

## **The Witch 951**

### Chapter 951: Silverscale City

Beyond the western inner sea region, in the dark outer sea region, a huge trench divided the black and blue seas like the gap between two overlapping tectonic plates.

However, this abyss-like dark opening wasn't just a simply large chasm; it was like an entrance to the underworld—Dark, gloomy, and deathly could describe its appearance. Sea life tended to avoid it, and no aquatic plants grew around it.

The ocean depths were generally cold, even freezing. But in this place, it was scalding hot, enough to cook all marine life below Rank 3.

The sea surface constantly bubbled and emitted endless steam like boiling water.

Due to the special conditions in this particular sea region, the sea weather in the area also became violent. Powerful storms and winds created a natural barrier, warding away all human ships and fleets.

Stubborn explorers who had ever challenged its power had all sunk into its abyssal depths, never seen or heard again.

This special region that existed on the border of the western inner and outer sea regions was a reminder to all humans that no matter how powerful and capable they thought they were, nature was to be feared and never underestimated.

As such, the Divine Serpent Empire never sought to cross its boundary. The toxic black water in the outer sea region beyond was an endless sea of death; it wasn't a place for mortals.

The stormy sea region was just the first trial. Those who couldn't pass it definitely wouldn't survive the numerous trials that lie beyond it.

In the dark depths of the huge trench on the ocean floor, a brilliant, large silver city of the Celestial Kingdom called Silverscale City was founded.

Silverscale City utilized the sea region's natural environment to generate an endless source of steam and electrical power to support the daily life of its ten million residents.

That said, the metallic city had an energy reserve large enough to support ten times its population at any given time. The rich resources in the region also enabled it to expand its capacity even further if it deemed it necessary.

Silverscale City was divided into three layers: The surface layer, the underground layer, and the deep earth layer.

Most of the population resided in the deep earth layer, where the living conditions were most suitable for ordinary residents and newborn celestials, who were not much different from the fair-skinned Lunarans.

It was called the Residential Zone.

The underground layer above the deep earth layer was a semi-militarized zone where celestials received education and training to adapt to the harsh conditions of the sea. It was also where the spirit energy was densest.

As such, the underground layer was called the Cultivation Zone.

On the other hand, the surface layer above, where all the silver structures of Silverscale City were exposed to seawater, was called the Military Zone.

Only blue-skinned celestials called Nauticans were authorized to navigate this city later as they had completed their military education and training. The minimum requirement for graduation from the Cultivation Zone was to reach the Heaven Ascension realm.

...

Inside a tall tower-like silver structure on the surface layer of the city, a blue-skinned watchman looked alarmed as three green-glowing Spirit Tablets on the Spirit Altar lost their radiance.

The Spirit Altar only held three dozen Spirit Tablets.

As such, when the light of the three Spirit Tablets dimmed, they immediately stood out.

When the blue-skinned watchman looked at the Spirit Altar more carefully, he realized a fourth Spirit Tablet had also dimmed. He immediately knew something big had happened outside.

After all, a Seventh-class Land Investigator, two Sixth-class Land Investigators, and even one Fifth-class Land Investigator had all died during their mission.

Something like this had never happened in the 500,000-year history of Silverscale City.

The blue-skinned watchman quickly took out a sound transmission talisman and alerted his immediate superior.

"Sir, we've just lost 4 Land Investigators to the surface!"

"What!"

On the top floor of the silver tower, multiple blue-skinned celestials were observing and reading special high-tech electrical equipment, which generated data related to the planet's spirit energy.

At the center of the command room, a virtual hologram of Pangea was displayed. Spirit energy fluctuations were shown in real time after receiving data from the collective network of the Celestial Kingdom.

Everyone in the room immediately glanced at the blue-skinned celestial man with a three-star crest pinned on the left breast of his black skin-tight uniform.

Although the entire room was submerged in water, every Nautican was an evolved celestial capable of communicating through the water.

The blue-skinned celestial man with the three-star crest was the highest-ranking officer present and the chief of Silverscale City's spirit observation division, a ninth-stage Divine Origin realm expert.

"What happened, Chief Kroksi?" a sharp-eyed Nautican inquired.

"Four Land Investigators have been killed on their mission," Chief Kroksi frowned deeply before demanding an answer, "Where was their last known location?"

"DSE, GMSC-012M, Chief," another Nautican answered after fetching relevant information on the four deceased Land Investigators.

"Shall I inform the Silverscale Master?"

"Not yet," Chief Kroksi shook his head and said, "The Silverscale Master is a short-tempered man. I'm afraid he will act rashly after finding out Silverscale City just lost four capable Divine Origin realm experts."

"We need to complete the threat assessment and understand what we are facing. Go fetch the Spirit Tablets of the deceased from the Spirit Altar and analyzed their last memories."

"See if we can find out what or who killed them," Chief Kroksi ordered.

Shortly after a Nautican departed from the observation center, Chief Kroksi stared at the virtual hologram of Pangea with a deep frown.

The loss of four Divine Origin realm experts was a terrible blow to the reputation of the spirit observation division.

Of course, Chief Kroksi also wanted to restore his damaged honor by bringing back the killer's head. However, countless years of military discipline have trained him to act rationally.

As such, he couldn't blindly seek out the enemy.

Nevertheless, Chief Kroksi also had another problem. He could already foresee many Nautican nobles from the privileged class using the opportunity to denounce him and shake his position once the news was released to the rest of Silverscale City.

After all, his position, in many eyes, was a high-ranking yet laidback one—At least, that had been the case until now.

## Chapter 952: The Extraordinary Water Affinity

Back in the snowy mountains of the Grand Misty Serpent's Coil, Vaan shortly inspected his spoils – The four blue-skinned corpses and nine serpent carcasses.

Vaan was immediately fascinated by the rich and potent Golden Dragon Bloodline in their bodies. It was unlike Astoria's Golden Dragon Bloodline, which had been diluted over countless generations.

It was very surprising to discover that Pangea's pure bloodline still existed in the present age.

After all, it was nothing like the Fire Dragon God's bloodline, which had only been around for three hundred years. Golden Dragon Pangea's bloodline was far more ancient – It was a million-year-old bloodline.

Vaan was curious how the Golden Dragon Bloodline could still exist in its purest form.

He wondered if the Pangea's inheritance was only recently opened or if special methods were used to preserve its purity.

Nevertheless, Vaan wasn't free to study the clues in the blue-skinned corpses and serpent carcasses. As such, he summoned some dragon members to bring them back to the Red Dragon Clan for research.

After receiving some information about the Black Serpent Clan from Emperor Carpus, Vaan immediately departed and left the latter behind.

Since Emperor Carpus swore his allegiance and joined the UN, Vaan had an obligation to look after it. As such, he intended to clean up the Black Serpent Clan before it could make a mess in the Divine Serpent Empire.

At that moment, the Black Serpent Clan did not know a disaster was heading its way.

Emperor Carpus softly sighed. He began to question whether he made the right choice again.

After all, the Evermore family had served the Black Serpent Clan for thousands of years. While it wasn't exactly honorable to serve a sea monster race, it was definitely dishonorable to betray it.

