

The Witch 881

Chapter 881: Director Gardner (2)

Although Director Gardner was furious at Secretary Foster for looking down on him, he took a moment to scrutinize her point of view. Even though Secretary Foster didn't mention her reasons, it wasn't too difficult for him to guess.

As such, he didn't fall for Secretary Foster's provocation and kept a cool head.

"You're right, Secretary Foster. The North's growth is unstoppable," Director Gardner surprisingly agreed before coolly adding, "However, that doesn't mean we should do nothing about it and just watch."

"Even if we can't stop the North from growing into a hegemonic superpower, we can still try not to fall too far behind," Director Gardner stated.

When President Hugo heard this, his unattentive gaze flicked with interest. He was forced to re-evaluate Director Gardner of the Starry Steel Research Tower.

In truth, he had been very disappointed with the Starry Steel Research Tower's lack of progress and achievements in space development despite receiving a substantial amount of the federation's funding.

After all, he had high expectations of Director Gardner's visionary dream.

As such, he was even more disappointed that another country had beaten them in the space race. Furthermore, it was a complete and overwhelming defeat that left no room for jealousy and resentment, only resignation and acceptance.

There was simply no competition between them.

What the North demonstrated wasn't just a few years ahead in technology but possibly decades to a century.

It was impossible to catch up with their own capabilities.

That was also why it was very improbable for the North to agree to any negotiation of the technology's acquisition. The North had no reason to give up its absolute advantage and benefit those outside its influence.

President Hugo originally thought Director Gardner was blinded by greed and ambition.

However, Director Gardner insisted on negotiating with full awareness of the matter. It seemed he had other considerations that gave him some confidence.

Ultimately, Director Gardner was still a top academician. He shouldn't be short-sighted.

"I apologize for hastily dismissing your proposal without hearing you out, Director Gardner," President Hugo sincerely recognized his fault before saying, "It's a sensitive period, so I pray for your understanding."

"Please tell us how the federation can keep up with the North's growth. Do you really think the North will agree if we try to negotiate the acquisition of Heavenreacher's technology?" President Hugo asked.

"I didn't say it would be easy," Director Gardner calmly shook his head and said, "However, our federation has its strengths, which we can utilize to appeal to the North and increase the chance of succeeding."

"Oh?" President Hugo raised an eyebrow with interest and requested, "Please elaborate, Director Gardner."

"Yes, President," Director Gardner nodded before explaining, "Although the North has succeeded in establishing access to space and the moon, it doesn't change the fact the North only occupies a small fraction of the continent."

"If the North wants to expand further into space, their limited territory won't be able to support the astronomical demand for resources like rare metals. They'll definitely turn to us for that."

"I'm sure they would be willing to make some concessions to establish trade with our federation," Director Gardner believed.

"I see," President Hugo uttered thoughtfully.

Indeed, the Freedom Federation was Pangea's current economic leader. It occupied the central continent and shared friendly relationships with many countries, both small and big.

With the exception of the mysterious Divine Serpent Empire and the witch kingdoms of the north, it had practically traded with every other country in the past century.

Even the Holy Knight Empire and Great Ratholos Empire weren't exceptions.

It wasn't far-fetched to say that it had access to all the resources on the continent. As long as their surrounding neighbors were willing to trade, it wasn't difficult to acquire any type of resource that could be found.

As such, the Freedom Federation was more than capable of supplying the North with vast amounts of resources if they could agree to an exchange of interests.

Nevertheless, President Hugo suddenly sighed.

"It's uncertain how long our federation can hold onto the position of Pangea's economic leader. Given the showcase of the Heavenreacher and the conditions listed by the Black Rose Empire, other countries might consider joining the North's United Nations," President Hugo mentioned.

The mood of the office shortly became depressive when the subject was raised.

Indeed, it was only a matter of time before the United Nations surpassed the federation's influence and replaced it.

How quickly that day came depended on the attitude of the other countries.

"This is why we should strengthen our relationship with our neighbors. That would make them reconsider joining the United Nations," Director Gardner suggested.

"That won't work, Director Gardner," Secretary Foster suddenly spoke after being quiet for some time.

"Oh? And why do you say that, Secretary Foster?" President Hugo asked with interest.

"The attitudes of our neighbors are important in determining the North's growth and our federation's economic leadership, yes, but what's most important is the attitude of the Black Rose Empire," Secretary Foster calmly stated.

"This is a country with an existence capable of slaying a Great Devil and has dragons as its subordinates. If our attempts of stunting the North's growth angers that existence, we may very well be facing a war."

"Moreover, it will be a war where we will definitely lose. I believe the other countries are also aware of that, so they will definitely treat matters related to the North with extra care."

"Everyone wants to maintain their power and authority, but I'm sure no one is willing to die for it since there's only one outcome," Secretary Foster stated.

"What you say makes sense, Secretary Foster," Director Gardner surprisingly acknowledged, but then said, "However, that's only true if the North doesn't care about the consequences of waging war over such minor issues."

"Considering the Black Rose Empire built the Heavenreacher, its ambition to conquer the continent and unify humanity is quite clear. As such, the North won't recklessly wage war, not when the shadows of Great Devils have long penetrated deep into Pangea."

"On that note, if our federation can prove itself to be a worthy ally of the North and help it purge the dark forces of Gehenna hidden in Pangea, I don't see why it wouldn't give us some benefits like sharing its technology," Director Gardner said.

Secretary Foster immediately furrowed her brows as Director Gardner's intention became unclear to her.

He seemed to be against the North at first, and yet now he was suggesting an alliance with it?

What exactly was he after?

Chapter 882: Secretary Foster's Unexpected View

While Secretary Foster failed to see through Director Gardner's intention, President Hugo understood it clearly.

Evidently, Director Gardner did not see the North as an enemy but as an opponent.

Despite the present odds against the federation, Director Gardner believed it could still make a comeback so long as they secured its interests before the North solidified its power.

As long as the federation's foundation remained firm, the federation could bide its time until it found another chance to surpass the North and become the world's dominant power again.

That was why Director Gardner had only made suggestions to delay the North's growth or allow the federation to keep up with it to some extent and not outright enter a hostile relationship with the North.

Director Gardner recognized the North's present dominance, yes.

However, given the federation's ideals, influence, and power, he didn't want the federation to join the United Nations and become the Black Rose Empire's vassal.

Director Gardner believed the federation had enough advantages to fight for an alliance-type relationship and maintain its independence instead.

President Hugo understood all this and couldn't help but admit that it was the ideal choice, given the North's unstoppable growth. They couldn't fight the North, but they also didn't wish to be swallowed and reformed by such a militant group.

Unfortunately, President Hugo was also aware that such an option was on their more wishful side of things.

Whether the federation could secure its position as the North's ally and maintain its independence ultimately depended on the North's attitude.

"You should know that the forty-five state members of the federation had decided on a wait-and-see situation during the last meeting, Director Gardner," President Hugo solemnly mentioned before asking, "If I were to send you to negotiate with the North, how confident are you in succeeding?"

"To be honest, I'm not confident at all, President," Director Gardner boldly admitted before saying, "However, if we don't even try to talk and take our chance, we are bound to lose our freedom and everything we have worked hard to build in the past century."

