

D. of Pride 661

Chapter 661 661- Complications Even Before The Event

What he didn't expect though was for Oswell to react with surprise when he revealed the location of his dungeon.

"Did you say Ghastly Winding forest?"...

"That's right, is there something wrong?" Simon asked looking at Oswell.

The latter blinked a couple of times before replying with some uncertainty "It's not that something is wrong, it's just that I didn't think your dungeon would be in the Ghastly Winding Forest".

"Why is that?".

"How should I explain it... Do you remember how I said in the Hexennacht, we discuss topics like feuds and territories?" Seeing Simon nod, Oswell continued—

"The race of demon nobles are very territorial, they would seek new territories to conquer and will never tolerate the presence of another demon setting up a dungeon near their territory unless it's by their permission".

"They would fight if need be. Most of the time, the conflicts are non destructive and in the form of political and undercover schemes. However, sometimes when the conflict gets intense, it leads to a dungeon war and might engulf multiple dungeons if it's an argument between two factions".

"To stop such conflicts from becoming too ugly, every decade a Hexennacht is held where we decide on how to settle such feuds and territorial disputes".

Simon nodded his head at Oswell's explanation. He could more or less understand till here. Being one himself, he could guess why the Demon Nobles fought for territory and why they did not tolerate the presence of another demon near their territory.

It was because of competition. If a demon noble conquers the territory of another demon noble, they would essentially remove any competition that was coming from the other party's dungeon. Thus making their dungeon the only one around to reap all the benefits.

It is after all a known fact that the more dungeons in a territory, the more distributed the benefit was. The benefit here referred to the adventurers who dived inside the dungeons and ultimately gave them DP.

Given this fact, a demon noble would go to any lengths to remove any competition near their territory.

Oswell continued "Not all demon nobles create their own dungeon. There are even some high ranking demons in this world without their dungeon. However, in the society of the Demon Nobles, where one's status is not only represented by their rank and power but also by their dungeon and how famous it was, those demon nobles are looked down upon".

"For example, if we compare two Demon Dukes, one with a dungeon and one without. The latter's status would always be below the former. This is also the reason why demon nobles compete fiercely with each other to make their dungeon more famous and wage war to remove any competitors. After all, who doesn't want status?"

"The reason why I'm telling you all this is because you need to be careful. You might not know because you haven't attended many events, but some of the high ranking demon nobles are fighting over to take claim of the Ghastly Winding Forest".

"It was a topic that was brought over many times in the last few Hexennact and I believe it will come up again this time too"

After saying all that, Oswell glanced at Simon. The meaning behind his glance was simple, the place that the other demon nobles were intensely fighting and vying over, Simon had nonchalantly squatted there and taken claim of it.

If the demon nobles get to know about it, a conflict would be inevitable. Oswell was concerned about that.

Simon closed his eyes after the former was done with his explanation. It was only after a while, did he open them back. A light of resolution flashed in his eyes.

If what Oswell said was true, then a fight was unavoidable. He didn't expect the Ghastly Winding Forest, the place he had set up his dungeon to be already vied up by other demon nobles.

Be that may, that was his territory now. There was no way he was going to let other demon nobles interfere in it. As such, he prepared himself mentally for the worst.

"Looks like you have made up your mind. Un, I like your current expression much more. What is done cannot be undone. The Ghastly Winding Forest is the place where your dungeon is located, so it's your territory now. You got to fight for it. That said, you do not have to be overly concerned. It's not like there is no way out of this situation" Oswell reassured.

"What do you mean?"...

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The next day, the Air Engine finally arrived at the Asphodel Meadows located in the southern region of the Demon Continent. The Asphodel Meadows was a captivating and otherworldly location far different than the dark and deathly Ten Thousand Bone Mountain range.

The place stretched out like an expansive tapestry of lush greenery, vibrant flowers, and gently swaying grass. The meadows are imbued with an otherworldly glow, casting a soft and radiant light that bathes the surroundings in an enchanting aura.

It is as if time stands still within these hallowed grounds, and a sense of peace permeates the air.

"This must be your first time coming to the Asphodel Meadows right?"

As the Air Engine started to descend near a clear space where all the other Air Engines are parked, Oswell commented arriving beside Simon who was observing the landscape below from the observation deck with a look of surprise.

His surprise was understandable after all, no one would expect a place like this would exist in the Demon Continent which was said to be a barren and harsh land.

"Hehe, don't get fooled. There is no such beautiful place like this in the entire Demon Continent. These ethereal landscapes, these mystical meadows that look like a place of serenity and tranquillity, are all just an illusion woven within an illusion".

"The Asphodel Meadows is a place where the boundaries between reality and illusion start intertwining. At first glance, these meadows appear as a tranquil haven, but beneath the surface lies a ghastly and perilous realm where danger lurks at every turn".

"The flourishing verdant foliage of exquisite flowers, these delicate petals that sway in harmony with a gentle breeze, releasing a rejuvenating fragrance, everything starts transforming as one ventures deeper".

Oswell explained with an odd expression. Although he did not say it out loud, but he too was once fooled by the scenery in front of him when he visited the Asphodel Meadows for the first time.

To think that everything in front of him was an illusion; Simon was inwardly a little shocked. He tried to use his Obstruce Demonic Eyes which had the ability to see through the truth behind certain things, but the result was all the same.

"It's no use using your demonic eyes too. If you want to see the Asphodel meadows for what it is, you will have to dive inside the pond located at the centre of this place. And only then will you be able to gaze at its true appearance. Coincidentally, we are also headed there" Oswell remarked, donning the air of an experienced guide.

After the Air Engine landed near a large clearance, Simon and the others got down.

"As this is the domain of the Demon Lord of Envy, Air Engines are not allowed to fly over from this point on. We will have to proceed forward with our flight skill".

After Oswell left behind some instructions to the cabin crew, he and Aisha along with Simon and the twins unfurled their wings and proceeded towards the depth of the Asphodel Meadows.

There were other Air engines similarly parked here and their passengers, the demon dukes and their subordinates were also making their way towards the inner regions of this plane. Of course, being who they are, a few clashes breaking out between the demon nobles here and there was unavoidable.

There was no meaning to the conflict, nor did the Demon Dukes themselves participated in it. They simply sent their subordinates to measure out the other party or just to kill their boredom.

