

Thief 571

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Chapter 571: Secrets from Fifth Imperial Demon Prince

However, when Freya told Ronan to disable that barrier in his mind, what came out of Ronan's mouth was entirely out of Ace and Freya's expectations.

He revealed with a depressed tone, "I-I can't break the Imperial Soul Seal on my Knowledge Sea."

"What Imperial Soul Seal?" Freya's squinted her eyes.

"When a member of the Imperial Demon Family is born, they are baptized in the Demon Temple. After that, we got the Deity Baphomet's blessing, and this Imperial Soul Seal was also placed within our minds by the Deity Baphomet.

"As long as someone tried to use soul search on us, they will be attacked by Divine Lightening of Deity Baphomet and turn into ashes. This is the blessing only Imperial Demon Family enjoy!" Ronan told one of the core secrets of the Imperial Demon Family!

Ace was astounded when he heard this unexpected answer, "So, you're saying that Baphomet is real?"

Although everyone knew that demons worshiped Baphomet and had its statues all over the continent, the Imperial Demon Family even used it as an imperial emblem.

But no one had ever thought that Baphomet was genuine and could even interact with and bestow blessings on imperials.

"Answer him!" Freya also wanted to know since a Deity was involved.

Because in her mind, they were also getting help from a goddess, so it wasn't impossible for someone else to get it. She was even more interested in knowing if the Thief God was more powerful or the Demon Deity, Baphomet!

Ronan pulled a bitter expression as he replied, "I-I don't know if Baphomet is real or not since we were never allowed to enter the Demon Temple again. But according to Empress Mother, Baphomet is real, and it resides in the Demon Temple and blesses our race!"

Ace's heart turned cold when he heard this since it was too big of a shock because if it was true, he might as well just hand himself over to the demons instead of going into the temple to court death!

"Um... system, could there be a real god in this world?" Ace could only ask the system for confirmation because Ronan's reply was quite subtle, and he believed the system more than anything in this world.

"[Mortal Sky Heaven is Godless.]"

It was a simple static reply that made Ace considerably calm down and feel relieved since he didn't know what he would do if some goat face deity were living in the demon continent!

He might've even considered dropping everything and fleeing!

"It seemed the Demon Race had many secrets," Freya commented coldly, but there was fear in her voice because she had been planning her sweet revenge on the demon race for a long time.

But it appeared they were not easy to trifle with, and she now also knew the concept of God wasn't just a myth.

Ace's calm voice rang again, "So, as long as we don't try to search your soul, you could reveal anything?"

Since he got the system's confirmation, he wasn't worried anymore, and he mused it might be some sham place by the demon race to make others apprehensive of them.

Or they won't be NO.2 if they had a deity in their backyard.

"Yes!" Ronan replied in affirmation which made Ace relieved.

Although he couldn't get Ronan's memories, as long as Ronan told him everything, he wasn't worried much, and as an Evil Seed, he was ultimately in Freya's control!

"It seems I'll be here for quite some time." Freya giggled meaningfully since Ronan won't answer Ace's questions sincerely without her.

"Alright, I know you also wanted to know the Imperial Demon Family's secrets. I don't mind; you can have your way. Just collect everything and then tell me. It would be much easier for me as well." Ace agreed since he could easily hear everything in his thief's space, so it didn't matter if Freya was there or not.

Afterward, Ace sent Noa back to the thief's house at her own request because she wanted to enter seclusion and become strong. She felt pressured after watching the latecomers overtake her without even realizing it.

Ace had a vague idea about what Noa was thinking, but he didn't say anything. He knew it would only make her miserable if he said something he shouldn't.

However, Cyrus also joined Freya and Ronan on his own accord, he has never come in contact with anything, and he didn't even see Ace yet.

So, the little guy was quite curious, and Ace let him mingle with Freya and let her teach him their common language, so he doesn't have difficulty communicating the next time.

Freya quickly agreed because she was also curious about Cyrus since it could suppress them all, so she wanted to know how Ace got it and from where.

An hour passed when the dining room was finally opened, and Ronan walked out, giving the two henchmen a startle.

Nevertheless, they quickly greeted him. Albeit they didn't know what Ronan was doing in there for an hour, they didn't dare to distrust him again.

They both were core grade students from Poison Wood and Nightmare Demon Clans, and their names were Nathanael and Byron.

They were following Ronan from their first grade and had already reaped many benefits because of it.

Ronan was also quite cunning and took full advantage of his identity. He always had others sign a soul contract so others couldn't betray him, and that's how the Secret Supreme Alliance was born.

From Ronan, Ace discovered that every member of the Secret Supreme Alliance was loyal to him like a slave. There was a total of 14 members, and all of them were from Core Grade Classes!

But this fact didn't know to others, and those who knew about this alliance only thought of it as an institute alliance established by him, and neither did they dare to mess with him because of his identity.

Ace finally discovered why Archie was selected for the arrogant prince's alliance.

It turned out Ronan had no intention of accepting Archie because he was only subpar in his eyes; heck, he didn't even know who Archie was because he was only interested in core grade students who could become his secret force in the future.

Archie was arranged to enter by the Housemaster Bodach. The latter promised Ronan that as long as he gave Archie some help when he entered the imperial domain, he would support him in the institute.

Ronan's alliance was always fighting with his Fourth Imperial Brother, Cassius's Alliance, in the Soul Assassin House for resources. They always tried to suppress each other, and Cassius was a little stronger.

So, Ronan didn't let this chance slide by and accepted Bodach's offer to help Archie as much as he could in the imperial domain.

But the cunning prince couldn't just let Archie out of his grasp since Bodach asked him personally then. This means Archie was quite important to him. It became even more apparent when Jefferson, who was none other than Clouse, came into the picture.

So, he decided to make Archie his slave here and now so he could use him as a spy and even lure Clouse to his side.

But he was just too hastily, and since this method always worked, he decided to be done with it.

Alas, he encountered Ace instead, and now... he, himself, had become a slave!

Ace was quite stunned when he found Bodach and Clouse involved in this, and he felt even more strange because those two were just helping Archie, not harming him.

If they knew about Ronan's true colors, they might not even think of him to seek.

Ace guessed that they wanted Archie to become one of the core members of the soul assassin house since he had already experienced their 'care,' and now Winter will receive the rest of it.

Winter had also successfully fooled Clouse with Ace's help and was in Archie's student mansion right now.

Now, Ace was free to move on to the next step of his plan: to leave the royal demon institute and enter the Imperial Domain as Ronan!

Nathanael, who had a skinny physique and listless face, asked at this moment, "Your Highness, did it go well?"

Byron, who had a hefty build, looked at Ronan eagerly.

They both knew why Ronan sent Clouse out.

Clouse was once invited by Ronan to join his side but was rejected mercilessly, so those henchmen and Ronan didn't have a good impression of him.

That guy didn't even give them a face just because his status was higher than theirs in the institute.

This naturally made everyone, including Ronan, unhappy, yet they could do nothing since Clouse was too powerful for them and had Bodach's absolute support.

The Imperials were also not allowed to bring their guardians to the institute, or there would be no difference between them and the students. These fifty years were tempering for the imperials so they could rely little on their statuses.

Ronan's cold voice rang, "What do you think?"

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Chapter 572: Meeting with Bodach!

After that day, nothing out of the ordinary happened.

As days passed, the students who were still undergoing their annual assessments started to return to their districts as the day of the yearly assembly drew near, marking the start of a new year.

Archie (Winter) continued to train in the royal tower, and Ronan (Ace) returned to his quarters in the Soul Assassin Royal Tower and remained there without drawing any attention.

Bodach also got the full report about Archie's encounter with Ronan from Clouse and found something wrong.

But according to Archie, the prince just made him take an oath of never betraying the alliance, which was a regular thing, so they couldn't find fault with Ronan and could only let it go.

Furthermore, after coming back, Archie (Winter) showed even more terrifying comprehension abilities and learned everything they taught at a tremendous pace.

As for how Winter, who was a martial cultivator, could learn soul skills and release soul attacks, it was all thanks to her Second Innate Ability, Faceless Reality!

...

2. Faceless Reality

[Description: According to Faceless Thief's will, the Qi and Aura (Like Soul Qi, or Elements, and Racial Aura and such) could change into any reality!]

[Limitation: The observer would sense and see an illusion-like reality as long as their cultivation is not two realms above Faceless Thief!]

...

That was why Ace wanted her to take the role of Archie because her disguising skills were too exceptional, and he was the most envious of Winter's abilities!

As for Ace himself, he didn't dare to move around too carelessly until he got all the essential information from Ronan.

Albeit, Ronan was now Freya's evil seed, and they could just use the real person like a puppet, but the problem was Ace couldn't enter the living thief's space, or he would be the first one to agree with this choice.

Furthermore, even he disguised himself as Ronan's henchman and then pulled the real Ronan's strings and had Ronan take him to the Imperial Domain.

The problem was that no one could enter there without permission from the domains except for Imperials!