This was especially so when the Divine Serpent Empire had benefited a lot from the Black Serpent Clan's knowledge.

Nevertheless, Emperor Carpus quickly remembered how Vaan slaughtered the blue-skinned celestials, and the doubt in his heart instantly disappeared. There was no need to question right or wrong when choosing the path of survival.

Loyalty was worthless in front of life and death.

After making up his mind, Emperor Carpus realized he was not attached to the Black Serpent Clan as much as he thought. In fact, he could even feel the distance clearer. The black serpents weren't humans, after all.

How could he care for it more than his own kind?

Emperor Carpus eventually made peace with himself over his decision to join the UN and serve the prophecized overlord.

At the same time, he couldn't help but realize how scarily accurate the prophecy was becoming. He, the proud emperor of the Divine Serpent Empire, had actually talked into joining the UN without putting up much resistance.

Was it futile to fight the inevitable? – Emperor Carpus wondered.

...

Meanwhile, Vaan flew through the fog-covered regions of the Divine Serpent Empire, passing through multiple cities, towns, and villages.

Although they were only flashes of scenery, he accurately remembered every detail.

Vaan couldn't help but marvel at the Divine Serpent Empire's unique culture; it was quite different from the Black Rose Empire, the Holy Knight Empire, and the Great Ratholos Empire.

There was much to learn about the Divine Serpent Empire's culture.

If the Black Rose Empire could integrate the various cultures, the diversified cultures would enrich the people's lifestyles and open up new possibilities. It would also be easier for people to learn about other countries in the UN.

Furthermore, it was only through understanding each other that different people could truly connect and become unified. Otherwise, even if all the countries were brought together, it would just become a mixed mob and not a true unification.

Various problems would arise and grow into bigger issues.

As such, bringing countries together was not enough to unify humanity. A solid plan was required to lay a solid foundation for the future.

Nevertheless, Vaan surprisingly did not encounter another serpent from the Black Serpent Clan despite passing through so many regions.

It was as if the black serpents Vaan had already killed were the only ones that had been in the Divine Serpent Clan. The rest were likely residing in the Western Sea, where the Black Serpent Clan was located.

Realizing that, Vaan headed straight for the Western Sea.

Due to Abaddon's matter, Vaan did not get the chance to explore the Eastern Sea back in the Great Ratholos Empire. However, today, there was nothing to stop him from visiting the Western Sea.

Splash!

After reaching the western coast, Vaan immediately dived into the blue sea with a big splash, surprising nearby fishermen.

Nevertheless, the moment Vaan entered the Western Sea, he felt like some of his dormant abilities awakened. His vision changed to suit the darkness of the ocean depths, and his senses greatly expanded.

He could feel the breath of every marine life within his range, even control the thoughts of weaker wills.

Despite having no prior swimming experience, Vaan felt like a fish returning to its sea.

The resistance of water against his body was smoothed out as the flow of water began to move around his body instead of clashing with it.

At the same time, water became easier for him to manipulate.

Pushing the water with the force of one unit would generate the force of two units. He was not pushing the water to swim but rather the water pushing him to swim faster.

As Vaan sank deeper and deeper into the depths of the Western Sea, the increasing water pressure also had little effect on his divine body. He understood he couldn't use water pressure to consolidate his body like the Body Refiners of the Great Ratholos Empire.

That said, his divine body was far too powerful for the tempering of water pressure to have any effect on him either way.

Vaan was almost infatuated with the blessing of water. This kind of wonderful sensation wasn't something he could find in fire and earth elements.

He did not need to improve his water affinity proactively at all. It was like the water element itself was rushing to butter up to him. His water affinity was rising simply by submerging himself in the ocean depths.

However, Vaan's biggest gain was the strengthening of his Boundless Sea and Sky Aura that came along with his increasing water affinity.

Schools of fish would subconsciously stop to offer their worship as he passed them by.

Chapter 953: Resonance

As Vaan continued to sink to the ocean floor, he saw many more species of marine life.



There were small and weak shrimps as well as large and powerful whales. The vast blue ocean was thriving with marine life, far more than the land. Even so, all were only food for the Black Serpent Clan in this sea region.

Nevertheless, it was said that Pangea used to be a planet of black toxic water. It was incredible how life could exist after the Golden Dragon Pangea died and become one with the world.

Even the supposed toxic black ocean had been purified into a clear blue sea, even if it was only limited to the inner sea.

Moreover, the purification was supposedly caused by Golden Dragon Pangea's blood spilling into the sea. As such, if all life was born from her blood, they should all have tiny traces of the Golden Dragon Bloodline.

Given life practically started a million years ago, the Golden Dragon Bloodline would have diluted into obscurity over the long passage of time.

It made Vaan even more curious how pure Golden Dragon Blood was preserved to the present era.

If the Celestial Kingdom and Black Serpent unearthed an untapped inheritance of Pangea recently, then it wasn't all that special.

On the other hand, it would be quite interesting if they had used special methods to collect the scattered bloodline and pass on the pure bloodline from generation to generation.

If Vaan could monopolize it, he could help Astoria and the Red Dragon Clan improve their strengths immensely.

Given the sheer size of Golden Dragon Pangea, there would definitely be too much Golden Dragon Blood for his personal usage. As such, it only made sense for him to consider the other's wellbeing.

More importantly, he possessed limitless life energy and the Everlasting Blood Refining Art. It wouldn't be impossible for him to increase the quantity of Golden Dragon Blood from a single drop.

Furthermore, if a superior ancestral bloodline was hidden in the Golden Dragon Blood, it could also draw it out with the Everlasting Blood Refining Art.

Nevertheless, none of that mattered a present.

Vaan was more concerned about the strengthening of his Boundless Sea and Sky Aura. It was growing on its own the moment he entered the vast body of seawater.

All of the purest water elements were rushing to nourish his soul and body, and even the water spirits emerged with subservient intents to serve him.

Although Vaan knew Varuna, the Lord of the Boundless Seas and Skies, was a master of the Water Law and Wind Law, he didn't expect to experience such startling improvements in the Western Sea.

After all, if it was purely the benefit of coming into contact with the element of his first life, why didn't he experience such big changes when he flew in the sky, the domain of wind?

Why was it only happening in the Western Sea? – Vaan wondered.

Ding!

<Your water affinity has reached a certain threshold>

<Your Astral God Divine Body has gained a sub-physique, Water Spirit Body>

<Your Water Authority has been restored to First-stage Divine-rank>

...

Within a short time, Vaan had effortlessly acquired the Water Spirit Body. Although it was only at a low rank, it was still improving.

Ding!

<You have been blessed by the water spirits>

<You can hear the voices of the water spirits>

<You can communicate with marine life>

<You can breathe underwater>

...

Vaan was immediately surprised by his new abilities. Before entering a contract with a Water Spirit, he could already communicate their kind.

The Water Spirits were giving him too much favor.

Nevertheless, when Vaan looked down, he did not see a single trace of one. There wasn't a single Water Spirit in the area.

So, where were the blessings of the Water Spirits coming from?

When Vaan focused his senses, he found it to be coming from everywhere. It was the water itself that was giving him the blessing of water.