It did not matter to them even if their subordinates died in the conflict, if the latter they could simply hire or summon more. As such, Simon and Oswald had seen quite a few fights break out on their way inside.

Some demon nobles also flew their way with the same intention. However, after seeing the size of their group, all of them changed their direction and targeted other smaller groups.

"It ruins my appetite seeing how these bastards use their subordinates. Even if they are their underlings and they can easily replace them, this is still going too far. Is the loyalty of their subordinates mean nothing to them" Oswald grumbled.

As someone who cared for his subordinates, the scene around him was sickening to say no less. Using their subordinates to kill their boredom, a thought like that would never appear to him.

It was not only him, Simon too was quite disturbed by the scene happening all around him. He couldn't understand the twisted thinking of these demon dukes who did anything that they desired.

Perhaps that's what a Demon Noble was and they were the odd ones among the lot. Whatever the case was, Simon didn't want to stay here and get embroiled in this meaningless conflict.

He and the others increased their speed. As they ventured deeper into the Asphodel Meadows, they encountered breathtaking meandering streams, with crystal clear waters cascading over smooth stones.

These babbling brooks reflected the shimmering light of the meadows, creating a mesmerizing spectacle. The place looked so perfect and exceptional that Simon had difficulty believing it was all just an illusion.

Chapter 662 662- Drow

Seeing his expression, Oswald couldn't help but chuckle, he was reminded of his own time when he foolishly believed everything in front of his sight.

"Do you know what the adventurers of today call the Asphodel Meadows?"

Simon looked askance "What?"

Oswald gave a wicked smile that was very true to his race and answered "The pearl of the Demon Continent, that's what they call it. They associate it with tranquil and peaceful, the only place in the Demon continent where nature and magic intertwine, offering a sanctuary and tranquillity to those who seek it".

"Of course, the reality is far from what they think. You will also understand what I mean once we reach our destination, the Empty Lagoon".

Oswald had told him on their way that the Empty Lagoon was the name of the pond that was the only thing in this place that reflected the truth of this land. Additionally, the pond was also their destination and the place where the Hexennacht will be held.

"Oh! If it isn't Oswald, what a coincidence meeting you here"

While Simon and the others were making their way towards the pond, a high pitched voice that had a touch of femininity, suddenly rang out.

Immediately afterwards, a couple of figures appeared in front, blocking their path. The group that stood in front of them, was led by a demon so fat that he looked almost like a ball. What's more, he had heavy make up on and was dressed in such striking and ridiculous clothes that he stood out in a very unique way.

How could Simon forget who this demon was? The demon duke who became the centre of attention in the auction by bidding against the Demon Archdukes. The demon against whom even an idiot might look smart.

He was the genius who purchased all the garbage items that appeared in the auction. Apart from the Eye of Enigma which turned out to be a genuine article, this demon was completely ripped off by

the Merchant of the Damned. And now, he had come to attend the Hexennacht along with his two subordinates.

Simon wouldn't have bat his eyes if it was any other demon noble appearing before him. However, this guy was after the twins at the auction and judging by the way he was lying in wait for them, this guy clearly didn't have any good intentions.

"What coincidence? Cut the crap. Why did you block my path Famoan?" Oswald spoke in an annoyed tone. He didn't have a very good relationship with this Demon Duke.

"Haha, you misunderstand. I am not blocking your path. You are free to go, my business is with the guy beside you" The Demon Duke who was called as Famoan, pointed at Simon, his eyes did not hide his perverseness as they roamed around the twins.

"Zerul is he the Demon Earl that blocked your path the last time?" He looked towards one of the two subordinates beside him and asked.

"That's right master, he is the very same demon that mocked you"

Zerul flashed a disdainful smile as he looked at Simon. Because of the latter, he was unable to complete his master's orders thus making him lose favour. As such, he bore some hatred towards Simon.

"Hoh!!!" after hearing that the other party dared to mock him, Famoan made an amused face as he observed the Demon Earl even more closely.

"To think that a time would come where even a lousy Demon Earl would mock me. It appears that it really is the case of not knowing the immensity of heaven and earth. Usually, I would have punished such behaviour until you begged for death".

"However, I'm in a very good mood right now so I'll caution you not to do anything to off put it. Listen well young blood, I came here with a proposal. Nullify the contract you made with those two and hand them to me".

"Of course, I am not an unreasonable demon, I shall offer you [20,000,000] DP each for them. How about it? I am even offering twice the amount I offered you last time"

After making his proposal, Famoon stood in the sky with his hands behind his back. Although he said it was a proposal, this was no different than an order. The opposite party was just a Demon Earl after all, as such he did not need to put them in his eyes.

Usually, he would have acted more brutishly and directly snatched the twins away from the Demon Earl. However, as he said before, he was in a very good mood after purchasing all sorts of things from the auction.

Hence he was generous enough to even make an offer to the Demon Earl.

Famoon thought that the other party would gladly latch on to his offer and willingly give the two children to him. But to his surprise, not only did the other party not take his offer, they even sighed in exasperation and cursed him out.

"You fucking jackass... I told you before too, but let me repeat it once again. They are my family and not for sale. If you get that, then buzz off you clown"

Simon spat glaring at his opponent with his crimson eyes. He had done his best to avoid trouble but it came looking for him at the end. He knew that those words would piss off the Demon Duke and he would be unable to avoid making a scene here.

However, he had no choice. He cannot just allow the other party to climb on top of his head and do whatever they want.

"I guess it was a waste of time to discuss it with a lowly Demon Earl. I told you before didn't I, not to piss me off? Since you refused my offer, I have no choice but to do things more crudely. Sigh... and here I was in such a good mood"

Famoon exaggeratedly shook his head and pointed at his subordinate "Zerul since this is your mess, you will be the one to clean up. Give the container of the Eye of Enigma to Salvus".

Since the Eye of Enigma was a sentient item, it couldn't be stored in a space ring. As such, he had one of his subordinates hold it the entire time.

The Demon Earl named Zerul did as he was told, after passing the container to the other guy, he had just stepped forward towards Simon and his entourage, when...

"This looks fun, why don't I join in too"

Oswell stepped between Simon and the Demon Duke "Famoon let me check out how powerful your subordinate is. Aisha why don't you teach this fellow a thing or two"

He glanced at his subordinate Aisha who immediately understood his intention. Just as the latter was about to step forward and engage the enemy, Simon stopped them.