"That said, it seems Secretary Foster has a different opinion," Director Gardner suddenly added, having noticed the person's brief look of contempt.

"I don't have anything to say, Director Gardner," Secretary Foster stated dismissively, unwilling to continue the topic.

Nevertheless, Director Gardner was unsatisfied with her response.

"There's a difference between having nothing to say and having nothing good to say, Secretary Foster. I'm sure an insightful woman like yourself has something constructive to say, even if it is unpleasant to the ears. Please share it," Director Gardner urged.

"I better not," Secretary Foster coolly replied.

"I insist," Director Gardner pressed with a stern look.

At the same time, President Hugo also glanced at Secretary Foster expectantly. He was interested in her differing opinion.

Although Secretary Foster and Director Gardner had no decision-making power in the federation's governing body, they offered unique perspectives that were worth listening to.

As president of the federation, it was imperative for President Hugo to consider all sides' opinions and weigh their pros and cons.

Only by doing that would allow him to make the best choice for the good of the federation.

In truth, President Hugo did not agree with the state members' passive stance of waiting and seeing the situation. After all, it would be too late to act by the time the federation decided to act later.

As such, President Hugo found Director Gardner's proactive approach appealing.

Even so, he did not forget to pay attention to Secretary Foster, who may have a differing opinion. After all, she could be aware of something they weren't.

Secretary Foster softly sighed after realizing she had no choice but to speak her mind.

"I shouldn't be saying this as a member of the Freedom Federation, but the freedom we advocate is nothing but a joke in my eyes, honestly speaking," Secretary Foster made an unexpected statement before locking her gaze on Director Gardner.

"The very reason the Freedom Federation could freely pursue freedom and promote human rights, becoming a superpower is because it enjoys peace, far removed from the threat of Gehenna in the north."

"However, such freedom is also a double-edged sword that will hurt us and bring humanity to ruin should the Freedom Federation lead our entire race. You can try to refute my words, but you will only be lying to yourself."

"Gehenna had always been a mysterious place, and the Great Devils were invincible existences to us. Pangea has always been at Gehenna's mercy. Humans have been no more than chess pieces for the Great Devils to play with."

"However, the death of Abaddon has shattered their invincibility and brought forth an age of uncertainty. We don't know if Gehenna will wage an all-out war on Pangea tomorrow or some other day."

"What I do know is that when it happens and the flames of war spread across the entire continent, what will save humanity will not be the diversified opinions of democracy but the unified will of dictatorship."

"Only a dictatorial group can force everyone to fight for the survival of humanity and leave no one out," Secretary Foster stated.

President Hugo and Director Gardner were shocked by her blasphemous words, but they had to admit there were truths in them.

Should the relationship between Pangea and Gehenna deteriorate to such a point, the Freedom Federation indeed lacked the ability to conscript every single human being into the war.

They could use propaganda to sway their people to fight for humanity, but they could not force them into the military if they did not want to.

After all, it would go against the very laws that protected them and the ideals they stood up for.

How could humanity with divided strength win a war against Gehenna when its chances of victory were already abysmally low?

"So what are you proposing, Secretary Foster?" President Hugo inquired with a deep and thoughtful look.

"Honestly speaking, the federation must join the United Nations," Secretary Foster stated without hesitation before adding, "We cannot beat the wisdom of the dragons, nor do we possess the strength to slay a Great Devil."

"It is sheer foolishness to try and resist the inevitable change just to protect our freedom. After all, you need to be strong and alive to enjoy any form of privilege," Secretary Foster stated.

She could only imagine Gehenna bringing death and enslavement after the death of Abaddon.

Any possibility of peace between their two worlds didn't seem possible any longer.

Chapter 883: Holiest of Holy Lands

Garden of Thyia

Ever since Vaan disappeared into the sea of darkness beyond the upper half tree region, Elder Willowthorn couldn't help worrying.

After all, the upper half tree region was where the death energy concentrated and was the den of Death Eaters.

More importantly, Divine Lord Death Eater dwelled there.

Even though Elder Willowthorn had never personally met the Divine Lord Death Eater, he had always been aware of its existence.

The opposite held true as well.

Both sides had known of each other for a very long time but had never interfered with one another. They had remained within their domains and respected their boundaries.

As such, after Vaan entered the upper half tree region, Elder Willowthorn started to feel regret.

"I shouldn't have allowed him to go look for Goddess Thyia's inheritance..." Elder Willowthorn sighed after looking away from the upper half tree region.

If Vaan perished, the wood spirits would also lose a Holy Wood Spirit. Nothing was more cruel than to be given hope only to have it taken away.

When the other wood spirits in the village found out where Vaan went, they couldn't help but look up at the dark sky with concern as well. They may not care about Vaan, but they definitely care about Emerald.

Holy Wood Spirits were directly tied to the prosperity of the Wood Spirit Race.

"Hm?"

Suddenly, a mushroom spirit, among other wood spirits, began to notice unprecedented changes in the skies of their garden.

"Everyone, look! S-Something is happening!"

"That...! How is that possible...?"

As more wood spirits in the village looked up and noticed the changes in the dark sky, their surprise changed to shock and alarm.

The sea of darkness that had occupied the upper half of the Garden of Thyia was receding for the first time in forever.

Before long, the whole trunk of the dead Mother Tree came into view, followed by the crown and beyond.

The glow of life from the surface had never been able to penetrate the wall of darkness. Thus, many wood spirits in the Garden of Thyia had never seen the upper half of the dead Mother Tree.

However, Elder Willowthorn was one of the few who had seen the full image of the Mother Tree, even when it was still alive and overflowing with vitality.

As such, Elder Willowthorn was quite emotional to see the complete Mother Tree again, even if it was only in a dead state.

That said, he was startled shortly after.

Even after the veil of darkness was mostly lifted from the upper half tree region, not a single Death Eater was seen. The swarm of Death Eaters had seemingly disappeared with the sea of death energy.

It was as if their entire existence had been an illusion from the start.

Nevertheless, after the deathly energy disappeared, the abundant wood energy quickly poured into the vacant upper half region, sprouting new life on the surface of the lifeless Mother Tree.

Within minutes, the new domain of wood was quickly marked and assimilated.

Meanwhile, the swarm of Death Eaters and the sea of death energy had been moved into Vaan's Heaven-Swallowing Space.

Although the present Heaven-Swallowing Space didn't support life, it had no problem hosting spiritual lifeforms. As such, the Divine Lord Death Eaters and the others moved into their new dwelling without any discomfort.

At the same time, Vaan had moved his stockpile of magical plants and medicine into the Profound Pearl of Life.

With the limitless life energy there, not only would the magical plants be perfectly preserved, but they would even continue to grow and evolve on their own.

Vaan suspected that even high-rank magic tools and artifacts had the potential to develop their spiritual consciousness as they underwent the baptism of life energy over time.

The Profound Pearl of Life was simply that heaven-defying.

In a single trip, Vaan had acquired an overwhelming military force capable of dominating Gehenna and lording over the Great Devils.

In fact, his newfound military force could sweep across every vassal star realm under the Skymagia Star Kingdom. Even so, this was ultimately borrowed strength and didn't belong to him.