The incomplete water spirits hidden in the water elements were subconsciously blessing him before they had even formed their independent consciousness and manifested into the world.

This kind of miraculous phenomenon was far too unnatural.

Something wasn't right.

Ding!

<Your Boundless Sea and Sky Aura is resonating with another source of Boundless Sea and Sky Aura>

With that one line from the system, the scattered pieces of the puzzle came together and formed a complete picture in Vaan's mind.

He could receive such a strong blessing from the water element because everything in the Boundless Sea might have originated from the water aspect of his Boundless Sea and Sky Aura in the first place.

Vaan was aware that the Boundless Sea and Sky Aura were only a minuscule fraction of what it once was during Varuna's life.

However, he didn't expect to find other traces of it on Pangea, which had yet to integrate with Chaos fully.

Nevertheless, after Vaan tried to sense out the location of the other source of Boundless Sea and Sky Aura, he discovered it was very far—somewhere in the southern outer sea region.

Since it was in a completely different sea region, he could only look for it another time.

...

When Vaan arrived on the ocean floor, Vaan found it to be a rather unforgiving place despite its beautiful silver-white glow, which resembled the moon in the night sky.

The energy-depleted Deep-Sea Steel ocean floor was covered in a thick layer of white sand.

However, this white sand wasn't quartz; it was coral fragments and the bone powdery remains of marine life. It was hard to imagine how much marine life was lost over the years to form such a vast and thick sandy ocean floor.

Nevertheless, this wasn't why the ocean floor was an unforgiving place.

The ocean floor was an unforgiving place because it was a region of radioactive seawater. The super-heavy water was both colorless and corrosive. Ordinary life forms wouldn't be able to sense the danger.

As such, when they enter the region, they would just become additions to the white graveyard. Even if they briefly entered and escaped quickly right after, their limited time would have already started ticking.

Only Transcendent-rank life forms and above were immune to the invisible damage of this region.

Chapter 954: Leading the Snakes to Their Nest

According to Emperor Carpus, the Black Serpent Clan's home was situated in a large system of interconnected caves underneath the deathly ocean floor. The only entrance leading into it was a large X-shaped crevasse.

The radioactive water zone was a natural barrier that prevented trifling marine life from wandering into the Black Serpent Clan's home.

As Vaan scanned the ocean floor for the X-shaped crevasse, he ran into a patrolling black serpent that was minding its own business.

However, when it spotted Vaan, it was dumbfounded and froze in confusion.

(What's a human doing in this region of water? Doesn't he know humans are prohibited from exploring this area?)

While the black serpent was wondering this, Vaan also studied it.

Although the black serpent was also a mutated species that grew several hundred meters big, it only possessed ordinary serpent scales and lacked a golden horn.

Evidently, it did not possess the Golden Dragon Bloodline—or at the very least, it didn't have enough pure Golden Dragon Blood to cause changes to its body.

The black serpent was only a Late-stage Transcendent life form.

As such, it was also easy for it to fall under the influence of Vaan's Boundless Sea and Sky Aura. He quickly made his way over to it.

(Hm? This human even dares to approach this Noble One without any fear or respect? How bold! It seems this human lacks education and requires a lesson!)

The black mutant serpent glared at Vaan with an attitude.

However, as Vaan got closer, its tough look disappeared, replaced by confusion. It didn't know why, but it suddenly didn't have the heart to be hostile to him.

A few more moments passed, and the black mutant serpent's heart shook in horror after it sensed the terrible energy and divine aura contained within Vaan's puny body. It had never encountered such physical density.

With a casual smack from Vaan, it would definitely become meat paste on the ocean floor!

"I have a question for you. Can you understand me?"

(Yes, loud and clear, Your Excellency! Please forgive this Noble—Lowly One for profaning your divine presence with a disrespectful gaze earlier! What do you want to ask me? This Lowly One can answer any inquiries you have! Even if I don't know, I can still find out for you!)

Vaan stared at the black mutant serpent in a stupor.

He was expecting the Black Serpent Clan to be full of arrogant and overbearing black serpents due to their years of lording over the Divine Serpent Empire.

However, the black mutant serpent could become surprisingly reasonable.

If they were all like this black mutant serpent before him, Vaan might not have a reason to keep slaughtering its kind. He could even learn plenty of information from it.

"Where is the entrance to your Black Serpent Clan?"

(The entrance to my clan is just a little over 80 kilometers that way... Wait, you can understand me, Your Excellency?)

Just as the black mutant serpent was happily pointing Vaan in the right direction, it suddenly looked back at him with surprise. The black mutant serpent didn't expect there was a human capable of understanding its language.

After all, it was only a Transcendent-rank life form. It had not awakened higher spiritual wisdom and learned human speech like the Demigod-rank black mutant serpents in its clan.

"I do," Vaan nodded.

(That's awesome, my guy—I mean, Your Excellency! I didn't expect I would have the chance to converse with a human before becoming a Demigod-rank life form. Do you need a guide, Your Excellency? I might have given you directions, but you can still get lost. How about I lead you there?)

"Sure, if you are so willing to help. How nice of you."

(Hehe.)

The black mutant serpent was so eager to help that it became a little embarrassed after hearing Vaan's response.

However, it couldn't help but become even more friendly and subservient the longer it spent around Vaan. It felt very comfortable and happy, like a pure child who had never experienced life's cruelty and suffering.

Vaan saw no reason to decline its willing offer since he still had questions to ask it.

"Does the Black Serpent Clan have a connection to the Celestial Kingdom?" Vaan asked.

(Your Excellency knows about the Celestial Kingdom?)

The black mutant serpent couldn't help but look at Vaan in astonishment since the Celestial Kingdom was only ever known to the creatures of the sea.

Land-dwellers were mostly ignorant of its existence.

Nevertheless, the black mutant serpent quickly remembered it was supposed to answer all of Vaan's questions, so it didn't wait for his reply.

(This Lowly One wouldn't say the Black Serpent Clan has a connection to the Celestial Kingdom, Your Excellency. If there were one, it would just be the same as any other sea clans; we are just vassals or slaves, while the Celestial Kingdom is the true ruler of the Boundless Sea.)

"Oh? The Celestial Kingdom has such great influence over all the marine life in the Boundless Sea? How did it achieve such that?" Vaan asked with interest.

Given the Celestial Kingdom's advanced civilization, it might not be difficult for it to study and learn how to communicate with the various marine life in the Boundless Sea.

However, was the Celestial Kingdom's knowledge and power so great that it could even control the non-sentient species that only knew how to act on its most primal instincts?

(The Celestial Kingdom's dominance over the Boundless Sea is all due to the Ocean Master, Your Excellency. The Ocean Master is the most absolute being in this world. No one can violate his will.)

When the black mutant serpent mentioned the Ocean Master, its gaze was filled with both fear and awe. It was the same kind of gaze one would find in a blind worshipper.

Vaan took note of it.

Nevertheless, as the black mutant serpent happily led Vaan to its Black Serpent Clan's home, their group of two slowly increased as they ran into other black mutant serpents on the way.

The black mutant serpents all showed the same look of hostility when they saw Vaan.