"I know, you are doing this as a show of goodwill. However, this is my fight. I cannot allow you to get into my mess".

Oswell looked like he had something to say but when he saw the smile of reassurance on his friend's face, he chose to stay silent.

"Oswell, I don't care if you are favoured by the demon lords or the other factions. In the end, you are someone who was born much later than me. If you get it, then behave like one. Even if it's you, I will not hold back".

Famoon threatened; however, he also understood that his threat meant nothing to Oswell. The latter's status and dungeon was much higher than his own. In terms of influence and power, in the demon society he could even match some ancient Demon Archdukes.

Famoon wanted to possess the twins; however, they weren't worth enough fighting it over with Oswell. So when he saw Oswell backing down, Famoon was inwardly a little relieved.

On Simon's side, Theodore insisted that he leave it to him.

"Master, just leave it to me. I want to teach this bastard who dared to grab the hands of my sister, a lesson that he will never forget. Plus, it just so happens that one of my kindred is itching to try her new powers".

Seeing the boy insist so much, Simon could only nod his head. "Who are you sending?" Even he was interested as to how much of the Vecna's power those six have assimilated with.

"Hehe, Drow it's time for you to shine"...

"Yes my master".

As if reacting to his own, a voice came from the void. Immediately, the shadows cast by the surrounding objects, started bending and twisting in a weird way.

The sky darkened and a bloody glow descended onto the place. A figure emerged from the enlarged shadow of the boy.

Covered in a red black piwafwi, light leather armour and footwear of the elven kind, the Dark Elf who was called as Drow appeared beside Theodore.

At this moment, she was kneeling on one knee with her head bowed towards the boy.

"It looks like assimilation with the power I have given you is going well. Though it seems it will still take you all a lot of time to completely absorb it. Nevertheless, your current strength should still be enough to handle the likes of that guy".

"Go drow, show them the power of a true vampire. Also, make sure he regrets laying his hands on my sister"

With those words from Theodore, the Dark Elf raised her head. Immediately, two blood red pupils hiding underneath her ash grey hair, came into view.

Chapter 663 663- Drow (2)

These bloody pupils possessed a weird charm that made one unable to look away from them. When the Drow took a step forward, all the shadows seemed to have become agitated. They danced and slithered like a snake.

SHAA... what was even more strange was the disturbing noises that continuously came from the shadows like some kind of a chant.

"What is going on?" Zerul who had never faced a true vampire before, made a slightly confused face as he witnessed the strange phenomenon.

The mannerism in which the dark elf woman appeared and those blood red pupils, was giving him an ominous feeling for some reason. However, he didn't have the time to ponder about it because the woman suddenly sprang into action and rushed towards him.

She manifested two daggers out of blood and came hacking at him with them.

"Hmph, you think such low level skills can even touch me?" Zerul mocked, he immediately conjured a few Tempest Scythes and hurled them towards the dark elf woman.

As a Demon Earl, his aptitude towards magic was extremely high. The Tempest Scythe that he conjured, was an advanced tier magic of the tempest attribute. Each of these scythes possessed an extreme sharpness that could easily slice through sturdy metals like Blackgold and such.

Even Mythril would have a tough time stopping these scythes. As such, Zerul was very much assured that the Dark Elf woman wouldn't be able to close the distance.

From what he could see, she was a close combatant. Compared to her, he who fought using long distance magic, had an edge over her as long as he maintained this distance.

As if to prove him right, the dark elf woman was forced to change her direction and dodge in the face of his magic.

"Hahaha... let's see how well you can dance. After I kill you, it would be that demon's turn" Zerul gave a loud laugh and started conjuring tempest magic faster and faster.

Numerous tempest scythes with deadly sharpness targeted Drow, making it impossible for her to close the distance.

"Tch..." After she deflected a tempest scythe with her blood daggers, Drow clicked her tongue and muttered something under her breath "Shadow Snare".

Immediately, the shadows in the surroundings started rippling just like a water in a pond and she dived into it, dodging all the incoming attacks.

"What?! Where did she go?" Zerul rubbed his eyes in disbelief and looked all around him.

The dark elf woman disappeared too abruptly, hence he was unable to see how she did it. He could only look around for her trace and maintain his vigilance. However, what he didn't expect was for the dark elf woman to appear from under his shadow.

Oblivious to Zerul, his shadow started rippling and Drow materialised from beneath it.

STAB... the next second, a fierce pain assaulted his right hand and something dropped to the ground with a dull thud.

When Zerul turned his head towards the noise, to his horror he realised that the thing that dropped on the ground was none other than an arm. It was his arm which has been chopped off by the opponent.

"AAaaarggghhh!!" Grabbing his shoulder which was dripping blood, Zerul gave a blood curdling wail and immediately unfurled his wings to gain some distance from the dark elf woman.

SLICE... SLICE... SLICE... Numerous tempest scythes like a storm of blades, were manifested and besieged Drow from all sides. However, just like the previous time, she easily escaped the bombardment by diving inside the shadows.

This time, Zerul was clearly able to see how the woman had escaped his attacks. That said, being able to see it and respond to it in time was two different matters.

STAB... fierce pain assaulted him once again and to his surprise, he found two blood daggers deeply inserted into his shoulders.

Where did they come from? Zerul glanced behind him and saw the dark elf woman disappearing inside a nearby shadow.

She appeared and disappeared within the shadows just like that and stabbed him in his blind spot every time she showed her face. Soon, Zerul's back was decorated with numerous blood daggers inserted into him and he looked just like a porcupine.

"GUaaahhh!!!" in his anger, Zerul destroyed every object in his surrounding. However, how could anyone stop shadows from emerging?

Drow threw her daggers even from the tiniest shadow like an expert marksman and opened numerous holes on the demon.

"Dammit, stop fighting like a coward and face me up front" Unable to even catch a glimpse of his opponent, all Zerul could do was taunt her in frustration. If not for the Mana Armour protecting his vitals, he would have been lying dead by now from all the injuries.

Even the [Super Regeneration] of a Demon Earl was unable to keep up with the rate at which he was suffering an injury. If this went on for long, Zerul was sure that he would lose.

He had already lost favour from Fmoon after the last time he failed to get the twins. If he lost this fight, he would be discarded by his master. In the demon society, the fate of a Demon Earl, who had been discarded by his master, was far worse than death.

Therefore Zerul couldn't let this happen no matter what.