Even the servants or supporters weren't allowed no matter who they were, and they had to register and then make a permit, and only then could they enter the Imperial Domain!

Ronan himself had to send a message if he wanted to return, and someone would come here to pick him up. He couldn't go alone as he wished.

Even then, he had to give a good reason for his return since he was a student of the Royal Demon Institute so others won't suspect anything.

Ace knew even with all this, he would have a small window to stay before he had to leave or someone might suspect him, and being suspect in the Imperial Domain would not bode well for Ace.

So, while he was collecting information from Ronan about the Imperial Domain, he planned accordingly, and Freya was his advisor. Oh, and don't forget Cyrus's straightforward advice to burn everything down.

Ace also inquired about the elemental orb, but sadly Ronan had no idea what an elemental orb was, nor did he know what it looks which made Ace somewhat depressed.

Only two days left before the yearly assembly started, and the announcement for the gathering would also be made on that day.

Today, Ronan finally appeared and headed toward the lifting platform of the 73rd floor, where third-core-grade students live.

Ronan reached the lifting platform without encountering anyone, nor he wanted to and pressed his hand on an array panel on the wall.

Thereupon, the Deacon with the lifting platform rose from the lower floor.

When the Deacon saw Ronan, he was startled for a moment since Ronan would never go anywhere without Nathanael and Byron, so it was quite an unusual sight.

Nevertheless, the Deacon knew better than to ask, so he respectfully bowed in greeting, "Your Highness, where to?" He inquired.

"100th Floor!" Ronan revealed impassively.

The Deacon's eyes widened slightly as he asked earnestly, "But I wasn't...."

"I wasn't invited, but I'm sure Tower Master won't reject me. Just contact him, and you'll see." Ronan coldly uttered.

Everyone knew to enter the 90th floor and above, one needed permission or invitation not to talk about the 100th floor where Bodach lived.

100th floor was forbidden to anyone as long as they were not Bodach personal students or had the same status as him. Except for these few exceptions, everyone required Bodach's permission, even an imperial demon prince.

As for how to get permission, the easiest way was through this Deacon!

However, to make the Deacon seek permission was a whole other story. Not just anyone could make him, and Ronan was such a person.

So, when the Deacon heard this response, he had no choice but to contact the 100th floor and seek Bodach's opinion on this.

As for if he agreed to meet Ronan was completely dependent on his mood, his status was higher than Ronan's in Royal Imperial Institute as a Housemaster!

"Let me up." Bodach's ghostly voice rang in affirmation in the communication cube when he heard Ronan wanted to meet him.

After getting the confirmation, the Deacon didn't say anything and took Ronan to the 100th floor!

It was Ace's first-time meeting Bodach, and it won't be a lie to say he wasn't nervous because this person was most likely a Quasi-Law-Awareness Realm Expert, and he had a glimpse of such power in the fox mountain.

If not, because it was absolutely necessary, he didn't want even to go close to such an expert, much less confront one on his own accord.

Nevertheless, his appearance was hidden behind the illusion mask, which was actually a Low-Grade-7 concealment treasure called the Imperial Demon Mask!

From Ronan, Ace discerned that the Imperial Demon Mask was the first treasure any imperial would ever get, and they wore it their entire life since they were not allowed to show their faces except their spouses or parents.

Even siblings weren't allowed to reveal their faces to each other, which was a strange custom.

As for that pendant, it was a soul-limit talisman that could block three attacks from a Law-Awareness Realm and release a Qi signal that would alert the imperial domain about the attack on an imperial family member locate their location.

The arm guards were a high-grade-6 soul treasure called Chains of Lightning which was related to the cultivation technique of the Imperial Demon Family.

Their tribe was called the Black Lightning Demon, and all of their skills and techniques were related to soul lightning, which fascinated Ace, and he remembered every one of them for his own use!

As for Ronan's storage ring, he got many rare soul treasures with over a hundred thousand TP middle-level thievery!

Thereby, they soon reached the top floor of the Royal Tower.

The 100th floor was completely different from the lower floors; the soul Qi here was ten times denser than any floor below, and there weren't any corridors.

There was a grand space with four rooms on every side and in the center of this space was a long table with hundreds of chairs.

When Ace was the ghostly appearance demon sitting at the end of this table, his heart raced just by staring at those empty eye sockets as it was his first time seeing such a demon which looked more like an actual demon than any demon he had ever seen.

"Please." The Deacon singled him to step off so he could leave them alone.

Ace calmed down and walked on the white floor toward Bodach.

Bodach coolly said when Ronan was a few meters away, "Please sit, Your Highness."

Ace took a seat a few meters away from Bodach, which was giving him a feeling of aghast the closer he moved to him, and Bodach clearly wasn't releasing any aura at all.

"So, what brings Your Highness to my door?" Bodach didn't beat around the bush. He only agreed to meet Ronan because of his secret deal with him, and Archie was really worth it.

So, he didn't want to make Ronan unhappy for no good reason, so he gave him a face by letting him enter.

Furthermore, he was still wary of this cunning demon prince, every member of their family was not to be underestimated!

Ronna calmly stated at this moment, "Nothing much. I just want Tower Master to arrange for me to return to the Imperial Domain tomorrow!"

Bodach's expression remained the same as he inquired, "May I know why? You should know the new year is about to start, and an imperial prince living before it is not a small thing."

Ace knew this old guy wouldn't give in just like that, and he was too hard to read with his ghostly face. So, Ace didn't know what he was thinking!

This was quite frustrating since he was used to reading people and then reacting accordingly, but this old monster was on a different level than him!

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Chapter 573: Plan for Demon Emperor Domain!

In reply, Ronan said, "Of course, it's for our deal. Tower Master. I found something from my men back at the Palace."

"Oh? May I know the details?" Bodach's expression still was the same, but his voice carried a hint of sharpness.

Ace knew this was the most challenging part; if he wanted to convince Bodach, he had to conjure something he would believe.

Furthermore, Archie was essential to Bodach, so he might get suspicious of Ronan's request to return.

"I think someone in the domain had other plans for the participants, including the participants from our institute. So, I just wanted to make sure Archie returned safe. It will also show my sincerity." Ronan impassively stated.

Bodach didn't reply instantly and looked deeply at Ronan with his empty eyes as if he was mulling over something.

Ace kept his calm, but he was a little tense about this situation, he didn't want to say too much, or it might backfire.

Finally, Bodach spoke, "I won't question Your Highness's good intentions anymore. I'll approve three months' leave for Your Highness today, and you can contact someone to pick you up tomorrow."

Ace felt relieved when he heard this.

"It'll be splendid." Ronan impassively said and stood up. He didn't want to stay with Bodach for an extra moment.

Bodach also didn't stop Ronan, but just as he was about to walk away, Bodach's voice rang again, filled with a strange chinless, "Have a nice trip, your highness. I'll be waiting for your good news... for both our sakes."

Ace felt his heart turn cold when he felt a hint of horrifying killing intent for an instant!

'What a lunatic to show killing intent toward an Imperial Prince!' Ace never thought there would be such a person among demons who dared to threaten an imperial family member.

Nevertheless, the killing intent was just a warning, and even if Ronan took it as an offense, he couldn't do anything without any proof or unless Bodach directly acted.

He merely grunted coldly before storming away like real Ronan.

Bodach watched coldly as Ronan left with the lifting platform.

A rueful sigh escaped his mouth, and a frown appeared on his emotionless face, 'It seemed Fifth Prince might want to help Archie this time for my support. If he hadn't come, I might've found him myself in a few months....'

After Ace returned to the 73rd floor, he quickly returned to Ronan's quarters, which were a spacious courtyard.

He felt much better after he got out of that old ghost's presence, but he knew Bodach was nothing compared to what he might face in the imperial domain.

A golden communication cube appeared in Ace's hand at this moment, and he activated it.

Thereby, a hoarse voice rang from the cube, "Greeting Your Highness Fifth Prince, please state your emergency."

This cube was directly connected to the Imperial Demon Council's headquarters, and any demand from the Imperial Family Member outside the Imperial Domain will make through this method.

But all these requests were heard by high-level members of the Council so they could be put in motion at a minute's notice.

"Southern Council Minister, sent Black Demon to pick me up tomorrow morning from the Royal Demon Institute. I'm coming back for three months." Ronan stated in a commanding tone.

Black Demon was the birth guardian of Ronan, and every imperial family member had a birth guardian who protected them with their lives no matter what.

Furthermore, from Ronan, Ace discovered that there were four council ministers with a status just below the Elder Demons.

The person on the other end was the Second Demon Minister, the Southern Council Minister who handled requests from both Fourth and Fifth Imperial Princes.

Furthermore, Ace also got to know a piece of astonishing news about the Fourth Demon Minister. The Western Council Minister had perished in the hands of that corpse king.

But the imperial domain kept this report under tight wraps and even reinstated a dummy fourth demon minister, so no one knew the truth.