However, their attitudes quickly changed all the same when they got close to him. It was like they had all seen the light or had their souls purified after coming into contact with his unique aura; they all acted like goody-two-shoes.

(Your Excellency, Can we also follow you?)



(Where do you come from, Your Excellency? How do you understand us so well?)

(Hm? But that's weird... How come we can also understand His Excellency's language? When did we learn about the human language?)

(Kekeke, it must be our spiritual wisdom awakening...!)

#### Chapter 955: Conqueror's Aura

Wherever Vaan went, the nearby black mutant serpents followed. Before long, Vaan arrived at the X-shaped crevasse on the ocean floor.

(Your Excellency, we have arrived at the entrance to our Black Serpent Clan.)

The group of Transcendent-rank black mutant serpents eagerly informed Vaan, oblivious to the potential threat they could be bringing to their home.

Nevertheless, Vaan had long erased the intention of eliminating the Black Serpent Clan from his mind. Given the Boundless Sea and Sky Aura's influence on the Black Serpent Clan, subjugating it would be more useful than exterminating it.

That said, Vaan also understood that the present level of his Boundless Sea and Sky Aura had limitations. While it could command non-sentient species, its effects against sentient life forms were greatly restricted.

As such, the leaders of the Black Serpent Clan, who had all likely awakened their spiritual wisdom, would be less inclined to the Boundless Sea and Sky Aura's influence if their loyalty to the Celestial Kingdom was strong.

Of course, Vaan didn't mind changing the hands of the Black Serpent Clan if its leaders were stubborn and didn't know any better.

"Who are the strongest members of your clan?" Vaan patiently inquired. He wasn't in a hurry to enter the Black Serpent Clan's den.

(The strongest members of our clan would be the clan leader and ten elders. Besides the clan leader, who has become a Divine Serpent, the ten elders are all Peak-stage Demigods, Your Excellency.)

Vaan was slightly surprised to learn the Black Serpent Clan actually had a Divine-rank life form leading it.

Moreover, none of the Demigod-rank mutant serpents he had slain were among the ranks of elders despite possessing such pure Golden Dragon Bloodline.

Did they have special statuses or the Golden Dragon Bloodline was just that common?

"How many Demigods are there in your clan? How many possess pure Golden Dragon Bloodline?" Vaan inquired further, only for the black mutant serpents to happily answer.

(As far as I am aware, there should be more than six hundred Demigods in the clan, and they all possess the pure Golden Dragon Bloodline to some extent, Your Excellency. If you are interested in the pure Golden Dragon Bloodline, I can show you where our clan procures it.)

Just as the black mutant serpent finished saying that, a powerful current of water rushed toward it with lightning-swiftness, threatening to tear it apart.

However, Vaan waved his hand, and another powerful water current was generated to clash with the opposing force. A violent wall of water was quickly formed, pulling in nearby creatures.

Fortunately, the force was not strong enough to drag the big bodies of the Transcendent-rank black mutant serpents before it dispersed.

Even so, the black mutant serpent who got targeted by the powerful water current felt infinite fear after escaping its potential death. The black mutant serpent didn't expect to be sentenced to death for having a loose mouth.

(Ungrateful Wretch! How dare you reveal our clan's secrets to a human! And all of you insolent juniors! How dare you lead an outsider into our home! Are you trying to rebel?!)

The furious scolding of an elderly serpent resounded as a Peak-stage Demigod-rank Gold-horned Mutant Serpent emerged from the X-shaped crevasse.

Its overbearing aura quickly suppressed all the Transcendent-rank black mutant serpents in the area. Everyone lowered their heads or looked away and didn't dare face the elder serpent directly.

Only Vaan dared to look.

"They were helping me and had been quite cooperative. Do you have a problem with that?" Vaan frowned.

After being in an authoritative position for thousands of years, the elder serpent didn't expect anyone to challenge him. As such, the elder serpent immediately singled him out with a glare.

Swish!

Two arrow-like jets of water were released from its large nostrils as the elder serpent exhaled deeply. Afterward, the elder serpent approached Vaan threateningly until it was in a position where it no longer looked up but down at him.

(Do I have a problem, you ask...?! Of course, I... don't have a problem with that! How could this Lowly One dare? Your disguise is very good, Ocean Master. However, if you want to test us, you should at least hide your aura.)

Once the elder serpent spoke, everyone became dumbfounded.

Not only did he undergo a 180-degree change in attitude, but his words were also very shocking.

What did the elder mean by Ocean Master? This human was the Ocean Master in disguise? Could he actually be?

The black mutant serpents wore looks of surprise and wonder.

Now that they thought about it, only the Ocean Master could make any hostile marine life docile in front of him without doing anything. The Ocean Master was also the only one who could understand any sea creature.

If the human wasn't the Ocean Master in disguise, how could he understand them and acquire their goodwill?

"I'm not the Ocean Master," Vaan coolly stated.

He saw no reason to impersonate the Ocean Master. While it might give him some advantage, it didn't serve his goal.

Why would the real owner pretend to be the thief?

Vaan had already suspected the Ocean Master was related to the other source of Boundless Sea and Sky Aura. After experiencing the Black Serpent Clan's various reactions, he became even more certain of it.

(Sure, Your Excellency. If you say so.)

The elder serpent voiced its acknowledgment. However, it wasn't actually convinced by Vaan's statement. Instead, it thought he was being stubborn and decided to play along.

However, Vaan wasn't interested in this game.

"No, I don't think you understand what I'm saying. I am not the Ocean Master," Vaan reiterated before declaring, "However, I will defeat the Ocean Master and become the true Ocean Master."

"What does the Black Serpent Clan think of this plan of mine? Do you all want to join my revolution or go against me?" Vaan asked.

(Ocean Master, you can quit joking...)

"I'm being very serious."

The elder serpent soon realized Vaan was completely serious and couldn't help but tremble with great shock, fear, anxiety, and excitement at the same time.

Throughout history, the Celestial Kingdom has always ruled the ocean with an iron grip. Although the old Ocean Master would be replaced with a new one, they had always been part of the Celestial Kingdom.

However, now someone outside the Celestial Kingdom has also come in possession of the Conqueror's Aura.

The Boundless Sea was about to undergo huge changes!

Chapter 956: Black Serpent Clan's Allegiance

(Your Excellency, I can't make such an important decision on behalf of our Black Serpent Clan. Please follow me to meet our clan leader and other elders.)

After recovering from its shock, the elder serpent humbly gestured for Vaan to follow it into the X-shaped crevasse, which was like an entrance to the domain of death. The dark abyss was quite a contrast to the gentle white glow of the sandy ocean floor.

If it were anyone else, entering the Black Serpent Clan's den would pose a greater danger.

But to Vaan, this danger was almost non-existent.

After Vaan entered the X-shaped crevasse, he found the Black Serpent Clan's den to be much bigger than he had imagined.

He could see that it had expanded countless folds since the Black Serpent Clan moved into it, which was also understandable considering the mutant size of its members.

Nevertheless, he was curious why the Black Serpent Clan picked such a spot for its den.

Did it possess something special?