Thus, it was better not to boast lest he invited calamity.

More importantly, acquiring the powerful inheritance did not give Vaan a sense of peace. Instead, he had a newfound urgency to push forward his plans and grow even faster.

He had already learned that he had a brutally cruel and tough destiny. Thus, the indulgence of comfort would only be the hastening of his death.

'Within three years... No, within one year, I must complete the migration of Pangea and solidify my power in Gehenna...' Vaan thought to himself.

The dangers he had to face in the future weren't things the people around him could keep up with. As such, for those who wanted to stay, he had to create a suitable environment for them to develop at least.

As for those who would still follow him regardless of life and death, his first thought turned to the Profound Pearl of Life.

The Profound Pearl of Life's vast space and limitless life energy provided endless possibilities for development.

Creating a habitable realm within shouldn't take too much effort.

Moreover, such effort wasn't required from him.

After all, the Profound Pearl of Life was a heavenly treasure of Chaos. Its life energy was no different from life-attribute mana. In other words, it was an endless source of power for magic.

Any dragon or witch could use it to create a habitable realm.

More importantly, this kind of endless life-attribute mana was on par with the purest of mana, if not superior. As such, the world within the Profound Pearl of Life could be considered the holiest of all holy lands of cultivation.

Cultivating within the Profound Pearl of Life would produce results far better than anywhere else. Even the pure mana of the subterranean region couldn't be compared.

Alas, not everyone would get the chance to enjoy the benefits of the Profound Pearl of Life.

After all, revealing its existence required the highest level of trust.

Chapter 884: Wood Spirit Tribe's Allegiance

After Vaan and Elder Willowthorn met up, all of Elder Willowthorn's doubts were dispelled with Vaan's brief explanation.

Elder Willowthorn learned that the disappearance of the death energy and Death Eaters was indeed related to Vaan. He quickly expressed his relief when he found out the Death Eaters were simply moved to another subspace and not annihilated.

Although the Death Eaters were lifeforms of opposing nature to the Wood Spirits, they were still a type of lifeform.

As such, Elder Willowthorn thought it was too cruel to eliminate the Death Eaters after they had served their purpose of guarding the inheritance.

His concern seemed universal and did not discriminate despite his incompatible attributes with Death Eaters.

Such was the nature of Wood Spirits.

The Wood Spirit Race sought harmonious co-existence with all beings and wouldn't intentionally harm others for self-interest. Wood Spirits would rather be hurt than hurt others.

As such, the loyalty of a Wood Spirit friend was more reliable than a lifetime of friendship with any other race.

Since Vaan had Emerald, he didn't have to worry about befriending all the Wood Spirits in the Garden of Thyia and obtaining their loyalty.

It was also easier to trust them than it was to trust Great Devil Hecate.

After all, the Boundless Sea and Sky Aura was not omnipotent. Its influence on intelligent lifeforms wasn't absolute like it was on non-intelligent lifeforms.

As long as lifeforms were capable of rational thinking, their choices couldn't be governed by blind loyalty. Their choices would be governed by many other factors, such as morals, principles, self-interest, and fear.

As such, if Great Devil Hecate ever got caught in a difficult situation that required revealing some of his secrets for self-preservation, she would most likely do it.

Even if Great Devil Hecate didn't outright betray him, she could still sell out the information about the Garden of Thyia, sacrificing the Wood Spirits to save herself.

Although such a situation was very unlikely, Vaan still considered it since the future was full of uncertainties. As long as Great Devil Hecate knew about the Garden of Thyia, this minuscule risk of danger would always exist for the Wood Spirits.

"Senior, have you ever thought about the entire Garden of Thyia elsewhere?" Vaan casually asked.

"Oh?" the Elder Spirit's eyes flashed before thoughtfully replying, "Why do you ask such a question, Junior?"

"Since the Garden of Thyia's existence has been exposed due to visitors from the outside world, there's a small risk of the knowledge spreading and bringing disaster to the Wood Spirits living here," Vaan said.

"That's true..." Elder Willowthorn calmly acknowledged.

Whether it was Vaan or the other visitor, the Wood Spirits in the Garden of Thyia would face a great calamity if they were caught by more powerful beings and had their memories extracted.

Elder Willowthorn shortly sighed, "Unfortunately, it's not easy to move the entire Garden of Thyia elsewhere, even if you have the kind intention to protect my Wood Spirit Tribe, Junior."

The Elder Spirit was aware that Vaan had used a special subspace to hold all the Death Eaters and death energy.

However, the same method would work on the whole Garden of Thyia.

After all, even if the Wood Spirits could survive, the rest of the magical plants would just slowly wither and die. Of course, it was a different story if the subspace had the necessary conditions to support life.

However, the Elder Spirit had assumed Vaan's subspace was just another one of those interspatial storage artifacts.

Moving the Garden of Thyia in there was no different from throwing it into the void.

"I know what you are thinking, Senior, but it's not that kind of subspace," Vaan assured before revealing the Profound Pearl of Life, asking, "What do you think about moving in here?"

"This is..."

The Elder Spirit's emerald eyes quickly widened in horror and shock when he glanced at the white pearl in Vaan's hand.

Although he couldn't immediately tell what it was, he could at least understand the white pearl was an extraordinary object.

It was as if the vastness of an entire universe had been confined within such a small object.

More importantly, it possessed a seemingly inexhaustible amount of life energy!

Elder Willowthorn couldn't help but feel a shortness of breath at the realization. Such a heavenly object was even more precious than the Mother Tree in its prime.

"Goddess Thyia's inheritance, the Profound Pearl of Life," Vaan introduced.

"The Profound Pearl of Life...!?" Elder Willowthorn exclaimed with sheer disbelief as he immediately recalled the legends of the extraordinary object.

This was a True Divinity-level heavenly treasure and the absolute best tool for nurturing Wood Spirits and magical plants alike.

The world inside the Profound Pearl of Life was nothing short of paradise.

If a Divine Lord like Elder Willowthorn could really move into such a heaven-blessed world, becoming a Divine King or even a Divine Emperor wouldn't be impossible.

It would only be a matter of time.

After Elder Willowthorn understood the value of the Profound Pearl of Life, he was even more astonished by Vaan's act of revealing the priceless treasure to him.

It signified his absolute trust in his people.

Plop!

Elder Willowthorn suddenly knelt and lowered his head before saying, "Lord Vaan, your benevolence and open mind have earned this Old Thing's absolute admiration. To reveal such a priceless artifact to others isn't something easy to do."

"In order to repay your trust and the opportunity you have graciously bestowed to our kind, this Old Thing would like to represent my Wood Spirit Tribe and swear our allegiance to you."

"As long as you don't make us do things against our nature, we, Wood Spirits, will follow you to the end of time," Elder Willowthorn solemnly swore with sincerity.

"Please get up, Senior. You have already shown me sufficient goodwill and trust. How can I not repay you in kind? This is a small matter," Vaan replied, downplaying the significance of his act.

Nevertheless, he was pleasantly surprised with the result.

He didn't expect to obtain the allegiance of the Garden of Thyia's Wood Spirits in such a manner.