The Imperial Demon Family members had ears everywhere, and this matter was naturally known to them.

So, Ace was quite astonished when he thought just how powerful the mere corpse of an orb's guardian was and felt the chills just by thinking about the prowess of an alive guardian on the same level as the ice orb's guardian!

Southern Council Minister's hoarse voice rang again when he heard Ronan's command, "Do you have the permission of House Master?"

"I got the permission, and someone will contact you about it soon as well. I'm just giving you a heads up so you could send Black Demon, not someone else." He coolly stated.

"Very well, Your Highness, it's been decades since Her Imperial Majesty had seen you. She will be much delighted after getting this news." Southern Council Minister replied as his tone was like an elder this time.

Ronan merely snorted coldly, "I know." And cut off the connection.

Ace smiled wryly since he reacted according to Ronan's relationship with his family.

Ace knew Southern Council Minister was actually Fifth Prince's Maternal Uncle and Empress's only elder brother!

The Demon Emperor only had one wife, who was the current Empress Consort and held high authority, only second to the Demon Emperor, and they both had six children!

However, unlike other warm parents, this pair was cold and indifferent to their children as they never interfered between their fights. Or it was just how an imperial family works.

Nevertheless, Ace knew the biggest obstacle in his way was actually the First Imperial Demon Prince Martin, the Second Imperial Demon Prince Reginald, who was actually none other than the person who triggered the chain mission and came after Ace in the outer provinces.

Lastly, the Third Princess was none other than Leona, who should be in the Royal Demon Institute but not right now. All because she was grounded after Ace exposed her scheme that day.

Leona was probably the biggest thorn in her siblings' way to ascension because she was the most talented between them all and the only child who wasn't actually ignored by their parents and have their favor!

That's why everyone was jealous of her except the sixth prince, who was still a child and naïve and hadn't suffered from Leona's schemes yet.

But after she got exposed by Ace and because of her, he was able to theft the life demon auction, how could she get away without scot-free?

Furthermore, Reginald also didn't let go of this chance to put all the blame on her for allowing that thief to steal the myriad hex manual and escape any responsibility!

She was then sent back to the imperial domain with Paul, whose whereabouts were still unknown as he had yet to appear from the Imperial Domain but from Ronna's sources, he was being tortured for breaking many rules.

As for Leona, no one knows what kind of punishment she received, but she never appeared in the public eye. She was rumored to be grounded by the furious Demon Emperor after being stripped of her every title, including the Imperial Princess!

This was definitely the windfall for these jealous, power-hungry brothers.

Nevertheless, Ronan's return might be seen as a provocation toward both princes, who were now more powerful than ever after Leona got out of the equation.

That's also why Ronan first suspected Leona wanted to assassinate him to make it look like those two princes had gone blinded by their meteoritic rise and wanted to eliminate the future trouble in one fell swoop.

Because only those two would have a reason to kill an Imperil Prince and capabilities.

This way, Leona might have a chance to come back when both princes lay low or at least slow their rise until the killer was found.

But he was wrong since it was Ace.

Anyhow, Ace knew those three might start scheming against Ronan, it still remained to be seen, but he knew the longer he played Ronan, the more his chance of exposure would grow.

Because, unlike his past victims, Ronan's identity was probably the most terrifying, and just a sliver of suspicion might be the end of him.

So, he had another plan which was the moment he entered the Imperial Domain. He would find another low-profile identity and let the actual prince out and let him handle those schemes himself.

That guy was under Freya's complete control, so he should use him instead of letting him stay and take a precious spot in his living thief's space.

They had already got all the essential information, so he was now utterly useless to him except for his life.

As for Winter, she would join him soon in the Imperial Domain as Archie.

Ace looked at the empty place, which was filled with dense soul Qi and his lips curled upward, 'I'm as ready as I could be for the Imperial Domain!'

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Chapter 574: Entering the Imperial Domain!

The following day, the tightly shut doors of the Royal Demon Institute shimmered in bright symbols before they were slowly parted, revealing a vast road.

Thereby, carriages with swift speed suddenly emerged and exited the gates one after another. There were a total of five luxurious black carriages moving without any beasts.

After they left the Royal Demon Institute, the carriages turned invisible to the naked eye!

Furthermore, there was a golden emblem of Baphomet's face with a blue sphere revolving between its horns. Anyone will have to lower their head if they see this symbol because it is the emblem of the Imperial Demon Family!

Inside the carriage in the middle,

Ronan sat as he looked at another masked demon with white eyeballs, twisted gray horns, and a slim build. It was Ronan's birth guardian, Black Demon.

Just as Ace planned, after meeting with Bodach and getting his approval, everything went exceptionally smoothly, and Black Demon also came on time to pick him up.

Seeing the carriages leaving the Royal Demon Institute, Ace couldn't help but feel anticipation for the Imperial Domain, which was quite close.

He suddenly looked at Black Demon, who kept staring at him without speaking, and coldly asked, "What is it?"

Black Demon could be said closest to Ronan and think of him as a close friend, but he would never say it because of their status difference, and Black Demon also will never dare to call an Imperial Prince his friend unless he wants to die because of treason.

These birth guardians were like absolute loyal slaves of the Imperial Demon Family and could never betray them or move against them. They all were trained Killing Weapons that would protect their master at any cost.

Black Demon's husky voice rang exempt of any emotions, "It been a long time since I have last seen Your Highness. You have grown."

"Of course, I would grow. Or why would I need to go into that damn commoner's den?" Ronan disdainfully retorted.

He always looked down on the Royal Demon Institute because the demons there were far below their status. Yet, the imperial family members like him had to go there and live between them and interact with them daily.

Furthermore, Ronan hated demons like Clouse and Bodach, who didn't know their place and didn't bow their heads and think of themselves as an equal and even better than him just because they were a little bit powerful.

Yet, he couldn't change these customs or even challenge them, as a matter of fact, unless he became the ruler himself.

This was even more ridiculous because the current Demon Emperor was relatively young compared to the previous rulers, and this won't be wrong to say he was just getting started. He only ruled for over 1,000 years.

They still didn't have any crown prince because the children were relatively young and didn't have the qualification to be a crown prince.

According to the Demon Race's Ancient Custom, a Demon Emperor ruled the race for 10,000 Years if he didn't die for some other reason, and afterward, they had to select the new Demon Emperor whether they liked it or not.

Even more strange, this custom had never been broken in the history of the Demon Race!

However, Ace or even Ronan didn't understand where the previous Emperor and his other children went.

According to Ronan, after every new demon emperor was crowned, the previous Emperor and his family members vanished from the historical records, and no one talked about them. It was taboo.

Most people believed that they were all killed by the ruler, so they won't be able to challenge the new ruler ever, and it would also spare them the opportunity for rebellion.

All in all, the Imperial Demon Family was shrouded in mystery, and everything was related to one place, the Demon Temple!

No one lived there, but it was a place that was forbidden for anyone, and only the Emperor had the right to enter.

The more Ace knew about this mysterious place, the more he felt pressure because this place was simply too mysterious, and going there would be even more dangerous than infiltrating the Imperial Domain on his own.

Ace suddenly thought of something as he questioned Black Demon, who had turned mute, "What is the situation in the domain? How are my brothers taking my abrupt comeback?"

Black Demon replied truthfully, "The news about you coming back was not spread yet and only known by a handful of people, including the His Imperial Majesty, the Emperor, and the Empress. But when you enter the domain, it won't be long before the news spread.

"As for the situation in the domain, except for the preparation of the Ancient Alliance Gathering, nothing out of the ordinary."

Ace's eyes narrowed when he heard the last part, "What kind of preparation?"

After the Elemental Orb, he was most interested in this gathering, which was not going to be peaceful.

Black Demon revealed, "They were going to send the selected participants to the three forbidden countries for two years!"

Ace's eyes narrowed when he heard this because the three forbidden countries were quite dangerous for those participants, even with their cultivation. But it wasn't a surprise either since that place was suitable for training and gaining experience.

Furthermore, the three forbidden countries might be just a small part of the demon race's preparation, and that place was competently isolated so that they might have some other goals.

Afterward, Ace didn't question anymore since Ronan never spoke much with Black Demon, and he didn't want to change that.

An hour later, those invisible carriages entered a misty plain.

This was the first barrier surrounding the Imperial Domain, and only with speak formations could one escape this mist.

Furthermore, this mist was just a part of a massive Grae-7 formation called the Myriad Demonic Ghost Maze, and it was never breached in the history of the demon race.

After traveling in that mist on a peculiar pathway filled with turns and strange twists, Ace finally saw the fog getting thinner and thinner, and when Ace saw that ahead of them was nothing but a gloomy wasteland, he was astonished.

Because even he couldn't tell if it was reality or an illusion because the feeling it quite real.

But Ace knew it was a killing area of the Myriad Demonic Ghost Maze, and anyone who stepped into it would have one end, death!

However, before their carriages could enter this killing area, a dark slit suddenly appeared right in the air before it opened like a tear in the space!