"Welcome, Your Excellency. We are honored to be graced by your venerated presence," the black serpent leader greeted humbly in the human tongue.

Despite being the clan leader of the Black Serpent Clan and a First-stage Divine-rank life form, it did not display a shred of arrogance or pride in front of Vaan. Instead, it showed wisdom and patience.

"I already have an understanding of what happened outside, Your Excellency. You wish to recruit us and lead a revolution against the Celestial Kingdom, correct?" the black serpent leader asked.

"That's right," Vaan calmly nodded, seemingly unconcerned.

However, the expression and movements of the ten thousand black mutant serpents in the den were all under his indirect observation.

When Vaan gave his answer, the quiet den erupted with busy discussions as the black mutant serpents chatted with each other. Due to Vaan's presence, many black mutant serpents spoke favorably, while others expressed their concerns.

Very few were against the idea of overturning the Celestial Kingdom.

(Isn't this a chance for our Black Serpent Clan to be liberated from the Celestial Kingdom's control? Those Nauticans have been too much in the past several hundred years.)

(Right. Who do those Nauticans think they are? Just because they share the same origins as the Ocean Master, they believe they are entitled to the same worship and treatment?)

(Well said! I have never liked those blue skins, to begin with! I never thought I would get a chance to voice my discontent today! Those blue-skinned bastards don't even care about our interests and only see us as their slaves.)

(You are all looking at this matter too simply. There has never been more than one being with the Conqueror's Aura in history. A clash between two beings with the Conqueror's Aura isn't something we can participate in.)

(Elder Nakha is right. We cannot resist the Conqueror's Aura. If we blindly throw ourselves into the conflict, it will not be a pretty sight; we might be forced to attack friends and foes alike. Our losses will definitely be disastrous.)

(How is anyone supposed to fight in such a war? Won't all sea creatures be reduced to mere pawns and played to death in the contest between two beings with the Conqueror's Aura?)

(Alas, even if we don't want to join, we have to satisfy His Excellency. We can't go against his Conqueror's Aura. We will only suffer for nothing.)

When such words were spoken, every elder serpent agreed without hesitation.

Only Demigod-rank sentient beings and above could resist the Conqueror's Aura to some extent. It would be a great tragedy if they had to butcher their weaker kin for survival.

"Your Excellency, are you confident in defeating the Ocean Master?" the black serpent leader inquired carefully.

"How strong is the Ocean Master?" Vaan casually asked, adding, "Do any of you know?"

After hearing that, the black serpent leader instantly felt terrible, thinking they were all fucked.

The person with the Conqueror's Aura wanted to challenge the Ocean Master and the Celestial Kingdom but didn't even know how strong they were. If this wasn't foolishness, then he didn't know what was.

There should be a limit to arrogance.

"The Ocean Master's true strength has never been known since they have only ever needed to use their Conqueror's Aura, Your Excellency. However, only Divine Knights in the Celestial Kingdom can become the Ocean Master," the black serpent leader answered regardless.

"I see," Vaan calmly nodded.

Considering the Ocean Master was such an important position in the Celestial Kingdom, only the strongest Divine Knight would be qualified to inherit it.

In other words, the Celestial Kingdom didn't have anyone at the Divine Lord level. Its strongest was only a potential Peak-stage Divine Knight.

"The Ocean Master can't beat me," Vaan nonchalantly declared before adding, "I won't need your clan to fight the Celestial Kingdom either. I just need your clan to be my eyes and ears and provide me with information."

The black serpent leader and the elders couldn't help but look at each other and see the same incredulity in their eyes.

Vaan's conditions were far better than they had imagined. In fact, they were so good that they found it hard to believe.

"Won't you need an army to fight with against the Ocean Master and the Celestial Kingdom, Your Excellency?" the black serpent leader doubted.

"It's okay. I already have a better army," Vaan smiled mysteriously.

It was also questionable whether he would even need to rely on his private army of Death Eaters. The Divine Lord Death Eater alone was enough to bring the Ocean Master to his knees.

Vaan figured his biggest challenge was guarding against the Celestial Kingdom's attacks.

Its hidden cities could be anywhere, and they could engage in guerilla tactics. While they couldn't hurt him, they could hurt those around him.

As such, he wasn't interested in dragging out this potential war.

If he could take down the Ocean Master and locate all the hidden cities simultaneously, he could force the Celestial Kingdom into a passive position.

As such, it was also better to subjugate the marine clans in the inner sea. They would serve as a layer of protection to the land by keeping an eye out for the Celestial Kingdom's movements.

It was much better than sacrificing their lives in a big battle.



Although the black serpent leader and elders had doubts about Vaan's claim, the Black Serpent Clan had already been won over.

"All members of the Black Serpent Clan, listen up! From today onwards, we shall serve... Ahem, what did you say your name was again, Your Excellency?" the black serpent leader asked with embarrassment.

Chapter 957: Vaan's Compensation

"Vaan Raphna."

"All members of the Black Serpent Clan, listen up! From today onwards, we shall serve His Excellency, Lord Vaan! Lord Vaan will be the only true Ocean Master our clan recognizes!"

Shortly after Vaan gave his name, the black serpent leader decisively swore his clan's allegiance to him.

(Long live Lord Vaan!)

(Long live the true Ocean Master!)

Although some were slightly baffled by the black serpent leader's choice of words, they soon realized the implications upon further thought.

The symbol of the Celestial Kingdom's Ocean Master had always been an azure trident. It was also the azure trident that possessed the Conqueror's Aura.

However, Vaan's Conqueror's Aura came from himself.

As such, between the two Ocean Masters, it wasn't hard to consider who was the legitimate ruler of the Boundless Seas. It was like the difference between inheriting the position and borning for it.

Nevertheless, Vaan felt slightly guilty after obtaining the Black Serpent Clan's loyalty.

"I've killed nine Demigods from your clan. You won't hold a grudge over that?" Vaan asked curiously.

The black serpent leader was astonished but then quickly replied, "My Lord, you have the Conqueror's Aura and have the right to rule the sea. If you had to kill them, it must mean they deserved to die."

"That's right, Your Excellency. No one in the clan will resent you for their deaths," an elder black serpent added.

Although no one knew what happened, they only felt fortunate that the rest of the clan wasn't implicated. As such, instead of feeling pity, they would even blame the nine Demigods were fools for offending the true Ocean Master.

"You don't want to know why they died?" Vaan asked as he stared at the black serpents thoughtfully.

However, no one dared to meet his gaze. They all lowered their heads.

"If you want to share the events to satisfy our curiosity, then no one will refuse, my Lord. However, if you are unwilling to divulge, then no one will dare to make the demand either," the black serpent leader said carefully.

"My woman has the awakened Golden Dragon Bloodline," Vaan stated.

Once those words were spoken, the entire Black Serpent Clan trembled with shock and realization. It wasn't difficult to guess the general situation after hearing awakened Golden Dragon Bloodline.

Nevertheless, no one could hide their astonishment.

They had long given up on the Golden Dragon Bloodline being awakened. Thus, they didn't expect anyone to achieve it.

Was the true Ocean Master involved in making it possible?