After that taunt from him, it was as if all the sound had disappeared from the world, the place had turned completely silent. The shadow cast by a nearby tree in front of him rippled and the dark elf woman slowly emerged from it and stood in front of him.

To his surprise, the taunt had worked, his opponent was finally within his sight. This was his chance, Zerul willed his body, activated numerous augmenting skills and reached towards Drow as if he was trying to grab a doll.

Thanks to numerous skills buffing him up, Zerul's body inflated like a balloon. He became so huge that he looked like a small mountain. Compared to him, Drow appeared more like a delicate doll made of glass that would shatter just from a little force.

It was obvious that when it came to pure physical strength Zerul was far superior to the dark elf woman. That is, if you only look at it from the surface. The reality was far different from what the demon had imagined.

His burly hand which could easily enclose her entire body within it, was stopped by a small delicate hand. Yes, the delicate and fragile doll that looked like they would crumble at the slightest of force, easily stopped the attack of a demon dozens of times bigger than her.

Had it been any other dark elf, Zerul might have been able to overwhelm them. However, Drow was different. She was no longer an ordinary dark elf, but someone who was bestowed the power of a Vecna, and turned into a true vampire.

Forget about Zerul, if Drow completely assimilated with the power of Vecna within her, then even his master, the Demon Duke would be no match for her. It was for this reason that Drow did not even deem to dodge the attack.

She casually extended her hand and stopped those burly hands from touching her. She then gave it a slight twist and seamlessly bent it out of shape.

CRACK... there was a loud noise of bones cracking and in front of the stunned eyes of Zerul, his last remaining hand was also broken by the dark elf.

"Aaaargghhh!!" Zerul dropped to the ground wailing. With one hand severed, one hand broken and numerous wounds on his body, he made a sorry sight.

A pool of blood quickly formed underneath him all the while, Drow silently observed him with her cold emotionless eyes. Suddenly, she opened her mouth and broke her silence for the first time.

"Get up, it's time for round two. I still have many more skills and abilities I haven't tried on you yet. This is the perfect opportunity, I want to get used to my powers as soon as possible. With this, I can finally get my revenge, so get up".

Her voice was icy and flat as if what she was saying, wasn't just some words, but orders.

What was she talking about? He had lost, shouldn't she just kill him? instead of that, what was this woman going on about?

Confused, Zerul raised his head up only to realise that he was standing on his feet, all his wounds and injuries had healed. Even his arm that was severed had grown back. What's more, all the devastation that had spread in the surrounding from their battle had returned back to normal.

No, it would be more appropriate to say that it was turned back to normal. His wounds, his right arm, the trees and the surroundings, everything was placed back to where it was in its original place and condition as if someone had pushed the rewind button.

Even the place he was standing currently at, was where the fight had initially started.

What was going on? How did everything change in a span of an instant?

Zerul looked all around him in askance. It was also now that he realised that everyone was gone. There was no one here other than them. Because he was too focused on their fight earlier, he failed to realise that something was wrong with the world they were in.

What was wrong? He didn't know. All he knew was that he was being toyed with from the start.

Chapter 664 664- Stealing

From the beginning, Zerul wasn't an opponent for Drow, she was just using him as a target to practice her abilities and skill. Every time that they fought, she would try something different and just when he would be hovering around the brink of death, she would bring him back to normal.

Like this, the fight repeated again and again like a loop until Zerul's mind and spirit were completely crushed.

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Outside, the onlookers were startled to see Zerul becoming unmoving right at the start of the battle. He remained like this for a while before his body suddenly shook and limply fell on the ground unconscious.

"What is going on Zerul? What kind of joke is this? Get up and fight"

Over on the side of the Demon Duke, Fmoon roared in rage. He looked at his subordinate who had suddenly fallen down even without suffering any damage and cursed out loud.

"Tch useless piece of shit. You can't even execute a single order given to you properly".

On Simon's side, Oswald was greatly surprised by the event too "What just happened?".

"I believe it was the work of [Mind Inducement] and other skills in the mix. That demon was immediately charmed and brought inside a world of illusion right at the start of the battle".

"An intense battle might have broken inside the mind of that demon that caused him to become unconscious. It might have been just a few seconds for us, but for them quite some time must have passed" Aisha analysed narrowing her eyes.

"What?!" the shock in Oswald's eyes deepened when he heard Aisha's explanation. He looked at the dark elf woman and couldn't help but ask "To be able to dominate her opponent's mind instantly and put them in a world of illusion without them being aware of it, what terrifying ability. Is she really a dark elf?".

Aisha did not answer immediately, instead, she observed Drow with those mysterious eyes of hers before arching her brows in a frown.

"I see now" She muttered in a low tone and added. "She is a dark elf no doubt. However, there is a great power lying dormant within her. That power is extremely mighty and gives more of a dark and cold feeling".

"If I have to guess it, that woman has been turned into a vampire and that too not an ordinary one, but a very high ranking one".

Aisha straightened her glasses and the mysterious light flashing in her eyes immediately disappeared.

"A high ranking vampire huh. Are you able to appraise her level and rank?" Oswald questioned from the side.

At first, he thought that he would have to intervene. However, looking at the situation once again, there was no need for him to step in.

Aisha shook her head in response to his question "I am unable to appraise her rank. However, based on the mighty power I sensed within her, I would say that her rank is the same as mine. As for her level, she is far from reaching the peak of her rank".

Although she hid it well, there were still traces of surprise within those calm eyes of hers.

"A dormant power huh? Well, everyone has their own secrets, it's not like she is the only one like that. I'm sure that once you completely awaken that ancient bloodline of yours, you will be able to step into the [S] rank very soon".

Oswell added raising his subordinate's morale. He then shifted his eyes towards Famoon and taunted the latter with a gloating smile.

"What's wrong Famoon? Did your subordinate get so scared that he fainted at the start? Haha, talk about throwing away one's face. Now what? Are you going to send that other subordinate of yours?"

"Hmph, don't get so full of yourself. What they defeated just now was a trash who can't even follow a single order".

Famoon snorted, he then conjured infernal flames on his right hand and in front of the stunned eyes of all the onlookers, he burned his subordinate to ashes.

In front of the might of the golden flames that carried a terrifying amount of heat, Zerul's body disintegrated in a couple of minutes. All that remained in his stead, was a black scorched earth releasing white smoke.