Given their previous goodwill due to Emerald's existence, he was already satisfied with being able to trade with the Wood Spirits for precious magical plants that he may need.

But now?

It was very likely that the Wood Spirits would offer up any magical plant or wood spirit essence as long as he showed even the slightest desire for it.

Moreover, it wouldn't harm the Wood Spirits much since they could recover within the Profound Pearl of Life and even grow from it through the process of destruction and creation.

Vaan quite looked forward to the Wood Spirit Tribe's growth in the Profound Pearl of Life.

It seemed that he would not be lacking any top-grade magical plant or wood spirit essence in the future.

Chapter 885: Divine Refining Life Art

"The two matters cannot be weighed equally, Lord Vaan," Elder Willowthorn argued, saying, "You have acquired Goddess Thyia's inheritance, making you her successor. By right, you are qualified to lead our tribe."

"You didn't need to share the secrets of the Profound Pearl of Life with us, yet you still chose to do so. The weight of this trust and kindness to us means far greater than you can imagine, my Lord."

"This Old Thing has only helped you out a bit while you have given our whole tribe a prospective future with limitless potential! It only makes sense for us to offer you our wholehearted devotion," Elder Willowthorn said solemnly.

The most difficult challenge in Chaos was to upgrade one's level of existence. It may not be obvious at the lower ranks, but it was blindingly clear at higher ranks.

However, the Profound Pearl of Life was capable of removing the talent limit on all Wood Spirits, giving every one of them the potential to grow to the True Spirit God level.

Of course, Elder Willowthorn's small gift of his wood essence was insignificant in comparison.

"Then, I will accept your allegiance, Senior," Vaan nodded.

"Please just call me Old Willow or Willowthorn in the future, my Lord."

"I'll keep it in mind."

Shortly after, Elder Willowthorn gathered all the Wood Spirits in front of Vaan. Their numbers weren't great, only amounting to a hundred Wood Spirits.

Moreover, they were all at least Divine-rank Wood Spirits.

Nevertheless, Vaan took his time sending them into the Profound Pearl of Life and observing their compatibility with the new environment.

Without any surprise, it was quite chaotic due to their lack of ability to adapt to the zero-gravity space. Panic and silent cries spread through the group as Wood Spirits helplessly floated through the white void.

Fortunately, the Divine Knight-level Wood Spirits quickly adapted and brought the whole group under stable control.

Even so, it was clear that a majority of the Wood Spirits' lifestyle would be impacted unless they recreated the familiar environment on land. Simply moving the rest of the Garden of Thyia over wasn't enough.

After all, it wouldn't retain its world's gravity after being moved elsewhere.

Nevertheless, Vaan didn't doubt a Divine Lord like Elder Willowthorn would have trouble resolving this issue.

Even if Elder Willowthorn was incapable of using the life energy to create a completely new planet, a pseudo-planet using the Garden of Thyia as the foundation should still be possible.

Artificial gravity could be created through the centrifugal force of rotation.

After Vaan taught Elder Willowthorn about the theory, he expended all his effort to move the rest of the Garden of Thyia inside the Profound Pearl of Life.

Throughout the ordeal, only one person was unhappy with the arrangement.

Valefor did not like to share his space with the Wood Spirits despite its extreme vastness. He had already deemed everything as part of his territory.

Nevertheless, Valefor was only Vaan's simulated alter ego. Thus, Vaan had complete control of his behavior. It only took a single thought to suppress Valefor's urge to cause trouble.

That said, Valefor still glared at the Wood Spirits from a distance.

When Elder Willowthorn entered the Profound Pearl of Life, he couldn't help but feel alarmed by Valefor's existence and malevolent aura.

He was under the impression that Valefor was even stronger than him despite being a rank weaker in cultivation.

"What are you looking at?" Valefor grumbled hostilely.

Elder Willowthorn opened his mouth but failed to speak. He had a lot of doubts and questions, but he didn't think he could have a reasonable discussion with the person.

'Is this Lord Vaan or a beast?' Elder Willowthorn silently wondered.

"Want to die?" Valefor's vicious gaze intensified.

"N-no, thank you..."

...

Meanwhile, after the entire Garden of Thyia disappeared inside the Profound Pearl of Life, an enormous void was left in the subterranean region.

Fortunately, the ceiling didn't collapse due to its absence.

Vaan didn't forget to collect all the soil containing the Divine Tree of Life's essence on his way back to the moon base.

Although Vaan was severely exhausted from transferring such a large secret realm into the Profound Pearl of Life, a smile hung on his weary face.

He was ultimately satisfied with his gains.

While Elder Willowthorn's Wood Spirit Tribe was quite small in numbers, its population was bound to quickly increase now that it had moved inside the Profound Pearl of Life.

Nevertheless, it didn't take long before Vaan received more surprises.

"My Lord, there's something you should see here," Elder Willowthorn suddenly called out to Vaan.

"Hm?"

Vaan took a look at the situation inside the Profound Pearl of Life through Valefor's eyes and immediately noticed what was going on.

The dead Divine Tree of Life was undergoing changes after receiving the baptism of endless life energy from the Profound Pearl of Life.

Although the Divine Tree of Life didn't come back to life, its dead bark was shedding as brilliant white light shot out through the cracks on the tree's surface. As more light shone through the cracks, they formed lines and connected into recognizable characters.

Before long, a wall of text appeared on the surface of the giant tree. Above it was a single title – Divine Refining Life Art.

Evidently, the wall of text contained detailed instructions for cultivating the divine refining of life art.

After Vaan gave it a quick read, he learned that the Divine Refining Life Art was a cultivation method that involved harnessing, utilizing, and reproducing life energy.

Cultivating the Divine Refining Life Art had various benefits.

The Divine Refining Life Art granted insights into the Life Law and allowed the user to powerful healing arts. It was ultimately a top-tier cultivation method for healers.

However, it had one major drawback—its healing skills consumed the user's life energy. In exchange, the healing spell was said to be able to treat any wound or illness.

Its potency was only limited by the amount of life energy consumed.

While it was a self-sacrificing skill that few would choose to learn, the Profound Pearl of Life provided all the life energy one needed and was fully capable of negating its drawbacks.

Such an amazing divine art supplemented the Wood Spirits.

'To think that there was such a divine art hidden in the divine tree...' Vaan mused thoughtfully.

If he hadn't chosen to move the Garden of Thyia into the Profound Pearl of Life, the Divine Refining Life Art would never have been known.

Chapter 886: Valefor's Adventure

The Profound Pearl of Life, Primordial Avatar, and Death Eaters were only one part of Goddess Thyia's inheritance under the arrangement of the Lord of Chaos.

On the other hand, the Divine Refining Life Art appeared to be Goddess Thyia's sole inheritance, designated for her true successor.

Only when the Profound Pearl of Life and Divine Refining Life Art were paired together would their true value be utilized.

If the inheritor didn't show kindness to the Wood Spirits of the Garden of Thyia, the Divine Refining Life Art would have never revealed itself.

'Was this fate or just luck?' Vaan briefly wondered.

Shortly after, he shook his head and told Elder Willowthorn, "This Divine Refining Life Art should be the final piece of inheritance left behind by Goddess Thyia. There don't seem to be any restrictions on who can cultivate it."