Yet, the carriages didn't stop and successfully entered this tear before it closed just as it appeared.

Ace's vision blurred for a moment, and when it came back, he saw that he was no longer in the mist or there wasn't any gray wasteland in front.

The carriages were moving on a beautiful road, and a few miles ahead of them were towering golden gates and an immeasurable wall.

'The Imperial Demon Domain!' Ace's eyes shimmered with ecstasy when he saw the destination so close.

The invisible barrier on the carriages also vanished at this moment.

Thereupon, they soon reached the closed golden gates, and when they were only a mile away from it, black symbols suddenly started to shine on it, and it slowly started to part, opening the gap just enough for the carriages to pass through.

It wasn't fully opened. Only a person with Demon Emperor status could make this Imperial Gates fully open for its welcome!

Nevertheless, if Ronan weren't present in this carriage, this gate would've even opened this much, and a throughout investigation would be waiting for them before they could enter another passage.

When the carriages crossed the gates, they slowly closed before they vanished from plain sight, and only walls could be visible now.

Ace in the carriage felt his entire world change when they cross the gates.

The first thing he saw was a beautiful palace on the horizon, and right behind this magnificent palace was an outline of a long pillar that was simply too long as its edge was covered with clouds. It was the Demon Temple, the tallest building on the entire continent.

The Imperial Domain was divided into Eastern, Western, Northern, and Southern Palace Areas, and in the center was the Emperor Palace, where the Imperial Family resided. The Demon Temple was also in the Emperor Palace.

Except for the Emperor Palace, the other areas were overseen by Imperial Demon Council and the Imperial Demon Knights.

The Emperor Palace was forbidden to everyone; without permission, no one could step foot there.

Only the most loyal servant families of the Imperial Family were allowed there who worked for them for generations and absolutely loyal.

The carriages entered the Southern Palace Area when these other four carriages broke the formation, and only Ronan's carriage remained, which was going toward the Emperor Palace!

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Chapter 575: The Emperor Palace

The Emperor Palace covered half of the Imperial Domain, it was lavishly made with rare ores, and herb guardians were everywhere, which made the Qi here refreshing and denser.

Every member of the imperial family had their small castle here, including Ronan.

The castle given to him was named Demonic Seal Castle, which was at the west edge of Emperor Palace.

At this moment, servants in black and white attire were standing outside the Demonic Seal Castle in two rows. All of them wore black and white masks.

They were the Imperial Servant, and those black and white masks on their faces were slave items placed on their faces the moment they were born, and they could not remove them.

This symbolized these demons' everlasting servitude toward the imperials, and they weren't allowed to interact with outsiders and could only live in the Emperor Palace. The moment they left a certain perimeter, they will die because of the slave item backlash!

They also had another name in the Imperial Domain, Puppet Servants!

At this moment, Ronan's carriage entered the gate and slowly stopped a few meters away from the Demonic Seal Castle's Main gates.

A Puppet Servant quickly opened the carriage door and placed a golden staircase in front of the open door.

A demon placed his step on this small staircase and slowly disembarked the carriage. It was naturally Ronan.

Following Ronan appeared Black Demon, and after they disembarked the carriage, it moved on its own and left toward the back of the Demonic Seal Castle.

Ace looked at those puppet servants and their listless eyes exempt from emotions and couldn't help but frown slightly at the Imperials' ruthlessness. They were simply too paranoid and distrustful.

They didn't want anyone to come in contact with their secrets, and they trusted no one, even their close aids. Everyone around them was a thrall who couldn't go against them.

Even those Imperial Council Demons weren't allowed to leave here before taking oaths and signing confidential soul contracts.

However, it was also because of this exact reason that the Imperial Domain remained untouchable for countless years.

Until now, no one had any idea that the unbreachable Imperial Domain had already been breached, and this breach was already reached the Emperor Palace no less.

At this moment, a puppet servant approached Ronan and Black Demon, he wore the same black and white attire, but there was a golden star emblem on his shoulder, which meant he was the head Puppet Servant, which was like a butler of Demonic Seal Castle.

They didn't have names but numbers.

High-ranking Puppet Servants were given numbers between 1 to 1,000, and it never changed unless a high-ranking puppet servant died. These puppet servants were like guards of the Emperor Palace.

Then there were Middle Ranking Puppet Servants who were given numbers above 1,000 to 10,000, and they were like the head maids, butlers, and chefs and could also command Low Ranking Puppet Servants.

Low Ranking Puppet Servants didn't have any number and did chores and other minor staff in the Emperor Palace. Furthermore, these low puppet servants weren't allowed to cultivate until they were promoted to middle ranking.

But it was also challenging since those Middle ranking puppet servants were allowed to cultivate to River Core Realm, which meant their lifespan was 1000 years.

While the low-ranking puppet servants could only live up to 200 years if they weren't get killed by some unhappy imperial first.

The puppet servant with the golden star was a middle-ranking puppet servant, NO.8,430, and he took care of the day-to-day matters of the Demonic Seal Castle.

Every prince or princess could only have five middle-ranking puppet servants, but Ronan didn't like to be spied upon since these puppets could reveal everything at the Emperor's behest.

So, he only had one.

NO.8,430 quickly kneeled in front of Ronan, and the other low-ranking puppet servants followed suit. He respectfully spoke, "Welcome Back, Your Imperial Highness!"

The other puppet servants followed suits in unison, "Welcome Back, Your Imperial Highness!"

Ronan merely nodded, "Rise."

The low-ranking puppet servants quickly followed the order, while NO.8,430 remain in his position.

"Do you have anything to say?" Ronan coldly asked.

Ace knew the puppet servants had their own will, and they could bypass the imperial children's orders if the order were from a higher title than theirs, like the Empress or Emperor!

NO.8,430 respectfully revealed, "A decree came this morning from the Emperor's Palace for your highness!"

Ace frowned and coldly spoke, "Where is it?"

A golden scroll appeared in NO.8,430 hand at this moment as he presented it to Ronan respectfully.

Black Demon also kneeled when he saw the pitch-black goat face sealed on the golden scroll, it was the seal of the Demon Emperor, and anyone had to kneel in front of the decree of the Demon Emperor except for the Imperial Children.

Ace's frown deepened as he received the scroll but didn't open it, or more accurately, he couldn't open it!

"Let's go inside. I'll read it alone." Ronan coldly uttered as the golden scroll vanished into his storage ring before he walked toward the open gates of the castle.

The others closely followed behind.

When they entered the grand hall,

Ronan commanded, "You, Number Slave, lead me toward my room. Black Demon, you're dismissed for now. I'll call you if I need you."

Black Demon bowed, "As my prince command."

NO.8,430 also didn't dare to delay and quickly led Ronan toward his private chamber while the other puppet servants were dismissed for now.

Everyone thought that Ronan wanted to be alone when he opened the decree because the decree with a black emperor seal could only be opened by a member of the imperial family.

Because it required a drop of their blood to break the seal!

However, when NO.8,430 opened the doors to Ronan's chamber, something struck NO.8,430 from behind before he lost consciousness!

A few miles away the south of Demonic Seal Castle was the Demonic Wing Castle, where lived none other than the Second Imperial Demon Prince, Reginald!

At this moment, inside a closed room, Reginald was listening to Killer.

"... lastly, the Fifth Prince entered the domain half an hour ago." Killer finished his report.

Killer was Reginald's birth guardian, and he collected information for Reginald in the imperial demon domain since Reginald didn't need any protection in Imperial Domain.

Reginald coldly uttered at this moment, "What is he doing here when the new year is about to start in the royal demon institute?"

"I just received the news. I'm afraid only the Fifth Prince knows the reason for his return." Killer respectfully replied.

"Hmph, he's not essential as long as he's not graduated. He could only stay temporarily and couldn't do much. So, he might be here for more resources to suppress Fourth Brother.

"Invite him to Demonic Wing Castle. I might as well help him and let him hinder Fourth Brother." Reginald sneered coldly.

"I'll go personally." Killer agreed.

"What about the current status of that hateful Thief? Did Devils find him yet?" Reginald's voice was laced with hatred and killing intent when he mentioned it.

How could he not hate Ace for making a fool out of him, time and time again?

Although it looked like he escaped any responsibility for what happened in the Life Demon Auction, he still lost the Myriad Hex Manual which he borrowed from Imperial Treasury.

So, as a punishment, he was also forbidden to leave the imperial domain until he reached the Soul Manifestation Realm!

This naturally made Reginald resent Ace, and he also inquired about his whereabouts daily.

The appearance of Devil Envoys wasn't a secret in the imperial domain, but it had been months since they started searching for the Thief with two Demon Elders, and later Fiery Grand Demon Duke also joined them. But there's still no news.

Killer replied with a hint of helplessness, "It's the same, Your Highness. I'm afraid we all underestimated that Thief too much. He's probably escaped the continent."

"Cowardly Bastard, I'll skin him alive if I got my hands on him!" Reginald cursed with hatred. He just couldn't accept this!