When the black serpents had this thought, the deaths of the nine Demigods did not weaken their loyalty but strengthened it instead.

"Those nine Demigods deserved death, my Lord," the black serpents stated.

"Nevertheless, it doesn't change the fact that your clan has lost nine Demigods. As the first marine clan to serve me, I should give your clan a celebration gift to commemorate this occasion, not owe you," Vaan said.

"We are honored by your kind intentions, my Lord. Your words are more than enough," the black serpent leader said.

However, Vaan shook his head and said, "I have already decided to give your clan a blessing. You are the first marine clan to join me; you can't be weak either. Do you trust me?"

"We can die for you, my Lord," the black serpent leader said honestly.

All marine life existed to serve the one with the Conqueror's Aura. To be able to serve a respectable Ocean Master would be their greatest honor.

"I don't need you to die for me; I need you to live for me," Vaan corrected before ordering the black serpent leader, "Cut yourself and draw out the Golden Dragon Bloodline."

The black serpent leader was immediately startled. However, decisiveness shortly replaced his hesitation.

Puchi!

The black serpent leader bit into itself, tearing open a gaping wound. Red blood with a hint of gold poured out in streams.

Under the alarmed gazes of the black serpents, Vaan immediately extracted all of the pure golden dragon blood essence mixed in the black serpent blood.

What he did next was considered an experiment.

He refined the golden dragon blood essences with the Everlasting Blood Refining Art, drawing out their latent potential. The golden dragon blood essence was refined into golden dragon origin blood.

Afterward, he forced all the newly-refined golden dragon origin blood back into the black serpent leader's body.

At the same time, he also borrowed Emerald's power and sent a stream of life energy to strengthen the golden dragon origin blood in the black serpent leader's body.

Ideally, he should have used the primordial energy he could acquire from decomposing the world with the Nihilism Law. However, since he didn't have any primordial energy, he relied on life energy.

The life energy from the Profound Pearl of Life was also a type of primordial energy from the beginning of the universe. Furthermore, it had evolutionary properties. Thus, it wasn't necessarily worse than the primordial energy called Grandmist.

Nevertheless, once the already stimulated golden dragon origin blood in the black serpent leader's body received further stimulation from the life energy, it felt like it was on fire.

Every drop of golden dragon origin blood was like a miniature sun, producing an incredible amount of heat energy and affecting everything around it.

While it brought a lot of pain to the black serpent leader, the black serpent leader also couldn't help but feel excited. After all, the hot energy was activating every cell in its body and transforming it.

(Clan Leader?!)

Many black serpents grew restless and concerned as they watched the black serpent leader's squirmish agony.

Nevertheless, they could only watch on.

Over time, their concerns slowly changed to surprise, then finally settling for pure shock and astonishment.

Not only did the black serpent leader's black scales turn golden, but he also grew two additional gold horns on his head; they looked like a pair of eyebrows, making his eyes seem sharper.

His divine aura also became much stronger—from First-stage Divine Warrior, his power rose to Sixth-stage Divine Warrior.

"This is... bloodline awakening?!"

The elder serpents were all dumbfounded before staring at Vaan with glittering gazes full of excitement and desire.

Nevertheless, Vaan seemed a little unsatisfied with the results.

It only made sense for the extraordinary methods and extraordinary resources to also create extraordinary results.

However, Golden Dragon Pangea had only been a Rank 8 Divine Lord at the end of the day.

There was a limit to the benefits one could gain from her golden dragon bloodline.

Chapter 958: Collecting Intel

The black serpent leader had already been a First-stage Divine Warrior prior to the bloodline awakening. Thus, his improvement wouldn't be as huge as a Demigod or Transcendent achieving it.

Nevertheless, for a First-stage Divine Warrior to advance to Sixth-stage Divine Warrior in one go was nothing short of a miracle for the black serpents.

After all, their Black Serpent Bloodline had never been strong, to begin with. If it were, the black serpents wouldn't have needed to rely on the Golden Dragon Bloodline.

In fact, if they had not encountered the pure Golden Dragon Bloodline by chance and raised a few Demigod-rank life forms, their Black Serpent Clan would have never dominated the Western Sea.

Even the black serpent leader reaching First-stage Divine Warrior was considered a miracle.

The pure golden dragon blood could only improve the black serpent's physique and power to a certain extent. Without higher compatibility or bloodline awakening, too much golden dragon blood would become poison.

"Is this really my strength?" the black serpent leader was dazed.

Despite sensing the incredible vitality coursing through his body, he still couldn't believe his divine body would leap five stages with a single bloodline awakening. His blood also flowed more smoothly, and it was so much easier to draw strength from his divine body.

The weakness of the Black Serpent Bloodline had been mostly replaced by the advantages of the superior Golden Dragon Bloodline.

The black serpent leader could no longer be considered a Gold-horned Mutant Serpent after receiving his bloodline awakening; he was now a Gold-scaled Dragon-Serpent.

While he wasn't completely freed from the serpent bloodline, he could be considered a dragon.

"Congratulations on your successful bloodline awakening, Clan Leader!" the elder serpents and clan members praised with excitement.

The envy could also be seen in their eyes.

"Thank you for this invaluable blessing, my Lord! The Black Serpent Clan is forever in your debt!" the black serpent leader said with heartfelt gratitude.

With his first bloodline awakening, his future descendants would also enjoy the benefits of the Gold-scaled Dragon-Serpent Bloodline. If he could also partner up with another Gold-scaled Dragon-Serpent, their clan's future would be secured and not decline.

Nevertheless, that would also mean the Black Serpent Bloodline would eventually disappear.

Although the Black Serpent Bloodline could also evolve, the difficulty was much higher than adopting a superior bloodline. As such, the Black Serpent Clan couldn't be blamed for choosing the easy way forward.

Not everyone was blessed with the wisdom and resources to challenge the more difficult road.

"It's too early to thank me," Vaan calmly smiled.

Although he was slightly disappointed in the ancestral potential of the Golden Dragon Bloodline, he couldn't argue with the results. At the very least, the experiment had been successful.

The Everlasting Blood Refining Art was indeed capable of stimulating bloodline awakenings.

After Vaan helped the ten elder serpents achieve bloodline awakening as well, the Black Serpent Clan welcomed the addition of ten Divine-rank life forms. The strongest of the dragon-serpent elders became Fourth-stage Divine Warriors and the weakest were at least Third-stage Divine Warriors.

The Black Serpent Clan's strength had soared to an unprecedented peak.

However, it was still inferior to the behemoth known as the Celestial Kingdom. Even so, the Black Serpent Clan had become absolutely loyal to Vaan after his benevolent act.

At the same time, those who did not receive the blessing of bloodline awakening became extremely motivated to serve Vaan. They figured that if they could serve Vaan diligently, they would also have a chance of receiving the blessing of bloodline awakening.

Meanwhile, Vaan became confident in the bloodline awakening procedure after sufficient practice.

Once we returned, he could also help the others improve their strengths via bloodline awakening.

Nevertheless, Vaan wasn't too sure about helping Astoria raise her bloodline purity and achieve a second awakening. If he had to ride a giant lizard in the future, his feelings would certainly be complicated.