"Make sure your people learn it well, Senior. Just consider it as Goddess Thyia's gift."

"Thank you, my Lord!"

According to the divine text, the refinement of life energy didn't specify any special circulation through certain physiques; it only required high control and affinity with life energy.

As such, any biological or spiritual lifeform could learn the Divine Refining Life Art as long as they had the ability.

Although Vaan had already learned a powerful cultivation method, he figured the healing skills derived from the Divine Refining Life Art could be useful for emergencies.

Thus, he also decided to learn the divine art alongside the Wood Spirits.

"Other Me, we are switching. You can do whatever you want as long as you don't cause trouble to me and my people," Vaan informed before kicking Valefor out of the Profound Pearl of Life and taking his place.

"As if I have a choice," Valefor coldly snorted with displeasure.

However, Valefor did not complain or defy Vaan's decision.

Compared to dull cultivation or potioneering research inside the Profound Pearl of Life, exploration freedom was obviously more fun and desirable.

Strictly speaking, the current Valefor was the same Valefor from the original timeline but more of a clone of the person. From another perspective, Valefor was just Vaan roleplaying another persona with his divided consciousness.

While it might seem childish to those who know the truth, it was something Vaan had to do due to Valefor's extremely contrasting experience and personality.

Chaos and order coexisted but did not mix.

Only through memory separation and thought organization could Vaan prevent Valefor's overbearing Asura Law from influencing and corrupting his other laws. It would have affected the trajectory of his path.

The Lord of Chaos must have prepared the Primordial Avatar because he had foreseen this and not just due to his guilt toward Valefor.

However, thanks to this arrangement, it was possible for Vaan to pursue two completely different paths in a single lifetime.

To be one person but live the life of two.

Perhaps an extraordinary result was awaiting him at the end of these two roads.

...

"Is this Purpleflame Territory's deep underground region? It's been a while..." Valefor calmly observed his surroundings within the dark tunnel.

Shortly after, he directly sliced the space in front of him, creating a spatial rift before passing through it.

It took a while for the spatial rift to close after Valefor's departure.

Although Valefor had performed a spatial leap, he did not utilize the Spatial Law. Instead, he used the overbearing Asura Law to interfere with space.

As such, his spatial leap wasn't clean and left lingering traces that allowed trackers to follow.

Valefor's spatial travel didn't require technical skills, just brute force.

Moments later, Valefor stepped into a land of scorched earth and raging fire. The devastated world seemed absent of life, but the deep resentment and anguish hidden in the land revealed its once-flourishing history.

He had arrived on the surface of the Purpleflame Territory.

If Vaan had been paying attention to Valefor, he would have been dumbfounded by the latter's destination.

Since Valefor was instructed not to cause trouble for Vaan's people, he had actually gone out to play where his people weren't around.

Shortly after Valefor arrived in the burning land, the purple flames began to burn erratically and congregate towards his location.

The dry wind howled furiously before eerie silence replaced it, signifying the calm before the storm.

It was a sign that the burning land did not welcome nor tolerate Valefor's presence.

"Fire Fiends, huh?"

Valefor calmly observed the surrounding purple flames.

Although the so-called Fire Fiends were nowhere to be seen, Valefor was aware they had already surrounded him. They were hidden within the eternally burning purple flames.

While the Fire Fiends were hidden in the purple flames, they didn't have a fixed form and could be regarded as the purple flames themselves.

Under this state, the Fire Fiends were protected by the Eternal Purpleflame, making them almost impossible to kill due to their invulnerability to physical attacks. At the same time, energy-base and magical attacks were also ineffective unless they were stronger than the Eternal Purpleflame.

Only soul attacks that could target the Fire Fiends' source of existence directly were effective.

At that moment, the Fire Fiends were hiding within the Eternal Purpleflame, waiting for a chance to sneak attack Valefor and reap his life in a single move.

But despite Valefor's seemingly unguarded stance, the Fire Fiends appeared quite wary, as if Valefor had no openings.

"I understand your anger and resentment. You must have all died unjustly..." Valefor calmly stated, appearing sympathetic to the poor souls who had been wronged.

But then, his soft gaze suddenly became ferocious in the next moment. His palm plunged straight into the nearby Eternal Purpleflame, claspings onto a single Fire Fiend before ripping it out by the neck.

The Fire Fiend was easily caught and forced to face Valefor's grim gaze directly.

"However, I do not tolerate hostilities directed at me just because I understand. If you don't want to die, you all better start behaving in my presence. Is that clear?" Valefor strictly warned, seemingly unaffected by his burning hand.

The Eternal Purpleflame could not damage his body.

Meanwhile, the Fire Fiends surprisingly reined in their hostilities with shrunk necks after receiving Valefor's stern warning. Their anger and resentment were suppressed by greater rage and resentment spilling out of Valefor's body.

At the same time, a speck of intelligence seemed to have appeared within their empty eye sockets.

Chapter 887: Valefor's Adventure (2)

Although Valefor's malevolent aura seemed to have awakened the Fire Fiends' intelligence, it was only an illusion. He had simply awakened their fear of him with his overwhelming slaughter energy.

History may have been erased and changed, but the experience of endless slaughter has been preserved in Valefor.

He had simply killed far too many beings.

Originally, such an oppressive slaughter aura should have been counter-effective on the Fire Fiends due to the wrongful deaths of their past lives that turned them into vengeful spirits of fire.

However, Valefor's slaughter aura also contained his rage against injustice and wrongdoings done to him.

As such, the Fire Fiends felt both fear and belonging, as if they were kindred spirits.

If Valefor hadn't felt pity for their tragic experience, he wouldn't have spared any merciful words.

He would have simply killed them all.

After the Fire Fiends' killing intent was quelled, Valefor glanced around before fixing his gaze on a burning charcoal-black tree in the distance.

Although the Eternal Purpleflame had destroyed most things on the surface of the Purpleflame Territory, it did not destroy everything.

The fact that some trees could withstand the Eternal Purpleflame proved they were unordinary. Instead of reducing dust like most things, the charcoal-black tree had adapted to the fiery properties of the Eternal Purpleflame.

Without a tenacious life force to slow down its destruction, it wouldn't have been possible to adapt.

"Decamillennium-Year Blazewood... It's quite an excellent material for refining tools. It just so happens that I am lacking a suitable weapon," Valefor casually commented.

Shortly after, he expended a significant amount of effort to break off the charcoal-black tree, leaving the roots intact.

Although the Decamillennium-Year Blazewood had wood properties originally, it had become no different from a piece of extremely sturdy metal under the baptism of the Eternal Purpleflame over the years.

More importantly, it was also very receptive to the Eternal Purpleflame.

Since there was an excellent material capable of accommodating the power of the Eternal Purpleflame lying around, why would Valefor make use of it?

'This material can withstand True God-level fire, so it has to be at least Quasi-True Divinity grade. However, it is so brittle that even three hours of shock attacks from a Peak Rank 7 Divine Being can break it,' Valefor analyzed.

The Decamillennium-Year Blazewood was obviously a very strong material, yet it was also fatally weak against shock.

As such, Valefor couldn't use it to refine a sword like he had initially hoped.