On the east of Emperor Palace was the Demonic Spear Castle. Here lived the First Imperial Demon Prince Martin!

Martian also received the report of Ronan's return from his birth guardian, a demoness with crimson eyeballs standing in front of him. She was called Dagger.

Martian impassively said, "Invite little Ronan for a meal. It's been a long time since we had a brother-to-brother talk."

He also had the same thoughts as Reginald and wanted to help Ronan to cause trouble for the Fourth Prince.

"At your behest, my prince!" Dagger's emotionless sweet voice rang in affirmation.

"Do you find the whereabouts of Leona?" Martian voice laced with indignation when he asked this.

"Third Princess still hadn't returned to her Wisdom Castle from the Emperor Palace!" Dagger replied with a hint of fear.

"Just why those two couldn't let her go even after she threw our face into the mud!" Martian murmured as his voice was full of resentment and zeal!

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Chapter 576: Impossible Location to Infiltrate!

The next morning,

Ronan, with Black Demon, left the demonic seal castle in a carriage.

Their destination was the Emperor Palace Throne Hall, where the Demon Emperor summoned Ronan for an audience.

It was what was written in the Golden Scroll he received from Puppet Servant NO.8,430.

NO.8,430 looked at the departing carriage with a peculiar glint in his eyes. He didn't return inside the Demonic Seal Castle but headed to the herb garden at the west.

Some numberless puppet servant saw NO.8,430 doing something out of his routine and found it strange because as long as they could remember, NO.8,430 never broke his regular pattern.

However, they didn't think much about it since it might be Ronan's orders, so they minded their own business.

Yet, the truth was this NO.8,430 wasn't the real NO.8,430 but Ace impersonating NO.8,430!

Ace had already decided to switch his identity again when he saw the imperial decree to Ronan. The most suitable target was NO.8,430, to whom no one paid attention except these numberless puppet servants.

Furthermore, NO.8,430 was perfect for Ace's needs since he could move between places of Imperial Domain in the sham of Ronan's order.

So, he released the real Ronan after he captured NO.8,430, and now Ronan was following Freya's orders to act naturally and pretend as if nothing happened.

If the Demon Emperor asked the reason for his return, he could simply make any excuses, and no one would even suspect anything.

Ace had NO.8,430 complete memories, which were quite plain and repeated.

This guy was really like a puppet and did what he was supposed to every day without missing a single one, and he didn't have any desires except for his ridiculous loyalty toward the crown.

The slave mask on NO.8,430 face was vicious because the moment he found himself captured, he instantly tried to commit suicide, but Ace was ready since Ronan had already warned them about the nature of Puppet Servants and had Cyrus restrained him.

Because even these Puppet Servants had Qi Mark Disks, and in case of their uncanny death, the entire Emperor Place will be locked down until the reason for their death becomes apparent.

These Mark Disks were giving Ace a massive headache lately, and he didn't dare to go for the kill anymore unless he was absolutely sure it was safe.

Anyhow, since Ronan's problem was solved, he was going to start with his search for the Lightning Orb and wanted to find it as soon as possible so he could leave with Ronan in three months.

As for his job mission, he didn't dare to even think about it because he knew the moment demons discovered him, it would be impossible to escape the imperial domain, especially with grade-7 formations guarding the entire place.

Lastly, it wasn't simple to learn how he could acquire that lightning orb since it could be in anyone's hand and any in the imperial domain. But he had a daring plan as long as someone in person carried it.

After Ace saw no one around the herb garden, his expression turned serious, "System revealed the lightning orb's position again!"

[1 Million Thief Points have been deducted!]

[Host only has ten seconds before the Host is required to pay 1 million thief points again for another ten seconds!]

[Thief Point(s): 115,970,100]

The fate map activated on its own, and Ace gawked at it without blinking. He couldn't just keep wasting one million thief points all the time, so he was determined to mark its location this time.

As the map started to zoom out, the area around the demonic seal castle became smaller and smaller, and the Emperor Palace's area started to enter.

However, Ace's expression started to change when the zooming out started to slow down as a peculiar area started to appear. It was the center of the Imperial Domain, the Emperor Palace!

His expression became ashen when he saw the map finally stop, and an indicator appeared on a peculiar structure.

The moment that indicator stopped, Ace knew he was screwed!

Ace looked into the central area with an appalled expression as his eyes locked on the large pillar on the horizon!

'The lightning orb is in the demon temple!' He just couldn't believe that of all the places. It was in the most secure building of the entire demon continent!

Even if it was in the Emperor's Palace, he still would accept it and might have a chance to search for it, but its location was static which meant it was always there!

That building was forbidden for anyone except the demon emperor, and unless he could impersonate Demon Emperor, he could forget about approaching that area.

[Did the Host want to activate the location again?]

The fate map returned to its previous state with this notification.

"Are you sure it's in that building?" Ace questioned sternly as he looked at the demon temple with a gloomy look.

"[Yes, the Lightning Orb hadn't move from this location!]"

'Shit!' Ace cursed in indignation, 'I prefer facing an orb guarding more now!'

'What if I try to fly there? No, unless my stealth could fool the senses of Law-Awareness Realm and grade-7 formations, I would be discovered!' Ace thought gravely.

'But what if someone took that lightning orb out of the demon temple?' Ace's mind raced as he thought about every possibility.

However, all those possibilities were hazardous.

Ace's eyes suddenly brightened when he thought of something and quickly confronted that System about it, "System, will the Random Pick Pocket Talisman work on a building?"

This was Ace's trump card to steal the lightning orb if someone carried it in person!

This heavenly talisman can pick pocket any random treasure of grade-8, but if the target didn't have a grade-8 treasure, it would go for the second best.

Ace from the System found that the elemental orb minimum grade was grade-6, which goes as high as grade-9!

So, when he asked about the lightning orb's grade, he knew that it should be around grade-7 or even grade-8 because the lighting element was quite rare.

That was why he was confident in acquiring the orb even from the demon palace, but it wasn't in the place at all, and instead, it was in the freaking Demon Temple!

However, now that he thinks about it more carefully, the Random Pick Pocket Heavenly Talisman would work on any target, not just space rings, as long as the target was within its limitation.

So, if the demon temple could be considered a target, Ace won't even need to take such a risk to enter the temple, and he could directly use the heavenly talisman, which was a grade-8 heavenly talisman!

But he still didn't know if this thinking was correct, so he needed the System's confirmation.

"[The Random Pick Pocket Heavenly Talisman can be used on a single target, or it can pick pocket any random treasure of Grade-8 within 10 Mile Radius Target Area once used. But if there are no grade-8 treasures available in a 10-mile radius area, then it would go for the second-best treasure.]"

Ace nearly jumped with joy when he heard this, and all the gloom in his heart vanished as he looked at the Demon Temple with thievish eyes.

'So, all I need to do is to be in a ten-mile radius area of the demon temple now. This means I just have to be in the Demon Palace and get as close as possible to the demon temple.'

But a frown appeared on his face, 'But what if the talisman didn't pick pocket the orb but some other treasure? The demon temple might have a grade-8 treasure. The orb wasn't on the same rank.'

'Furthermore, the moment I stole a grade-8 treasure, the thief symbol was bound to appear, which would instantly trigger the job mission in succession, and it won't be late before they noticed the thief symbol of that enormous building.'

'In both cases, I need to make an escape, but if I don't get the elemental orb, then it would be even more impossible to acquire it in the future since they would move it from the building.'

Ace was in a huge dilemma even after he had a slight chance of acquiring the elemental orb from the demon temple. However, it was a huge risk that would divulged his whereabouts, and escaping would be impossible.

Many high-ranking demons resided in this place, and then there was the Demon Temple, the most mysterious place of all the imperial domain.

There might be a terrifying existence residing inside, and the moment Ace theft, there is a high chance that he will be found.

'Did I have to use Instant Flash Heavenly Talisman as well?' Ace frowned since he only had three heavenly talismans.

The most precious of the three was also the Instant Flash which could let him teleport within 10,000 miles randomly.

Ace suddenly remembered something as his eyes glowed in hope, 'Why don't I craft that heavenly talisman? It should work!'

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Chapter 577: The Gathering Participants

Today, the normally tranquil Imperial Domain was bustling as many young demons were walking toward a massive building while looking toward the Emperor Palace's direction with shining eyes filled with reverence.

They were all the selected participants for the upcoming Ancient Allied Gathering in three years.

These demons wore uniforms of four Demon Institutes but amidst this crowd, walking at the end were 100 black robes demons wearing crimson masks.

Furthermore, unlike the four institutes' demons, they were completely silent, and their eyes were exempt from any emotions.

"Alright, enough sightseeing for today. We're here." The demon walking at the very front impassively stated.

Those youths quickly shut up, they didn't dare to voice out any opinion in front of these demons since he led them in the imperial domain, and more importantly, he was wearing the robes of the Imperial Demon Council!