Sometime after the excitement in the Black Serpent Clan died down, everyone returned to serious business.

"The Black Serpent Clan has ruled over the Western Sea for several hundred thousand years, but our control over such a large body of water isn't actually that strong. However, now that our clan's strength has improved immensely, we should be able to strengthen it and expand our surveillance," the dragon-serpent leader said.

"How much do you know about the Celestial Kingdom? Do you know the location of its cities?" Vaan asked.

"We actually don't know too much about the Celestial Kingdom, my Lord. Usually, it's the Nauticans who reach out to us; we can't look for them," the dragon-serpent leader replied apologetically before adding, "However, we have heard a lot of rumors from other marine life under our rule over the years."

"As such, while we don't know the precise location, we believe one of the Celestial Kingdom's settlements might be situated somewhere on the border that divides the inner and outer seas."

"That said, we also can't be too certain. Generally, marine life tends to avoid the border," the dragon-serpent leader added.

"Why is that?" Vaan asked. The topic piqued his interest.

"I can't say for the other marine life, but for our clan, it's an instinctive behavior towards danger. The Outer Sea isn't a forgiving place for weak life forms, my Lord. Even I do not dare to venture into that black sea," the dragon-serpent leader stated.

"I see," Vaan uttered thoughtfully.

If even a Divine-rank life form didn't dare to venture into the Outer Sea, then it must be a truly dangerous place.

However, Vaan couldn't help but wonder.

Was the toxicity of that unpurified sea truly that lethal? Or were the sea monsters that were able to thrive in that place simply powerful?

Being powerful and non-sentient was a dangerous combination, but being powerful and sentient was an even more dangerous combination.

Ultimately, the Outer Sea was just not a place for the weak to survive. Such was the law of the jungle. It was the survival of the fittest.



That said, Vaan couldn't help but think about Gehenna's Darksea Abyss Territory when he thought about the Boundless Sea's outer region.

Did they have a connection? Or was the black sea just a coincidence?

"Let us put aside the Celestial Kingdom's matter for now," Vaan changed the subject as he asked, "How many other marine clans rule the Inner Sea?"

Chapter 959: Dragon Vein

"We don't have much contact with the marine clans of the other inner sea regions. However, eight marine clans are ruling the Inner Sea, one for each of the eight seas."

"Among the eight seas, we do know our neighbor, the Emperor Crab Clan, rules the Northwestern Sea, and our other neighbor, the Fighting Dolphin Clan, rules the Southwestern Sea."

"If you seek to visit them, this subordinate suggests you choose the Fighting Dolphin Clan first, my Lord. The Fighting Dolphins are much more reasonable than the Emperor Crabs."

As Vaan listened to the dragon-serpent leader's explanation, he soon grasped the nature of the Emperor Crab Clan and Fighting Dolphin Clan.

The Emperor Crab Clan was a highly aggressive crustacean species due to its voracious appetite. Not only could they grow countless times larger than their earliest ancestors, but they also ate anything and everything, including their own kind.

The Emperor Crab Clan didn't have high battle power.

However, its fearsomeness lies in its powerful defense and frightening numbers—The Emperor Crabs were numerous to the point that there were no other marine clans in its sea region, only crustacean clans.

The Black Serpent Clan had constant friction with the Emperor Crab Clan due to its tendency to encroach on the territories of other ruling marine clans.

On the other hand, the Fighting Dolphin Clan was highly intelligent, perhaps even one of the most intelligent marine species in the Boundless Sea. Moreover, it was said to have a pretty amicable relationship with land-dwellers.

As such, Vaan should have an easier time speaking to the Fighting Dolphin Clan.

Nevertheless, the Fighting Dolphin Clan's intelligence and its good history of helping land-dwellers were no reason to believe in its friendliness blindly.

After all, the Fighting Dolphins were apex predators; they were even considered the bullies of the sea. As such, while they could be friendly, they could also be quite cruel if offended or agitated.

Fortunately, Vaan didn't need to have such concerns due to the Boundless Sea and Sky Aura.

Since the Southwestern Sea was also closer to the Southern Sea, where the other source of the Boundless Sea and Sky Aura was detected, it was also aligned with his objectives.

As such, Vaan saw no reason to refuse the dragon-serpent leader's suggestion.

"By the way, where does your clan get such pure Golden Dragon Blood from?" Vaan suddenly asked.

When this question was raised, all the members of the Black Serpent Clan hesitated to answer for a moment. After all, the Golden Dragon Blood was directly related to the prosperity of their clan.

However, it was still inconsequential to the grace they had received from Vaan not long ago. As such, they quickly recovered and resolved themselves. Even if Vaan wanted all of their Golden Dragon Blood, they would gladly offer it.

The Gold-scaled Dragon-Serpent Bloodline was now more important.

"My Lord, our clan harvests the pure Golden Dragon Blood from the Dragon Vein hidden deep in the earth," the dragon-serpent leader answered before offering, "If you are interested, I can show you where it is."

"Alright," Vaan nodded, seeing no reason to refuse.

Even if he didn't plan to take all of the pure Golden Dragon Blood from the Black Serpent Clan, he was still interested in learning more about the so-called Dragon Vein.

"Very well. Then, please follow me, my Lord," the dragon-serpent leader personally volunteered to be Vaan's guide.

Shortly after, they both left the den of the Black Serpent and headed in the direction of the mainland.

At roughly 300 nautical miles off the coast of the Divine Serpent Empire, Vaan and the dragon-serpent leader arrived at a region with large spires on the ocean floor. Dozens of black mutant serpents patrolled its perimeters.

Evidently, it was an important location.

Nevertheless, the black mutant serpents all made way for Vaan and the dragon-serpent leader after offering their respectful greetings while holding back the shock in their eyes.

They couldn't believe how much their clan leader had changed in a short time; he had become so much more powerful and imposing since they last saw him the other day.

"The Dragon Vein lies at the end of this long sea tunnel, my Lord," the dragon-serpent leader introduced.

In front of Vaan was a large cave entrance with a slight descending slope that led all the way into the Divine Serpent Empire's subterranean region. When he entered, he found the long tunnel to branch out into countless large caves.

The entire underground area leading to the Dragon Vein seemed even larger than the Black Serpent Clan's den.

Thousands of young black mutant serpents could also be found inside, performing various activities, including slumbering, learning, and sparring. Clearly, this place was where the Black Serpent Clan raised its young elites.

(Uhh... Was that the Clan Leader passing by just now? When did the Clan Leader have such pretty golden scales?)

(Don't just look at his appearance; didn't you sense his divine aura? I can't even tell how much more powerful he had become!)

(Who is that human by the Clan Leader's side? Why do I find him so pleasant to look at?)

(Could it be an important person from the Celestial Kingdom?)

(What? That can't be... He has pale skin. He should be a land-dwelling human... But why did the Clan Leader bring such a human here?)

Various discussions broke out among the younger generations of the Black Serpent Clan. Whether it was Vaan or the dragon-serpent leader, they both attracted great attention.

Nevertheless, no one obstructed their path. As such, they reached the Dragon Vein's location smoothly.