Even if there was the option of smelting the Decamillennium-Year Blazewood with other rare minerals to remove its weakness, there wasn't any fire strong enough to melt its metallic properties.

After all, it would have to be another True God-level fire like the Eternal Purpleflame, but not the Eternal Purpleflame.

Nevertheless, it was still undeniable that the Decamillennium-Year Blazewood was very valuable. Moreover, it wasn't the only piece in the Purpleflame Territory.

'There's so many treasures lying around here, but the Gehennan dogs have never exploited them. Truly a bunch of trash,' Valefor thought.

If the Great Devils had heard Valefor's thoughts, they would have been outraged.

After all, even if the Purpleflame Territory was full of treasures like the Decamillennium-Year Blazewood, they weren't strong enough to harvest them.

How could they be blamed for that?

Nevertheless, after Valefor determined the impracticality of a weapon, his attention turned to attack tools.

There was more than one way to use the Decamillennium-Year Blazewood.

'If I can't use the Decamillennium-Year Blazewood as a sword, then I will use it as a flag,' Valefor decided.

In the next moment, the power of the Asura Law gathered at Valefor's fingertips before he inscribed runes on the surface of the Decamillennium-Year Blazewood Tree.

Although the Decamillennium-Year Blazewood Tree was too tough to be indented with runes, Valefor planned to draw it with his blood, just like a talisman inscription.

However, Valefor didn't think far enough.

His body was practically indestructible and couldn't be harmed, at least not with his own strength. As such, he couldn't cut open a flesh wound to bleed.

Valefor immediately sat on the ground, feeling gloomy and depressed. He had never encountered such a problem before.

Should he be happy or sad for having such a blessed body?

While Valefor was feeling stumped with such a dilemma, a humanoid skeleton cloaked in darkness appeared in the airspace above him.

The newcomer appeared to be a Peak Rank 6 Divine Being.

No doubt, he was a Great Devil.

Considering Valefor's malevolent aura had been spilling out of his body without reservation, it would have been strange if the Realm Lord of Gehenna hadn't noticed such a powerful being.

Nevertheless, Thanatos could only hover in the sky since Valefor's location was mostly covered in purple flames.

There was nowhere safe to land.

"Your Excellency, I apologize for only being able to greet you from up high. May I ask who you are and why you have come here?" Thanatos inquired with a humble attitude.

He had no other choice.

The other party was a Divine Knight, perhaps the most powerful Divine Knight he had ever encountered in his lifetime.

After all, the other party was actually capable of resisting the Eternal Purpleflame!

As such, Thanatos could only act courteously even if the other party decided to beat him for no reason, let alone a small matter as trespassing without an announcement or invitation.

Meanwhile, Valefor glanced up and frowned.

Although he didn't like looking up at another person, the unknown lich had apologized in advance and was quite humble.

As such, he couldn't just punch a smiling face.

Even a killing star like Valefor still had some principles; he wouldn't kill or be unreasonable unless he were offended.

"You look familiar. Have I killed you before?" Valefor casually asked.

Despite being butt-naked due to the Eternal Purpleflame, Valefor didn't seem to understand the meaning of shame when he asked his question.

Nevertheless, Thanatos didn't dare to laugh or condemn the streaker. Valefor's question had shocked him.

"Your Excellency, what do you mean by that?!" Thanatos retreated in horror.

Although he had done his best to avoid offending the streaker, there was nothing he could do if the other party wanted to kill him anyway.

A reason was never needed to kill – Such was the way of Chaos.

Thanatos just didn't understand why he would feel so much fear over such a simple question.

Do they really know each other?

Why couldn't he remember?

Chapter 888: Heavenly Devil

"It's nothing. I just thought you were someone else," Valefor nonchalantly dismissed the subject, but his pupils flashed with a playful glint.

Naturally, Valefor could recognize Thanatos, the Lich King, Great Devil, and Realm Lord of Gehenna. He had killed this person far too many times just to see the limit of his resurrection skill.

It could be said that out of all the Great Devils, he understood Thanatos best.

Great Devil Thanatos might have a lofty position in Gehenna, but he was also just another cowardly mob. He feared the strong and bullied the weak.

Although he wasn't an excessive bully, he was still someone who would rather rely on his strength and position to acquire unfair benefits as long as the object of interest sparked his greed.

Such a being was easy to abuse and manipulate so long as one possessed superior strength.

This was because they were easier to read.

Since it was a new timeline, Valefor didn't plan to kill Thanatos because of past grievances. Rather, it was better to use him as his dog and lackey.

...

While Valefor was considering how to use Thanatos, the latter was pondering how to survive.

Valefor's casual question did not seem like a joke to him at all.

Instead, his question reflected how many beings he had murdered to obtain such a thick and bloody slaughter aura. The lives he took must have been in the billions, if not more.

What Thanatos didn't understand was how such a prominent killer could be unknown.

With such an endlessly thick slaughter aura, the person would have been noticed nowhere he went, especially considering his strength.

After all, Peak Divine Knight was the strongest power beneath Divine Lord in a tier-1 star kingdom. The name of such a powerful figure would have long been recorded in the Skymagia Star Kingdom's Divine Knight Ranking List.

However, Thanatos could not find a name on the Divine Knight Ranking List that matched his description.

Just where did this killing star come from?

Thanatos could only think of three possibilities as to why he couldn't recognize the person. Either the person came from a foreign star kingdom, was currently under disguise, or was part of the unrecorded.

Each possibility scared Thanatos more than the last.

"H-How should I address you, Your Excellency?" Thanatos humbly inquired, hoping to learn some information about Valefor's identity.

Valefor contemplated for a moment before replying, "People know me as Vaan Raphna."

"I see, so Your Excellency's name was Vaan Raphna. Then, I shall call Your Excellency—" Thanatos nodded pleasantly, pretending to have heard of him before.

However, his faceless expression soon froze upon realizing he had indeed heard of such a name before.

What?

Vaan Raphna?

Wasn't that the name of the Pangean Demigod being tested for the vacant seat of Great Devil?

That Vaan Raphna?!

Impossible!

They couldn't possibly be the same person! There was such a vast gap in their power levels! They had to be two different people that just happened to share the same name!

"What's wrong? Is there a problem with my name?" Valefor narrowed his eyes.

"N-No, not at all, Your Excellency," Thanatos humbly denied.

However, he didn't dare to keep any secrets in front of such a powerful killer. Thus, he quickly explained, "It's just that one of my people, a Great Devil, had recently been killed by a bastard who shares your name, Your Excellency."

"I am precisely that bastard," Valefor nonchalantly replied.

"..."

Thanatos was instantly petrified while screaming inside his head. He wanted to cry but had no tears to shed.

He tried not to offend the killing star but ended up calling the person a bastard.

How could he live now?

"Don't worry, I won't kill you for that. I'm not that narrow-minded. The ignorant are innocent, as they say," Valefor coolly stated.

"Thank you, Your Excellency," Thanatos sighed with relief before saying, "There must have been a mistake with our information."

"With your strength, you do not need to take any test for the seat of Great Devil and become one of us. As the Realm Lord of Gehenna, I can vouch for your qualifications, Your Excellency."