Seeing the ruthless actions of the demon duke towards his own subordinate, Simon and Oswald were deeply disgusted. The former had just killed their subordinate as if they were burning a garbage and not a Demon Earl.

Even if Zerul had failed to execute his orders, he was nonetheless loyal to Famoon. They did not deserve such an ending, especially from the object of their devotion.

After killing Zerul, there was not even an ounce of remorse on the demon duke's face, only a smile of elation and contempt.

"Why are you all looking at me like that, I just cleansed this world of one trash" Famoon nonchalantly shrugged his shoulders feeling everyone's gaze on him. After that, he pointed towards Simon and stated—

"Anyways, you are next Demon Earl. I was in a pretty good mood earlier, but you spoiled it completely. Now I will not only take everything that you have, but I will also make sure you regret making enemies with me until your very last seconds".

Saying that, Famoon stepped forward. In an instant, he covered a large distance and was already in front of Drow.

The latter immediately drew out her blood daggers and lunged forward; however, before her blades could even reach the opponent, she was blown back just from the aura released by the Demon Duke.

Drow's body flew back like a cannonball, she was just about to crash into the surrounding trees and mountains, when suddenly her momentum was halted and she was pulled towards Theodore.

The latter retracted his hands and made his subordinate gently land beside him.

"Master, I am.." Drow bowed her head in shame, she was just about to apologise for her defeat when Theodore cut her in between.

"That's alright. Your assimilation rate with the power of a Vecna, has not even reached ten per cent yet. That fatty is still beyond you. Return back and continue absorbing the power inside you".

"Yes," Drow obediently nodded her head and returned back to the shadow realm.

"Hehh, that's quite a unique power that you have boy. Is it perhaps a mutation magic?" Famoon asked intrigued by the way Drow appeared and disappeared inside the shadows.

"That's none of your concern. Come I'll be the one to take you on, let's see how powerful you are" Theodore beckoned with his hands in response to the Demon Duke.

"Hehe, I like your attitude. Once I take claim of you two, I will make sure to thoroughly educate you both" Fmoon laughed, with a twisted expression on his face.

He stepped forward once again and was just about to teleport past Theodore and towards where Simon was, when the space around him rippled, becoming solid just like a wall.

BAM... Fmoon crashed into that wall face first and was forced to take a couple of steps back.

Immediately afterwards, he clenched his nose and glared towards Oswald who had his hands extended in front of him at this moment.

"It looks like you really are ignoring my presence. Who do you think you are Fmoon to act so arrogantly in front of me?" Oswald spoke solemnly. He retracted his hands and the pressure of a high ranking demon, was instantly released from his body.

"As I thought, he really was a Demon Duke" Simon stated, that pressure, that aura, there was no mistaking it. It could only come from a high ranking Demon Duke. Simon had more or less guessed Oswald's rank as such, he wasn't that surprised.

"Oswald, this has nothing to do with you. It will be better for both of us if you didn't stick your nose where it doesn't belong" Fmoon bellowed, the fats around his face trembled with his words.

"I will... stick my nose. This demon here is my friend and as such, if anybody tries to harm him, they are my enemy too. So If you want to get to him, then you must first check with me if I agree or not".

As the last of his words fell, Oswald teleported in front of Theodore who was ready to duke it out with the Demon Duke. He patted the shoulder of the little boy and teleported him back beside his master.

"This..." Seeing Oswald trying to stand up for him, Simon wanted to say that he got this, but Aisha interjected in between.

"Lord Simon, please leave it to Master Oswell. He knows what he is doing. Besides, he truly sees you as a friend and wants to deepen his friendship with you. This is the first time Master has made a friend and I believe in his decision too"

Aisha bowed her head as she spoke. There was no worry in her eyes, only absolute confidence and faith in her master.

Simon didn't know what Oswell was planning; however, he left dealing with the demon duke to him. In any case, it was still too soon for him to show his cards and revealing the strength of the twins at this point will only impede his future plans.

As such, it was best for Oswell to deal with Famoan. Both of them were Demon Dukes so there shouldn't be any complications arriving.

With the Demon Duke taken care of, there was only the last of the two subordinates of his left.

Chapter 665 665- Stealing (2)

Simon activated his appraisal and glanced at Famoan's subordinate. The result that he got was as such—

Name- Salvas

Race- Battle Troll

Rank- [B]

Level- 621,

Skills- Ultra Enhanced Strength, Ultra Enhanced endurance, High Speed Regeneration, Poison Resistance, Body Enhancement, Flame Magic Resistance, Gale Magic Resistance. Brute Strength, Raging Fury, Unyielding Resilience, Thunderous Roar, Earth Quake Stomp, Armour Break, Boulder Throw, Thick Hide, Axe Mastery, Unrelenting Assault, Crushing Grasp...

This subordinate named Salvas, was stronger than the Demon Earl Zerul and being from the race of Battle Trolls, he possessed very high combat abilities.

Simon reckoned that even a party of level 600 adventurers would have some trouble dealing with a high level battle troll like him. Be that may, what attracted Simon's attention was not their level or their race, but the container in their hand.

The Battle Troll named Salvas was holding the Eye of Enigma that was sold in the auction. According to Prime, it was the actual article and one of the most precious items sold there.

Since he was concerned about the authenticity of the item, he gave up bidding for it. However, the eye turned out to be the real deal.

"The Eye of Enigma is a sentient item, it chooses its own master. You should keep an eye on the item, who knew if you are destined with it, the eye may end up in your hands" At this moment, Simon suddenly recalled the mysterious words that Prime spoke at that time.

Looking at the Eye of Enigma once again, Simon couldn't help but want to believe those words.

For good or for worse, the Demon Duke appeared in front of him and he also brought the Eye of Enigma with him. Simon didn't know if he was destined with it or not, but there was no way he would let this chance slip away from him.

This was his one and only opportunity to get his hands on the Eye of Enigma. As for offending the Demon Duke... there was no need to think about this matter anymore. In any case, the other party came to him with the intention of taking the twins away from him.

Therefore, they shouldn't have anyone to blame other than themselves if they got robbed of something instead.

Deciding so, Simon looked at Theodore who was eager to dive into the battle and gave the latter a simple command.

"Hehe, leave it to me master" Theodore thumped his chest and declared confidently. He then swiftly rushed towards the battle troll with a speed that was a hundred times faster than the speed of sound and punched the latter squarely in the guts.