"This is where we harvest Golden Dragon Blood, my Lord," the dragon-serpent leader informed.

The earthen tunnels of the Dragon Vein were still completely submerged in seawater and extended to seemingly no end. It was as if the Dragon Vein covered the entire continent's deep subterranean region.

Small traces of golden dragon blood could be spotted drifting through the seawater.

Vaan quickly understood the Dragon Vein was Pangea's actual system of blood vessels, and the openings were how the golden dragon blood flowed out and purified the Inner Sea.

No one had ever discovered the Dragon Vein because it existed so much deeper underground.

Furthermore, it was completely submerged in seawater, yet the golden dragon blood miraculously retained its purity; it didn't get thinned out from seawater dilution.

Vaan couldn't help but wonder how far the Black Serpent Clan had explored into the Dragon Vein.

The Dragon Vein was like a separate world of its own.

Chapter 960: Blame the Celestial Kingdom

As Vaan stared into the dark depths of the Dragon Vein, which was slightly illuminated by the faint traces of golden dragon blood aimlessly drifting through the water, black mutant serpents occasionally emerged from within.

Although the black mutant serpents were all dumbfounded and shocked by Vaan and the dragon-serpent leader's presence, they only offered their brief respects before moving on.

At their level, they didn't dare impose on whatever business the Clan Leader had in the Dragon Vein. As such, they could only look for other clan members in the spire region to satisfy their curiosity.

Nevertheless, based on Vaan's observation, the Black Serpent Clan didn't have much of a restriction on its clan members' entry to the Dragon Vein.

It seemed anyone could enter and harvest golden dragon blood if they were capable.

"Has your clan fully explored the Dragon Vein?" Vaan casually asked.

"Haha..." the dragon-serpent leader gave a dry laugh in response before saying, "As much as we would like to, it's not that easy, my Lord. The Dragon Vein has its own dangers."

"Oh? What kind of dangers are there in the Dragon Vein?" Vaan casually smiled with curiosity.

"The deeper one ventures inside the Dragon Vein, the stronger the water pressure and density. The water pressure itself isn't too much of a problem. However, there aren't many life forms that can resist the water density, my Lord," the dragon-serpent leader mentioned.

"In the Dragon Vein's deeper layers, breathing in fluid water becomes as difficult as trying to breathe in adhesive-covered ice; not only is it heavy and sticky, but also harder to expel from the body."

"It's almost impossible to extract oxygen from it. If too much high-density water is breathed into the body, death by suffocation will be the only outcome unless timely rescue is received," the dragon-serpent leader stated.

After listening to the dragon-serpent leader's explanation, Vaan stared inside the Dragon Vein with increasing fascination and interest.

"So, how far has your clan actually explored, Sutu?" Vaan asked.

"Personally, I have only reached the fifth layer. Any further, and the water density and golden dragon blood content become too much for me to handle, my Lord," Dragon-Serpent Leader Sutu answered honestly.

"I see," Vaan uttered with understanding.

Extracting oxygen from the water in the deeper layers of the Dragon Vein was a problem, but poisoning from high golden dragon blood content was also another hidden danger.

"It seems no one has fully explored the Dragon Vein, then?" Vaan mused.

"I can't say much for the other ruling marine clans, but if their Dragon Vein's situation is anything like ours, then they should have encountered the same problem, my Lord," Dragon-Serpent Leader Sutu replied.

There was never a shortage of golden dragon blood.

However, due to the excessive harvesting of golden dragon blood from the Dragon Vein over the years, there was hardly any golden dragon blood left in the safer layers.

If one wanted to obtain a substantial amount of golden dragon blood, entering the deeper layers was the only way. However, doing so was also not much different from entering the jaws of death.

Even Dragon-Serpent Leader Sutu could hardly collect enough golden dragon blood for his clan's needs.

However, now that he had become a Gold-scaled Dragon-Serpent at Sixth-stage Divine Warrior, it might be possible for him to challenge the Dragon Vein's deeper layers.

"Interesting," Vaan uttered thoughtfully.

Based on Dragon-Serpent Leader Sutu's information, the Dragon Vein's deeper layers didn't seem all that dangerous to him.

After all, he had ways to ward off the high golden dragon blood content. He also had his own oxygen tank and didn't need to breathe water like marine life forms.

Did the marine clans have no special methods to guard against such dangers?

Dragon-Serpent Leader Sutu seemed to have sensed Vaan's doubt, so he quickly explained, "At the deeper layers, unpredictable changes also exist, my Lord."

"The Dragon Vein experiences sporadic surges of water current in the sixth layer and beyond. No one has ever been able to calculate its unpredictable nature. For this reason, no one dares to challenge the sixth layer anymore."

"We have lost a good number of clan members to the sixth layer in the past. Anyone caught in the water surge would be instantly incapacitated, which is not much different from a death sentence," Dragon-Serpent Leader Sutu stated.

Despite saying that much, Vaan's interest did not wane. In fact, it only grew further.

Seeing how he was so interested in Dragon Vein, Dragon-Serpent Leader Sutu suddenly recalled something he might enjoy learning about.

"My Lord, did you know? Legend says a ninth sea exists in the heart of the Dragon Vein – A golden sea of just golden dragon blood. Alas, I don't think we will ever find out if it's true or not," Dragon-Serpent Leader Sutu mentioned with a soft sigh.

It was a pity that no one could access such a treasured sea if it existed.

"That may not be the case, Sutu," Vaan thought differently.

Wouldn't the Celestial Kingdom possess the knowledge and technology to overcome the dangers of the Dragon Vein?

Furthermore, if the Celestial Kingdom knew about the Dragon Vein, it had no reason to ignore such valuable resources.

Vaan believed the Celestial Kingdom had already established a big base in the heart of the Dragon Vein and had a monopoly on the golden dragon blood.

Otherwise, the Celestial Kingdom wouldn't have allowed the eight ruling marine clans to enjoy the benefits of the golden dragon blood.

The Celestial Kingdom didn't care about the leftover crumbs after taking the big cake.

"There's a high chance the Celestial Kingdom is occupying the heart of the Dragon Vein. The unpredictable water surges in the deeper layers might also be the Celestial Kingdom's doing to keep others out," Vaan speculated.

"If that is truly the case, this Celestial Kingdom is truly a vile existence, my Lord," Dragon-Serpent Leader Sutu said gloomily after being stunned by Vaan's speculation.

He felt anger boiling up inside him just by thinking about the possibility.

After all, the Celestial Kingdom had already occupied the absolute position and lorded over the Boundless Sea. The Ocean Master only needed to give the word, and no marine clan would dare to enter the Dragon Vein.

Did it need to drive so many innocent and talented members of the eight ruling marine clans to their deaths all this time?

"Truly vile, indeed," Vaan nodded with a smile.



Although he wasn't completely sure if the Celestial Kingdom was responsible for the unpredictable water surge, it wasn't difficult to pin the blame on it.

Knowing the Celestial Kingdom's selfishness was enough for Vaan to understand that they couldn't share the same world. Their clash over different values and ideals was inevitable.

Humans could hardly tolerate each other, so how could two different human civilizations tolerate each other?