"Also, since you are Pangean, Pangea is naturally yours. No, wait! The Evernight Territory is also rightfully yours! I will inform the other Great Devils to pull out their forces and return everything back to you!"

"Are you satisfied with this arrangement, Your Excellency?" Thanatos asked nervously.

"I can see your sincerity," Valefor calmly nodded before saying, "However, it's not enough. You should also throw in this Purpleflame Territory and the Darksea Abyss Territory as an apology, don't you think?"

"After all, just because I won't kill you doesn't mean there won't be any consequences for your previous offense. This much compensation should be reasonable for what you did, no?"

"I don't think there's any other Divine Knight as merciful as me after being called a bastard by a mere Divine Warrior," Valefor casually said.

"You're absolutely right, Your Excellency!" Thanatos chirped to Valefor's beat.

Whatever Valefor demanded, he could only agree to it.

After all, Valefor was a Peak Divine Knight.

Having such a backer was more valuable than any number of ordinary Divine Knights. It would elevate Gehenna to one of the top vassal star realms under the Skymagia Star Kingdom.

If Valefor became a Divine Lord, then even the Skymagia Star Kingdom's royalty had to give them preferential treatment and respect.

"Is there anything else I can do for you, Your Excellency?" Thanatos humbly asked with clasped hands.

"Since you asked, I think Great Devil is too lowly of a title for one with my level of power," Valefor mentioned, adding, "Or do you believe a Peak Divine Knight such as I can only be your equal?"

"You've made a... valid point, Your Excellency," Thanatos forcefully acknowledged before suggesting, "How about becoming the Heavenly Devil of Gehenna?"

"As the Heavenly Devil of Gehenna, all Great Devils and demons below will have to treat you as our heaven. Any decision you make overrules everyone, even mine, the Realm Lord's."

"What do you think of this, Your Excellency?" Thanatos sought his opinion.

"Not bad. You're good at this," Valefor praised with a soft chuckle.

"Great! May I take my leave to make the arrangements and inform everyone, Your Excellency?" Thanatos earnestly requested.

Thanatos feared that if he didn't find a reason to leave, Valefor would continue asking for more things.

"Mm."

Valefor's confirmation made Thanatos overjoyed. He immediately turned to leave, hoping to get away as soon as possible.

At the same time, the butt-naked Valefor glanced at Thanatos's departing back thoughtfully.

"Wait."

"Is there something else, Your Excellency?"

Thanatos immediately hurried back with a forced expression after being called by Valefor.

"Your cloak is not bad," Valefor casually commented.

Chapter 889: Artifact Refinement

After hearing Valefor's comment, the soul fire in Thanatos's empty eye sockets flickered with pain.

However, his pain only lasted a moment before it changed into a smile-like expression.

"Since Your Excellency fancies this Humble One's cloak, I will give it to you as a congratulatory gift for ascending the seat of Heavenly Devil," Thanatos offered his cloak of darkness with hidden reluctance and became bone-naked.

=====

[Cloak of Darkness and Death (Pseudo-Rank 7 Divine Artifact)]

Description: An extreme concentration of death and darkness energies that took a hundred thousand years to form naturally. It became a defensive-storage-type divine artifact after an inept Divine Lord refined it for ten thousand years.

Abilities: Can resist the magical attacks of Peak Rank 6 Divine Beings and below, naturally attract and absorb nearby death and darkness energies, store matter, and increase comprehension speed in related laws when worn.

Creator: Made by Divine Lord Mahi Tabakrum 450,000 years ago.

=====

Valefor inspected the [Cloak of Darkness and Death] with [Fourth Dimensional Sense] before nodding with approval.

The [Cloak of Darkness and Death] possessed the storage capacity of a small realm, but it was only used to store death energy and nothing else.

However, even without any other treasure or resource, giving up the [Cloak of Darkness and Death] alone was enough to make Thanatos feel a tremendous loss.

"Relax. I won't take your cloak for nothing," Valefor assured.

Shortly after, he snapped off a small branch from the [Decamillennium-Year Blazewood Tree] and offered it to Thanatos.

Compared to the thick trunk, the small branch was much smaller. Thus, it took Valefor little effort to separate from the main tree.

"Take it," Valefor casually tossed the branch and said, "If you can find supplementary materials of the same quality and a good artificer, it's not impossible to create a Pseudo True Divinity-rank weapon or tool."

"If you can't, it's still not bad to use it as a fire carrier of the [Eternal Purpleflame]," Valefor stated.

The [Eternal Purpleflame] could even burn Divine Emperors to death. Thus, objects that could contain such a destructive fire were undoubtedly very valuable.

That said, whether the said objects could become a weapon that effectively utilized the [Eternal Purpleflame] depended on the refiner.

After all, a weapon that also burned its own user or could not kill its intended target was a useless weapon.

"Thank you, Your Excellency," Thanatos said with a strained expression.

The [Decamillennium-Year Blazewood Branch] was indeed a very valuable material, but it wasn't useful to him compared to the [Cloak of Darkness and Death].

Furthermore, he couldn't sell or trade it for something actually useful since it would only spark endless greed.

Gehenna would no longer have peaceful days if that happened.

"I'm something of an artificer myself. But if you want to commission me, you'll have to pay the appropriate price. So, how about it? Would you like to commission me?" Valefor asked with a smile.

Thanatos shivered at Valefor's wolfish smile.

If he actually agreed to that, it would definitely cost him another arm and leg, if not more.

Was this how others felt when he made deals with them?

"Thank you for the offer, but I will have to think about it, Your Excellency," Thanatos wryly replied.

"Alright," Valefor acknowledged.

Shortly after Thanatos finally left, Valefor focused on the two items he had obtained: the [Cloak of Darkness and Death] and the [Decamillennium-Year Blazewood Tree].

Despite being butt-naked, Valefor had no intention of wearing the [Cloak of Darkness and Death] to cover himself.

No, he had other plans for it.

Valefor temporarily sealed the [Cloak of Darkness and Death] within a barrier of asura power before storing it inside the Profound Pearl of Life, where Vaan and Wood Spirits currently resided.

After all, he focused on the [Decamillennium-Year Blazewood Tree].

Once he picked a particularly long branch of moderate thickness, he proceeded to remove it from the main tree to use it as a pole.

Then, he took the [Cloak of Darkness and Death] back out, removed its asura barrier, and tied it to the [Decamillennium-Year Blazewood Pole], turning it into a flag.

However, in its current state, the flag wasn't considered a single item; it was just two objects tied together.

As such, Valefor took out some divine-rank magical plants from the Garden of Thyia, ground them into a sticky herbal extract, and applied it to the two tied points on the flag.

After further channeling life energy from the Profound Pearl of Life into the black flag, the herbal extract-covered [Decamillennium-Year Blazewood Pole] seemingly came back to life.

It absorbed the herbal extract to grow new branches out of its charcoal-burnt body. Its newly grown branches became the new fuse connecting [Decamillennium-Year Blazewood Pole] and [Cloak of Darkness and Death].

When that happened, the death energy from the cloak and the life energy from the wooden pole began clashing due to their opposing affinities.

However, such a problem didn't concern Valefor.

With the power of the Asura Law, he killed their clashing properties with a single slice. In that instant, two opposing energies became strangely docile despite contact with each other.