The poor troll, it was unable to even sense Theodore and was sent flying like an artillery fired from a cannon. It flew for quite a few distances and after crashing into the surrounding trees and getting embedded into a mountain, did the troll's body finally come to a stop. Thereafter, the troll lay there motionless in a pool of its own blood.

The Battle Troll was knocked unconscious in one hit.

"Got it" Theodore who sent the troll flying, caught the container that slipped out of their hands. The boy observed the item that his master wanted, before taking it to them.

On the other side, Oswell and Famoon were locked in a standstill. Neither of them moved, they simply stood in front of each other and barred the other from doing anything.

Both of them were Demon Dukes with a very high status. Not to mention, they each possessed a large force behind them. If the two of them really fought it out here, they would cause quite a big commotion.

Additionally, this was the domain of the Demon Lord of Envy. As such, it would be extremely unwise of them to fight here.

Oswell knew that Famoon wouldn't dare to make a move with him as his opponent and that is why, he stepped forward without a thought to stop the other party. That said, he was getting tired of the glare Famoon was directing at him.

He who was aware of the other party's hobbies and taste felt a chill run down his spine every time those eyes glanced at him.

"Can you stop with that, it's really giving me the creeps. Just to let you know, I'm straight and my ideal types are well endowed women like Miss Lilith" Oswell goofed about.

"Shut up, I have no interest in a fatty like you" Famoon snapped giving Oswell a death stare.

"Haha, it's funny you calling me fatty. Compared to you, one might even call me slim. If I'm fat, then you are a ball, a ball of obesity...pftt" Oswell started laughing at the end of his own sentence.

"You!! laugh all you want right now, I'll make you regret all this later..." Famoan snapped back like a wounded beast. He was just about to start a second round of argument with Oswald when from the corner of his eyes, he noticed his subordinate Salvus being blown back and the Eye of Enigma being snatched by the opponent.

"This... give it back you brat" Famoan moved to stop Theodore from taking away the prized item he bought from the auction. However, he was stopped by Oswald who blocked his once again.

"Move Oswald, can't you see those people are stealing my item? Are you still going to defend them?" Famoan pointed at Simon and his group and asked in rage.

"Why are you getting so agitated for? Didn't you come here with the same intention? Now that the target stole something from you instead, you are suddenly acting like a victim. You had this coming, so stop with your act, it's disgusting"

However, Oswald made a repulsed face and simply exemplified the irony in Famoan's words.

The latter was extremely frustrated and angry over the fact of losing the Eye of Enigma in an attempt to get the twins.

When was it that a Demon Duke like him failed to get something that he desired? What's more, to even suffer a loss in the process? This suffocating feeling inside his heart, was very foreign and threatened to burst out of him.

However, Famoan could only swallow his bitterness for the time being. He knew that as long as Oswald was near the Demon Earl, he couldn't do anything to the latter.

As if to prove him right, he could tell from Oswald's eyes that were saying 'Don't even think about it'.

In the end, Famoan could only snarl in frustration, glare at Simon and the others who snatched his item before dropping some ominous words and leaving.

"Oh, that's right. When you check the items you bought from the auction later, do give me your opinion" Oswald commented looking at his departing back.

The other party would no doubt vomit blood once they realise that everything that bought was all garbage, they were completely scammed by Grimvul. The only item that had any worth was also snatched by Simon.

At that time, Oswell's words would definitely madden them until smoke starts coming from their head.

After Famoon left, the area descended into silence once again. Of course, there were still the rumbling sounds of fights erupting in the distance. Nevertheless, with Famoon gone, there was no one to make things difficult for them.

The group gathered together and observed the container in Theodore's hand.

"Hahaha, Simon I didn't know you had such a cynical side to you. To think that you would rob Famoon who came to rob you instead... it's so hilarious that I can't stop laughing" Oswell laughed, flashing Simon a thumbs up.

Other demons wouldn't even dare to speak against a high ranking demon like Famoon. However, Simon had not only mocked them, but even robbed them of their item.

"So the Eye of Enigma ultimately landed in your hands huh? In the auction, I couldn't say it with certainty but seeing how it came to you, I can now say for sure that the Eye of Enigma is a genuine sentient item".

Just like Simon, Oswell and the other high ranking demons too had given up on bidding for the Eye for the very same reason. They weren't sure if the Eye of Enigma was a genuine article just from its outward appearance.

And they sure as hell cannot believe the words of the Damner Merchant. In the end, it all relied on the ones who were willing or unwilling to take the risk.

It wasn't about the price of the item than it was about their reputation. 65,000,000 DP... For many of the high ranking demon nobles, this sum wasn't considered much. In fact, had they really bid for the item the price would have sky rocketed to hundreds of millions and might even reach a few billion DP.

Nevertheless, they did not do so because their reputation was much more precious to them. There had been many precedents before where a high ranking demon bought an item he thought was genuine for a large sum of DP only for it to end up a garbage in the end.

The DP spent on the item wasn't as much of a problem as it was their reputation which had taken a hit.

DP could always be recovered after a certain period of time. However, the same couldn't be said for their reputation. In the demon society where the demon nobles cared very much for their status, getting swindled by Grimvul in front of the whole demonkind, was a blotch that one cannot wash away even after hundreds of years.

They would be made fun of by other demon peers in every event and reduced to a laughing stock.

Chapter 666 666- Master Of The Eye

This is the main reason why not many high ranking demons are willing to take risks by bidding for items like the Eye of Enigma whose value is incredibly difficult to assess.

What's more, the shady way the merchant had introduced the eye, they had all the more reason not to bid. Oswald too had similar thoughts; however, when he saw the Eye of Enigma end up from Fmoon to Simon as if the item was choosing its master, he couldn't help but believe that it was a genuine article.

Though that said, Oswald had no intentions for the item. Since the Eye of Enigma ended up in Simon's hand, he believed that the item had chosen him.

"Master, here" Theodore passed the Eye of Enigma to Simon.

Looking at the container that had the mysterious Eye of Enigma, Simon's heart started pounding in anticipation. As he gingerly extended his hands, he couldn't help but wonder if the Eye of Enigma had really chosen him as his master.

Simon reached out and held the container, his fingertips brushed the smooth surface of the glass prison. As he looked at the eye floating inside, he couldn't help but inadvertently get drawn towards it.