Thereupon, they all entered a large hall, where a masked demon wearing Imperial Demon Council robes was waiting for them.

The demon leading them bowed respectfully toward this masked demon and stood behind him without speaking.

"Form four queues according to your institutes!" The masked demon coldly ordered.

The young demons quickly followed the command, and soon except for those 100 black robes masked demons, the queues were formed.

There were 50 students each from Evergreen Demon Institute, Battle Demon Institute, and Black Mountain Demon Institute.

Lastly, there were only 20 students from the Royal Demon Institute.

In total, there were 170 students from the four institutes, and they were all geniuses of the platinum river core realm!

Including those 100 masked demons, there were 270 selected participants.

The masked demon from the council coldly uttered, "I am Northern Council Minister, and I'll be in charge of you guys until the Ancient Allied Gathering is over.

"Without any ado, let me give you all a small briefing about the upcoming Ancient Allied Gathering. Most of you might already know, but it doesn't matter.

"First, this time, the Ancient Allied Races will send 250 participants each, unlike 50 from the past.

"Second, it will be absolute slaughter in the Fiery Hell Secret Realm, and only those strong could survive. So, I suggest taking it seriously.

"Third, this training is designed specially to make you all strong and sharpen your survival and killing instincts. These two years will be absolute hell for all of you, and if any one of you dies, someone else will replace you!

"We want results. We don't care about your background or your status as geniuses. We can replace you if you're not enough, and you could only leave here either as a corpse or as a soul realm cultivator!"

Northern Council Minister's cold words sent chills to those geniuses because they could tell he wasn't kidding around. Some of them already know what this gathering represents.

But they had no choice in this matter since they were all selected by their institutes, and the only way out was to break into the soul realm before the gathering started!

Northern Council Minister continued, "As I said, the only way to leave is to achieve Soul Realm, but you only have two years to achieve it because, after two years, you're not allowed to break through. Because after two years, we'll start the voyage toward the gathering spot, and it would be meaningless to break through at that time!"

The faces of those demons turned pale after this revelation.

"Now that I revealed the disadvantages, let me tell you about the advantages, which are hundreds of times more lavish than any demon had ever received in their entire lifetime in the history of the demon continent!" Northern Council Minister coolly stated.

Those demons' eyes finally shone as they looked at Northern Council Minister with anticipation.

Northern Council Minister revealed, "First, you'll be given a chance to cultivate in the Imperial Family's Body Tempering Technique, and all the resources will be provided by the imperial domain as long as your performance will satisfy us!

"Second, anyone who will enter the Fiery Hell Realm will be given the title of Demon Marquis at their return and lavish rewards.

"Third, as long as you bring out the Fire Spirit from the Fiery Hell Realm, you'll be given the status of Demon Duke and could live in Imperial Domain as well as you'll be given the status of Vice Council Minister of Imperial Demon Council!"

Those demons inhaled sharply when they heard about the rewards of this gathering, especially the last one, which was a complete life changer for these demons.

Just living in the Imperial Domain and the council membership was enough to make any demon outside the imperial domain green with envy.

Those gloomy faces suddenly vanished as their eyes burned with resolution. They knew they were all selected because they were dispensable, unlike those peerless geniuses.

So, they were all determined to grasp this chance and change their fate!

Northern Council Minister sensed those demons' burning passion, and his lips curled up under his mask, "Now you may rest in the Northern Imperial Palace Area and prepare mentally for these two years of training. We'll be leaving for the three forbidden countries in three days!"

"Follow me!" The demon behind Northern Council Minister led those motivated demons from four institutes away while those black robes demons remained in the hall.

Northern Council Minister looked at those masked demons after those demons left. A disdainful glint flashed past his eyes.

"Leland!"

A demon suddenly emerged out of thin air wearing the council robes before he impassively asked, "Your Order Minister."

Northern Council Minister coolly stated, "These hundred were selected from the eight provinces and given the chance of their lifetime. They will cultivate in Demonic Miasma Body in these two years, and I want half of them to have at least over 50% succession rate."

Leland's eyes widened when he heard this, "This? 50% succession rate in Demonic Miasma Body will turn them into walking...."

Before he finished, he shut his mouth because he suddenly thought of something, and realization dawned on him.

Northern Council Minister chuckled coldly, "It's the biggest chance of their life, and they will be doing their race a huge favor. Let them glorify the eight provinces' title as Cannon Folds!"

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Chapter 578: Tier-12 Heavenly Talisman!

The Demonic Seal Castle, servant quarters,

Ace, disguised as NO.8,430, was frowning at this moment, "Tell me more about there were hundred black robes demons in masks."

Ace transmitted within his mind.

Winter's perplexed voice replied, "How do I know? They were like corpse puppets, completely emotionless, and we were told not to interact with them. As I said, we were separated by this Northern Council Minister and told to be prepared for two years of training in the forbidden countries.

"These demons are planning something big, and I don't like being part of it. Although my disguise is flawless, I had this feeling a Law-Awareness expert might be involved in this training. If he checked my progress, I might really be got seen through!

"Besides, what kind of plot are you hatching? Before coming here, I thought the rumors about the famous imperial domain being impenetrable were exaggerated, but now, I think we should wait until we have manifestation realm cultivation, at least!"

Winter was clearly among the twenty students of Royal Demon Institute as Archie.

Just as Ace was warned, Archie got selected among the twenty students for the gathering in the assembly and led by an imperial demon council member with others in the imperial domain.

Furthermore, they were all inspected with a grade-7 formation, and if it were Ace instead of Winter, his disguise would've been seen through.

But Winter, who was confident in her ability, also discovered that it wasn't as easy as she thought, and the Imperial Domain was filled with danger at every step.

Just the Northern Council Minister gave her a threatening feeling, and there were still Demon Elders above him, so she quickly contacted Ace to warn him about the situation.

If Ace was really planning to steal something, then he better makes it untraceable, or the full power of the imperial domain isn't something he could endure.

Ace sighed ruefully, "I know, but if I gave up now, I don't know when this chance will appear, and the thing I want is not something I can just get from anywhere. Even if I gave up, who knows how long will it take to search for it again?"

"Don't worry. I won't act until I'm completely confident in escaping from here. As for you, just find an opportunity to eliminate Archie's identity. Then hide in the endless sea somewhere close to the continent. I'll fetch you once I'm done with the demon continent!"

"Hmph, don't cry if you get captured!" Winter scoffed with a hint of helplessness. She knew Ace was determined, so persuading would not do anything.

Ace chuckled, "Capturing me is not easy. You just take care of yourself. I'll be joining you soon."

With that, the house call ended.

But Ace was still thinking about those masked demons in black robes Winter had told him about, 'Could they be those participants from the eight provinces? I have to make sure that idiot isn't among them.'

Ace grimaced as he thought about his friend from the eight provinces. He then contacted Freya to order Ronan to investigate this matter.

Speaking of which, Freya could use Ronan like her surveillance bird and even control his action while still remaining hidden in the thief's house.

Even with the presence of the Demon Emperor, he still didn't discover evil seed enslavement on Ronan, and everything went smoothly.

Freya even wanted to cause trouble, but she gave up when she observed the meeting between Demon Emperor and Empress. Those two simply questioned him about his everyday life and then sent him away after they got their answers.

They were simply too cold toward Ronan and probably summoned him just for the sake of it.

After Ace instructed Winter, he focused on sorting materials for the heavenly talisman he wanted to create.

Ace had long achieved tier-12 rank in Heavenly Rune Crafting, and he didn't have a grade-level manual for Heavenly Rune Crafting yet.

Nevertheless, just the Heavenly Talisman he learned was enough to compensate for his lack of grade heavenly talismans.

Furthermore, Ace presumed that even if he had a grade-1 or higher-level manual, he might not be able to comprehend the heavenly talisman with his current cultivation level.

Because just the tier-12 Heavenly Talisman was equivalent to Grade-3 or even Grade-4 worldly talisman!

Besides, with just the Heavenly Rune Crafter Foundational Manual, he can easily craft arrays, formations, and any ordinary talisman up to Grade-3 as long as he has their crafting method.

Just the Heavenly Talismans were different, and he still had yet to come in contact with Heavenly Arrays or Formations, so he didn't know the difference between the ordinary arrays or formations and heavenly ones.

Not only that, but with his runic eyes skill from the Heavenly Rune Crafter Foundational Manual. He could see through, comprehend, and decipher any rune symbols up to grade-3 and bypass those formations without needing any skill!

Right now, Ace knows the crafting methods of 50 Heavenly Talismans from Tier-1 to Tier-12. He learned from Talisman Crafting Technique.

He was planning to craft a Heavenly Talisman of Tier-12, which was the most difficult one of all the heavenly talismans he had ever comprehended.

After skimming through the materials in his thief's space, he thought, 'If I used all those materials, I'd deplete almost half of my high-level soul materials and soul crystals.'

Previously, Ace never dared to craft a Heavenly Talisman for this exact reason. The heavenly talisman from tier-9 to tier-12 needed soul materials, not ordinary ones.