Such was possible with the Asura Law.

Although the Asura Law was a killing law full of blood and slaughter, who or what to slay was up to the user. Mediocre users could only kill other beings, while skilled users could slay anything, even intangible things like ideas and concepts.

An Origin Law that had transcended the heavens was that capable.

Nevertheless, Valefor wasn't satisfied after killing the conflict of the two opposing energies.

He channeled the Asura Law into his fingertips and inscribed the [Connection], [Flow], and [Share] runes onto the newly-grown wooden parts instead of a simple [Merge] rune.

Such runic inscription was only possible since the newly-grown wooden parts were far softer than the [Decamillennium-Year Blazewood] parts.

After all, those new parts had never been tempered by the [Eternal Purpleflame] and survived for countless years.

Nevertheless, after Valefor completed his three sets of runic inscriptions, he watched the attributes from the [Cloak of Darkness and Death] and the [Decamillennium-Year Blazewood Pole] flow into each other.

The newly-grown wooden parts were strengthened continuously under the power of the two materials becoming one. It didn't stop until it was sturdy as Rank 7 divine materials.

In that instant, the black flag had truly become a single entity. A single [Merge] rune wouldn't have produced the same result.

Even so, Valefor still considered his newly-refined divine artifact incomplete.

Chapter 890: Purplefire Fiend King

After putting away the incomplete divine flag, Valefor continued his adventure in the Purpleflame Territory.

However, he didn't seem to be exploring blindly; he had a clear destination in mind.

Even so, it also didn't stop him from delaying his trip whenever he came across an object of high value, such as the [Decamillennium-Year Blazewood].

The [Decamillennium-Year Blazewood] wasn't common. In fact, it was very rare, considering its quality.

However, since the Purpleflame Territory's surface was mainly just scorched earth and black ash, it was very easy to spot [Decamillennium-Year Blazewood] as long as it was in the area.

After all, any tree standing after enduring such destructive fire and the long passage of time had to be [Decamillennium-Year Blazewood].

Unfortunately, besides [Decamillennium-Year Blazewood], the Purpleflame Territory didn't seem to have any other valuable resources. At the very least, there didn't seem to be anything else on the surface.

Valefor spent a full day of travel, but he only came across two other [Decamillennium-Year Blazewood Trees].

On the other hand, he had gathered millions of Fire Fiends. They mindlessly followed him after he suppressed their hostile behaviors with his slaughter aura.

Although there wasn't a single divine-rank Fire Fiend among them, their military force couldn't be underestimated due to their sheer numbers. Moreover, this was only a tiny fraction of their kind.

As Valefor made his way northward, the [Eternal Purpleflame] and Fire Fiends became increasingly concentrated and numerous.

'This should be the place.'

Valefor stopped a few steps short of an edge. Just ahead of him was an enormous crater overflowing with the [Eternal Purpleflame]. Such a high concentration of [Eternal Purpleflame] couldn't be found anywhere else in the Purpleflame Territory.

With [Eternal Purpleflames] as vast as the sea, the region came to be called the Sea of Eternal Purpleflame.

It was the most dangerous region in the Purpleflame Territory.

None of the Great Devils of Gehenna had ever been able to set foot inside such a fiery region of purple fire.

It wasn't the most dangerous region for nothing.

After all, the Sea of Eternal Purpleflame was the original point of impact, where the Skymagia Star Kingdom's Royalty had unleashed the full power of their [Eternal Purpleflame].

The number of Fire Fiends in the Sea of Eternal Purpleflame alone exceeded a hundred million. Such a fearsome army of vengeful spirits definitely had the power to bring death and destruction to the lands visited by it.

However, the Fire Fiends could not leave the Purpleflame Territory.

While the countless vengeful souls of the dead were reborn as Fire Fiends by the [Eternal Purpleflame], they were also bound by it. They could only thrive where the [Eternal Purpleflame] burned.

Valefor only had one purpose for coming to such a place – To tame that concentrated power for his own benefit and convenience.

"Purplefire Fiend King, come out and greet your guest!" Valefor arrogantly demanded.

His deafening roar resounded throughout the Sea of Eternal Purpleflame. It caused the billowing flames to flicker like a strong gust of wind had attempted to extinguish them.

As if the Sea of Eternal Purpleflame was angered by such a vain and foolish attempt to snuff out the eternal, its surface erupted with a towering pillar of flames.

From within the towering flame pillar, a unique Fire Fiend emerged, furious.

Compared to most humanoid Fire Fiends, the unique Fire Fiend was thrice as big, possessed large demonic-like antlers on its head, and its ghostly emerald eyes burned with intelligence.

However, its most distinguishing trait was its divine aura; it was a divine-rank Fire Fiend.

"Human! How bold of you to come here and make demands of this King! Even death cannot cure your foolishness! I want you to kneel and beg for death!" the Purplefire Fiend King roared.

Although the Purplefire Fiend King could see Valefor's undamaged body in the face of the [Eternal Purpleflame], it had slipped past his mind due to his towering rage and hatred.

"Capture him!" the Purplefire Fiend King commanded.

Swoosh!

The surrounding [Eternal Purpleflame] billowed in agitation as countless Fire Fiends emerged.

They all charged at Valefor blindly with rage and hate, unaware and unconcerned of the unsurmountable gap in power between them. Even the Fire Fiends who followed him to the Sea of Eternal Purpleflame turned against him due to the order.

However, Valefor didn't show the slightest surprise by the rear attack.

The Purplefire Fiend King was the king of all Fire Fiends. He was the lord of the old Purpleflame Territory, and the Fire Fiends were all his subjects.

Naturally, the Fire Fiends all listened to him.

"Get lost!" Valefor barked.

A powerful sound wave was instantly generated, sweeping outwards and blowing away the incoming Fire Fiends like a big blast of wind.

The power of the Asura Law infused in his very voice ensured that creatures of such meager power had no hope of getting close to him. Even so, the Fire Fiends weren't deterred by the increased distance or the absolute power difference.

They resumed their charge without fear, seemingly immune to Valefor's slaughter aura.

The searing pain of soul burning from the [Eternal Purpleflame] had robbed all their intelligence and reduced them to mindless beasts over the years, but their strong desire for revenge together with their king remained true.

The Purplefire Fiend King's command was absolute.

"Wait!"

The big horde of Fire Fiends immediately halted their charge at the Purplefire Fiend King's sudden command.

It was only now that the Purplefire Fiend King finally realized the [Eternal Purpleflame] did not affect Valefor.

"Who the hell are you, Human? Why do you want to see me?" the Purplefire Fiend King frowned, forcefully suppressing his endless rage and hatred.

Out of the billions of lifeforms that had been burned to death by the [Eternal Purpleflame], the Purplefire Fiend King had been the only one to hold onto his reasoning and not give in to the pain of soul burning.

Even so, it wasn't easy to suppress his rage and hatred, if not for his newfound curiosity.

"Who I am is not important," Valefor coolly stated.

"What's important is what I can offer you—an opportunity to break away from the shackles binding you to this land and leave to take revenge on the people who brought death to your home and people."

"So, are you interested?" Valefor calmly asked shortly after.