The eye looked so enigmatic, so mysterious, like a piece of art that it was hard for him to look away. Simon was observing the eye in a trance when suddenly he noticed the eye move.

It turned towards him and reflected his countenance on its pupil. Immediately afterwards, a mysterious energy started leaking out of the container and latched onto his hands.

A jolt shot up his arms causing him to recoil momentarily. Shocked, Simon immediately snapped out of his trance. He instinctively tried to move his hand away from the container; however, to his surprise, he realised that his hands were not following his commands.

It was as if they got frozen the moment they came in contact with the container. It was not only his hands but his entire body was frozen still, leaving only his mind to work as usual.

What was going on? Simon turned his eyes towards the people around him only to realise that they too were frozen still just like him. The breeze, the swaying of the grass, the falling leaves, everything had come to a halt around him as if the time itself had come to a stop.

What was going on? Simon didn't know. However, what he was clear about was that it was definitely the doing of the Eye of Enigma.

Simon shifted his attention back to the eye floating inside the container. At this moment, the mysterious energy that had latched onto his hands, was now coursing through his entire body, rushing through every corner and cell of his in search of something.

This continued for a while before there was a sudden resonance between the fragments of pride lying deep within him and the Eye of Enigma.

The resonance started intensifying, reverberating through the vast expanse of this space and causing the very ground under Simon's feet to tremble. Beads of perspiration formed on his forehead, his heart raced and his grip on the container tightened, the muscle in his arms straining against the mounting force.

He could feel the eye yearning for him, beckoning him to release it out of its containment. The thing inside was no mere artefact; it was an entity unto itself, alive with power and purpose.

The fact that it resonated with him and was beckoning him, did it mean that it had chosen him as its master? Simon steeled himself with an unyielding determination for what was to come next and destroyed the container.

With a sudden, explosive burst, the container shattered into a thousand fragments, casting shards of glass in all directions. A blinding light erupted from within, engulfing Simon in its brilliance.

As he instinctively closed his eyes, he suddenly felt a searing pain in his left eye socket causing him to let out a guttural cry of agony.

Something had pierced his left eye and was now trying to tunnel through. The pain was unlike anything he had experienced before, it was so excruciating, radiating through every fibre of his being.

It felt as if a thousand fiery needles had pierced his flesh, tearing apart his senses and leaving him screaming and gasping for air.

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Outside his time space, where everything was moving normally, the group around Simon was shocked by his sudden screams.

"Master!!" Concerned, Theodore and Maybell called out to Simon. However, he did not respond as if he couldn't perceive them. His body seemed to have been frozen mysteriously and droplets of blood trickled down from his closed left eye.

What just happened? In one moment, he just held the container and the next second he was letting out deep cries of agony. Why did the blood come out of his eyes? Who attacked him?

Just as the group was getting anxious as to what was going on with Simon, Prime who was hiding inside Simon's pocket, suddenly jumped out.

"There is no need to fret. This brat was chosen by the Eye of Enigma and is now currently experiencing what is called the 'Temporal Stasis'. I'm sure that in his time space, everything around him is frozen still thus the reason why he is unable to perceive us".

"This moment is extremely important for him as it is related to his twisted destiny, so do not disturb him during this timeframe" Prime explained.

The group finally calmed down after they were told that it was the doing of the eye. However, when they looked at the container, they couldn't feel anything out of the ordinary. The container was still intact and the eye was floating inside it as usual.

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Back inside his time space, Simon was currently enduring an excruciating amount of pain. His body trembled with anguish and a vision with a kaleidoscope of vibrant colours and swirling patterns, swam inside his head.

Simon heard a voice sound inside him [The Eye of Enigma reveals itself in front of you. The Primordial Eye, Celestial Ocularis has chosen you as its master].

Right after that voice, the vision in front of him started becoming clear. Simon found himself standing at the foot of a once-mighty tower that stretched towards the heavens.

It was a colossal structure, now reduced to crumbling ruins and echoing with the whispers of forgotten glory. The tower's spires, once reaching for the sky, now drooped with weariness, a solemn reminder of the passage of time.

In the vision, eight shadows stood near the tower, their forms cast against the backdrop of twilight. They emanated an aura of ancient power, each possessing a distinct silhouette that hinted at their unique identities.

Some stood tall and imposing, while others appeared graceful and elusive.

"This is..." With eyes wide open in surprise, Simon recalled that the vision in front of him was the very same dream he had about a year ago, during Cecilia's birthday.

Something that he thought was just a passing dream, why did it appear in front of him in the form of a vision once again? Baffled, Simon looked around.

Just like in that dream, the Eight Shadows were locked in a fierce battle with two shadows, their powers colliding with a cataclysmic force overturning the very heaven and earth and causing unnatural phenomena to occur.

Amongst these eight shadows, Simon's gaze was drawn towards one of the figures that was very much familiar to him. It was none other than the adult looking Cecilia, the Forest Spring Royal Spirit.

Those emerald green hair, fairy like beautiful face, those mystical speckles of light that always followed her. The two figures resembled one another so much that Simon couldn't help but associate them together.

He had his own conjecture as to who she was; however, his attention wasn't on her this time, rather it was on the distinct silhouette next to her.

Standing regally among the group, was a diminutive figure no taller than a fairy. With gossamer wings that glimmered in the fading light, it radiated an ethereal beauty that contrasted with the desolation surrounding the tower.

The tiny figure wore a crown upon its head, resembling that of a fairy king, marking it as a being of authority and reverence.

Just as Simon tried to observe the figure more closely, the vision became tumultuous. A gigantic eye opened in the sky and stared at him. That eye that looked like it existed since the beginning of time, was the eye of enigma or in other words, the Celestial Oculairs.

As soon as the eye appeared in the sky, the vision dissipated in the recesses of his mind leaving him disoriented and breathless. The pain began to subside and Simon found that he was finally able to move his body once again.

He lowered his trembling hand and looked upon the scene before him. The Eye of Enigma, no longer confined, had embedded itself deep within his left eye socket, its mystical gaze locked with his own.

The eye that once belonged to him had been replaced by the pulsating, mysterious eye called the Celestial Ocularis.

Simon extended his hands and touched his left eye. Weirdly enough, he did not feel any discomfort from it anymore. On the contrary, he felt warmth from his newly acquired eye.