So, he was always satisfied with worldly talismans.

But right now, only this heavenly talisman could do the job, and he couldn't be too stingy with it, either. He needed at least over two hundred to ensure he won't get caught.

Resolution shone in Ace's eyes, "Open the Heavenly Rune Crafter Panel!"

[Heavenly Rune Crafter Panel]

Rune Crafter Rank: Tier-12

Rune Crafter Trademark: Coin

Rune Crafter Colophon: Thief Symbol

[Talisman Section] (UNLOCK)

[Array Section] (LOCK)

[Formation Section] (LOCK)

[UNKNOWN Section] (LOCK)

[Talisman Creation Section]

-Heavenly Talisman Available: 50 (Tier-1 to Tier-12)

-Worldly Talisman: Available: 110 (Tier-1 to Tier-12)

[Heavenly Talisman: Tier-1 to Tier-12]

-Available: 50

...

...

-Space Step: Soul & Martial Talisman (Tier-12)

[Effect: 1000-Meter Teleportation in chosen direction!]

[Limitation: Useless under Grade-5 Space Locking Array!]

-Materials Require(s):

1. 100 Million Qi-Stones (Peak Grade-3)
2. 50 Million Soul Crystals (Peak Grade-3)
3. Space Stone (Grade-4): 2
4. Void Iron Ore (Grade-3): 10 Gram
5. Fickle Speed Grass (Minimum 1000-Year Old): 3 Grass Blades
6. Space Crystal (Grade-5): 1

[Creation Cost: 100,000 TP]

Except for the Fickle Speed Grass, the third and fourth materials were used in crafting space rings, so Ace had quite a lot if he simply dismantled all those storage rings. As for Fickle Speed Grass, it was an essential material for creating a Martial River Core Realm Breaker Pill.

So, Ace had all these materials, but the only problem was the space crystal because it was used in making space rings of grade-5 or above, and he only had 119 of them.

But they were barely enough to make the cut, so he could only ask Ronan for more, but even he could only buy them at a very high price, and even then, he would only be able to send a hundred more.

So, Ace had no choice but to part with a chunk of his high-grade soul materials if he wanted space crystal. So, he would get those crystals in one month, according to Ronan.

But before that, he wanted to try and see the effect of this Space Step Talisman and experience Teleportation.

He wanted to see if this talisman could teleport him outside the walls and formations as long as they didn't have this Space Locking Formation active.

From Ace's point of view, the teleportation concept was fabled in Golden Sky World, so this Space Locking Formation, which could stop Teleportation, would be even more fabled.

That's why he was confident in escaping if this talisman worked, and he has over a hundred of them, which would be equivalent to hundred miles of Teleportation!

"System craft one Space Step Heavenly Talisman." He commanded.

The system's voice sounded in affirmation, and soon after, a new heavenly talisman appeared in his Thief's Space.

Just like the other heavenly talisman, this new pitch-black talisman coin was a pentagram filled with tiny symbols, and in the center of this black pentagram talisman coin was Ace's thief symbol.

Expectantly, Ace took out the talisman coin. He had never used a heavenly talisman before, so he was looking forward to it.

Right, now, he was inside the servant quarters, and a grade-5 formation controlled the locks on this building.

So, Ace stood up and faced forward toward the direction of the main castle. He wanted to see if he could cross anything in his path and appeared right a mile away.

A mile away from this place was the wall of the castle so that he couldn't cause any commotion.

The next moment, Heavenly Qi flashed on the Space Step Talisman.

Thereby, Ace vanished on the spot!

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Chapter 579: Hidden Existence!

It's been three months since Ronan returned to the Imperial Domain.

However, today, he was returning to the Royal Demon Institute because his vacation time was coming to an end.

But in these three months, Ronan has been proactive as he visited his brothers and some high-ranking council members in the imperial domain, which made the usually dormant domain somewhat lively.

No one understood why this Imperial Prince was so friendly, but it wasn't something out of the expectation.

Just yesterday, Ronan was summoned by the Emperor again in the sham of bidding farewell, but in actuality, he was made to reveal his face by the Emperor, and only then was he excused.

But this fact was only known by Ronan or the Emperor, well at least it appeared to be.

Today, Ronan embarked on his carriage with Black Demon and left the Demonic Seal Castle under those puppet servants' revered-full gazes.

The Demonic Seal Castle will be returned to its dormant state after today, and only these puppet servants will remain here to tend to the castle.

NO.8,430 looked at the vanishing carriage as the castle gates slowly closed. He impassively said at this moment, "Alright, everyone, we can't slack off. We have to do our best even without His Highness's presence, one day, he'll return for good, and he might reward us if he tends to his home well like our ancestors!"

His passionate voice pulls the strings of those puppet servants' hearts, and they quickly leave to tend to their work in high spirits.

'Being a slave servant is not a joke.' Ace sighed in exasperation under NO.8,430's guise.

He couldn't help but feel a lingering fear when he thought about how he had nearly drawn the attention of the Demon Emperor by making Ronan purchase the space crystal and investigating the black robe demons that appeared with the participants.

The demon emperor not only made Ronan reveal his appearance, he probably scanned him with some formation to ensure he wasn't an imposter and let him go.

Ace had to admit the Demon Emperor even suspected his son's legitimacy just because he didn't behave like his past self or was a little out of character.

So, he had no choice but to pretend to be NO.8,430 with all his effort just in case these puppet servants entered the radar of the Demon Emperor.

But nothing has happened like that, not yet, at least. Ace still didn't dare to let his guard down, and every hour he would activate the fate map to find any danger around him.

His plan to enter the Emperor's palace also halted because of it, and he didn't dare to try anything for now. He would be a good puppet servant and do as expected from him before he acted.

But his plan had stopped, which doesn't mean it hadn't progressed at all. He had already acquired enough space crystal and valuable information about those black robes' demons.

They were really from the eight provinces and were turned into High Ranking Servant Puppets, and right now, they were going under some secret refinement to make them even more powerful so they could be used in the Fiery Hell Secret Realm!

Ace had long guessed that those geniuses of the outer provinces weren't just chosen because the royal zone decided to change their ways.

But they were chosen because they were all inferior to the demons in royal zones, and no one would raise any objection if they turned them into puppet servants. The ridiculous thing was they had fought tooth and nail for a puppet servant spot!

Ace wanted to know about their identity, and if Thomas weren't one of them, he wouldn't care about them even if they died, but he didn't dare to make Ronan seem too interested in those peasants.

Likely, poking his nose in those peasants' matter aroused the Demon Emperor's attention in the first place, so Ace didn't want to make it too obvious, so he could only give up and lie low for now.

On top of the castle turret, a tall figure was standing, observing those puppet servants going toward their daily words, but no one noticed him standing so high above in the middle of the day, not even Ace.

He wore a Black and Silver Mask, proving his identity as a High-Ranking Puppet Servant!

The next moment, he suddenly vanished from his spot when all the puppet servants scattered.

Inside the Emperor Palace, within a spacious room filled with bookshelves like an old library,

Three masked demons were sitting beside a large table made with exquisite red jade soul wood, a grade-7 soul material; even the chairs they were sitting on were made with grade-7 mind-calming clay!

Right in the middle of this table were different projections which were showing various images of the imperial domain, including the princes' castle and four outer palaces!

But one of the images showed the same scene the high-ranking puppet servant just saw as if his eyes were connected with this projection!

"What do you think, Leona?" The masked demon in golden robes asked gently in his deep voice.

If someone heard this name, they would be startled because Leona hadn't made a public appearance since she came back after she caused the life auction blunder, and everyone thought that she was being held in a dungeon as a punishment.

Only the First Prince still believed that she was living comfortably, and all the rumors about her being captive or punched were a sham because his Father and Mother loved her too much, and it seemed he was right about it as well.

Because the masked demon in golden robes was none other than the Demon Emperor while the Masked Demoness wearing a graceful black gown was the Demon Empress was sitting right in front of the Demon Emperor!

Leona was sitting on the side wearing a purple dress showing her nation's toppling figure. She softly replied at this moment with uncertainty, "Everything is routine."

She didn't have any reverence or hint of fear in her voice when she talked with the most powerful demon revered by every being, the Demon Emperor; her tone was even arrogant.

"Then it was a false alarm?" The Demon Empress questioned in her gentle and melodious voice.

"I was told by Master that there was a space fluctuation around the area of Seal Castle a month ago, so I was sent out to investigate, but there's nothing wrong with anyone.

"Father even checked Little Brother Ronan, and he's also fine, so I also think I might be a false alarm, or Ronan is doing something with Space Crystal which case that space fluctuation, which alarmed Master," Leona replied.

"Ronan probably found something that required Space Crystal so he probably came back to collect space crystal as well. But I can't just ask for him to reveal it, or I can't take things for my son. It's petty for Demon Emperor!" Demon Emperor coldly uttered.

"Nobody asked you to snatch things from Ronan. But at least you can ask him about what he was up to like a Father!" The Demon Empress coldly retorted. She won't dare to retort if they were around someone else but alone. They were just like any husband and wife.

"Look who talking about parenting, mother of the demons, humph!" Demon Emperor sneered in mockery.

"It's your fault that I can't show love to my sons!" Demon Empress slapped the table, making it tremble; she was clearly angry.

"It is our Race's custom. Go complain to ancestor if you're discontent!" Demon Emperor didn't back down, and they both started to squabble like an old couple.

Leona was calm as if she was used to it, and she was deep in thought while looking at the Ronan's carriage moving toward the exit of the imperial domain.

She suddenly said, "Let me go back to the Institute to complete my last grade."

"Absolutely Not!" The couple replied in unison.

"You can't go back until that hateful thief got captured, and I'll skin him alive publicly. To actually dared to humiliate the Imperial Family!" Demon Emperor's voice and aura turned icy as he said that.

Demon Empress also agreed as she spoke with hatred, "That scoundrel dared to sully your reputation, which is equal to sullyng the entire race's reputation!"

"Let it go. He's probably out of the continent now. Even the Master said he couldn't find any trace of his presence on the continent.

"Those devils are the best proof of it as well, and I have to investigate this space fluctuation that even startled Master in his cultivation state, and he sent me out.

"He clearly wanted me to investigate this matter, and the best way to do this is Ronan and what he's been up to recently. I can't let my Master down. You both should know this better than anyone!" Leona softly stated.

Silence descent inside the library.

Just who this mysterious Master was? Who could make two of the most influential persons on the continent force to reconsider?!

[Eternal Thief](#)

Chapter 580: Come to Demon Continent...

Over five hundred miles away from the Demon Continent were three large Islands, each scope in hundreds of miles, and these three islands were in a perfect triangle shape formation.

Right in the middle of this formation was a giant vortex, revolving at an unimaginable speed, creating a sink dark hole in the middle of the sea.

But strangely, its revolving didn't disturb the water level or create any waves outside this triangle formation.

It was clearly a strange natural phenomenon of the endless sea.

These three islands were none other than the mysterious Three Forbidden Countries, Thunder Mountains Country, Beast-Filled Country, and Dark Forest Country.

The Thunder Mountains Country and Beast Filled Country were both opened for young demons below the age of 1000 who belonged to the royal demon nation for adventure and tempering.

But no one over the 1000 years or manifestation realm or from another race could enter these islands, and to assure this, the imperial demon council oversaw this place.

Lastly, the Dark Forest Country was closed entirely to any demons and was the most mysterious of the three. Anything known about this country was it was surrounded by a faint fog, and one could see huge black trees' shadows from any of the other two islands.

At this moment, on the Dark Forest Country Island, which was filled with towering black trees, size 500 feet at least, the highest one was probably over 1000 feet tall!

Unlike the fog surrounding the outer island, the lands were completely exempt from any mist. On the contrary, the Qi density here was even denser than in the royal demon nation, and it clearly something of having to do with those black trees!

But this palace was also filled with vicious beasts and poisonous species, and every being on this island was far more potent than any other place.

For example, every beast born on this island had a beast core which was quite rare in any place except the core areas of the beast continent!

That was one of the reasons this place was kept a secret from others, and only high-level members of the council or the imperial family knew about the novelty of this place.

At this moment, on a 900 feet high black tree, under the shade of a thick branch and large leaves, Archie (Winter) was looking around with a sharp gaze, and after making sure no one was around, she relaxed a little.

She thought as a hazy dark Qi suddenly flashed past her eyes, 'Hundred Beast Transformation: Clover Snake!'

Dark mist oozed all over Archie's body before his shape started to twist and decrease, and soon the mist began to retract, and a pitch black, one-meter snake with a purple clover marking over its head appeared on Archie's place.

This was Myriad Beast Body Transformation Technique unique to Winter or Faceless Thief.

With this technique, Winter can turn into any beast recorded in the Myriad Beast Body Transformation Technique.

The disguise was simply flawless because she could perfectly copy 80% of the beast's abilities recorded in the Myriad Beast Body Transformation Technique!

Her current limit was Hundred Beast Transformation, and this Clover Snake was one of the hundred transformations she learned. However, once she broke into the Manifestation Realm, the limit would reach 1000 Beast Transformation!

The only flaw was the cultivation realm couldn't be controlled, and the beast she transformed will have her actual cultivation, and she could be killed or restricted once she took one of the beast forms.

Nevertheless, this was the perfect technique to get rid of Archie's ID, and no one will be able to suspect a snake in this vast wilderness.

From the imperial domain, the participants from the four demon institutes were bought here by the Northern Council Minister, and then they were told to survive in the Dark Forest Country for one year.

Winter had been pretending to be Archie for over three months after being sent into this dense forest. She knew it was her chance to get rid of Archie's identity without arousing any suspicion, and this place was simply too perfect for cultivation after Thief's House.

She knew Ace might take years to fetch her, and she didn't want to fall behind Freya and Noa in the Thief's house, so she decided to hide in the Dark Forest Country as a magic beast.

'Who could've thought those hateful demons were hiding this place.' Winter's snake eyes shimmered coldly, 'Now, I just need to destroy that soul contract they made me sign, and everyone would think some vicious beast killed Archie. They simply didn't care about these demons' statuses.'

She had long noticed that these demons were entirely dispensable for the imperial domain and weren't the only participants they were nurturing. They might be hiding the actual details about the entrance slots.

So, she knew she could easily get away, and she had to do it before this one year was over because she had this forbidding feeling that she won't get the chance if she didn't do it now!

The next moment, she respectfully asked the 'goddess' to get rid of that soul contract in her consciousness, and then like a dark streak, she vanished within a huge tree crown...

A cluster of buildings protected by an illusionary barrier was at the entrance of Dark Forest Country Island.

In one of these buildings was the Northern Council Minister sitting cross-legged on a cultivation mat.

Suddenly his eyes sprang open before he flipped his hand, and a broken crystal disk appeared in his hand. There was a name on this disk, 'Archie Soul Life.'

A hint of surprise flashed past Northern Council Minister's emotionless eyes before they returned to cold and indifferent.

'All those rumors and top of our list for Soul Solder Program, but he was only amounted this much, what a letdown!'

Northern Council Minister shook his head with disdain before he returned to cultivation as if nothing had happened!

While Demon Continent was preparing for the Ancient Allied Gathering with all their might, far away from the demon continent, on the Blood Continent was the Silver Ice Region, filled with ice and cold storms all year long.

Somewhere in the middle of this deadly cold territory was a palace that looked like it was made with pristine ice crystals.

A man with a peerless face and bright silver hair was releasing a blood-freezing aura as he looked at murderously on the large communication cube with his silver eyes.

"Dream Shatter, if you didn't want war, then release my daughter and uncle! I'll compensate you and even give you 50 spots in the gather from Silver Ice Clan!" His voice was filled with killing intent, but there was a hint of fear concealed in his voice.

In reply, a mild voice rang, "Dear Ice Lord, we are old friends, and you know my personality the best. I hate fighting and scheming the most.

"Your daughter is my niece, and your uncle is also my elder. If I want to harm or threaten you, I won't contact you to tell you they are in my care now and together. There's no need to turn hostile."

Ice Lord clenched his fists but didn't have a word to refute since the other party was right.

Ice Lord calmed himself as he asked coldly, "What do you want then?"

"See? Now we're talking like civilized beings and friendly neighbors. All I want is to chat with the Thief named Sky Stealer." Dream Shatter's mildly revealed.

Ice Lord's face fell, and he retorted, "What it had to do with you capturing my family members?! Go and search the demon continent. They will surely welcome the Might Dream Shatter, the Ancestor of the Human Race!"

"Hah, I would trust me. But that person won't come out just because I want him to, right? Even demons are helpless against him. I don't dare to overestimate myself." Dream Shatter chuckled.

Ice Lord sneered with scorn.

"As for why I 'invite' my little niece on this voyage is exactly for this reason. How about you hear it from her? You'll believe then that I didn't want to harm her and just want something of mine taken by the Thief, who actually called your daughter Sister in the past." Dream Shatter divulged.

"What nonsense are you spouting? It's impossible!" Ice Lord instantly rejected it without even hesitation.

"Alright, you can hear from her. You'll believe me then. It's also proved that I'm not making things up." Dream Shatter helplessly conveyed.

"D-dad?" A melodious voice rang before Ice Lord could say anything.

His frosty expression instantly melted, and concern shone on his face, "Alina, where are you? Don't worry. Dad will immediately come to take you back!"

Alina's voice rang again, "No, I want you to come to the Demon Continent directly. We are heading there, and you can take me back from there.

"Also, what Elder Dream Shatter said is true. That Thief might really be my brother who took care of me when that person suppressed grandpa.

"I-I just want to confront him, and if he's really become a thief, I'll break every tie with him and help everyone to capture him before he commits any more evil!"