His vision, once clouded by agony, sharpened with an uncanny clarity, allowing him to see the world in a different, more profound light. The eye had chosen him, he had forever become bound to its enigma, linked to its inscrutable power.

Chapter 667 667- Invitations From The Various Factions

Just as Simon wondered what the Celestial Oculairs wanted from him and why did it show him that vision, he felt his clothes being tugged and saw the twins looking at him in concern. The time was starting to flow normally once again.

"Master, are you alright? It looked like you were in immense pain?" the twins asked.

"My friend, are you alright?" It was not only the twins even Oswell and his subordinate Aisha, were glancing at him with worry.

Simon nodded his head and spoke a few words to disperse their concerns "Yeah, I'm alright now. I'm sorry for worrying you all".

"You don't have to say sorry, we are just glad that you are alright" Oswell laughed patting Simon's shoulder. The group started becoming merry once again when Prime interjected in between.

"Brat how is your eye? Do you feel anything unusual?".

"This..." Simon thought for a while before deciding to keep the vision he had, a secret from everyone. "Its fine, it would take a little time to get used to the new eye. However, other than that, there seems to be nothing unusual".

He did not lie, in fact, the left eye felt no different than his original eye. Apart from it feeling a little foreign, the left eye was no different than an ordinary eye.

"I see..." Prime seemed to have realised something and did not press further. He simply jumped back inside Simon's pocket leaving behind a few words of his.

"Although I'm sure you are already aware of it, but brat be careful from now on. You now possess one of the items that existed since the dawn of time and to top it off, the colour and patterns on your left eye are very unique and unfathomable. I'm sure many demons will inadvertently get drawn to it. Never let them know what eye it is".

The words that Prime spoke, was low enough for only the two of them to hear.

Simon glanced at his pocket, this guy seemed to be quite knowledgeable about the eye. Well given the latter's advanced intelligence and the fact that they were the ones to tell him the eye was a genuine article, it was not surprising.

Still, the words that Prime said about the eye being an item that existed since the dawn of time, really intrigued him. Simon planned to learn more about it from him later. For now, he decided to focus on what's ahead.

The group after resting for a bit, resumed their journey through the Asphodel Meadows and after travelling for five days, they finally reached the place of their destination.

Simon and the others might have arrived here sooner had they flown here straight. However, they chose to take rests in between and slowly make their way. Hence when they arrived at their destination, most of the demons who were lagging behind them, had already arrived.

'So this is where the Hexennacht is going to be held' Simon muttered inside his heart and tightly clenched his hands for what was going to come next.

Up ahead in front of him, was a vast clearance filled with the serene ambience of the meadows. A grand open stage reminiscent of the ancient architecture, stood at the heart of this place. Its towering columns and elegant archways exude an air of regality and mystique.

This magnificent stage was the venue for the Hexennacht, a momentous gathering that is held every ten years.

Standing on the stage, attending to the various demon nobles were servants adorned in elaborate and ethereal attire. They moved around gracefully, their captivating beauty attracting the eyes of every demon noble and their enchanting presence adding to the grandeur of the event.

The atmosphere on the stage is filled with celebration and the air resonates with the melodies and songs performed by skilled musicians. Various food and delicacies lined up the tables, their aroma attracting the appetite of all the attendees present.

"Haha, don't look there for now. We will also be going there but first, we need to make a trip to the Empty Lagoon" Oswell commented, leading the group towards the pond.

Located a few dozen miles away from the venue and hidden amidst the tall overgrown trees, was a seemingly unremarkable pond known as the Empty Lagoon.

At first glance, it appeared no different than any ordinary pond; however, this ordinary pond holds the key to uncovering the true nature of the illusory landscape that envelops the meadows.

The Empty Lagoon stretches out like a mirror, its still surface reflecting the distorted beauty of the Asphodel Meadows above.

"Hehe, this is our destination. Only those that possess the knowledge about the pond, are granted the ability to look beyond the veil of illusion. Lets go, we will meet on the other side" Oswell did not explain further and immediately dived into the pond. Aisha followed behind him.

Simon hesitated for a while before making up his mind and diving inside the pond with the twins in tow. He thought that he would have to submerge inside the pond for a while. However, to his surprise as soon as he dived inside the pond, he surfaced almost the next second.

Splash... Displacing a large volume of water, Simon appeared out of the pond and landed on the shore.

What was going on? He should have been diving inside the pond, so why did he surface out? Tilting his head in confusion, Simon searched for Oswell and Aisha when suddenly his gaze froze and he stood rooted in his place.

His calm expression crumbled, giving way to a slack jawed dumbfounded face.

"Haha, that's the exact same face I made when I first came to the Asphodel meadows and surfaced out of that pond. Welcome to the actual Asphodel Meadows, my friend" Oswell laughed.

Simon could hear Oswell talking; however, at this moment he did not have the additional concentration to pay attention to anything else. The reason for that was because as soon as he surfaced out of the pond, the world he had seen up until now, seemed to have morphed and transformed into something else entirely.

"Woah, master this place is nothing like the land we had just seen," said the twins who emerged out of the pond after him.

The illusory beauty of the Asphodel Meadows that had been gazing up until now, faded away revealing a grim and desolate realm.

The vibrant greenery and blooming flowers transformed before their eyes. The once picturesque scene distorts into twisted, sinister forms. The meadows became overgrown with thorny vines that writhe and coil, eagerly seeking their next victim.

The flowers, once radiant and enchanting, reveal jagged teeth and emit toxic fumes, their sole purpose to deceive and harm.

Streams that once seemed pure and inviting, now run black with poisonous liquid, their gentle flow hiding treacherous currents and unseen creatures lurking beneath the surface.

The mist that wafts through the air is no longer benign but becomes a suffocating fog, obscuring vision and disorienting those unfortunate enough to be ensnared within its embrace.

The fauna and flora of the Asphodel Meadows reveal their true nature. Trees, gnarled and twisted, stretch out their branches like skeletal arms, eager to ensnare unsuspecting victims in their grasp. T

he grass underfoot becomes razor-sharp blades, cutting through flesh with malevolent glee. Even the air itself turns toxic, laden with invisible spores that bring illness and decay to any who dare to breathe it in.

True to the Demon Continent there is no peace in this land, only a constant struggle for survival. Every element of the landscape, from the seemingly innocent petals to the towering trees, is imbued with a dark purpose—to deceive and to kill.

Simon couldn't believe that this was the true nature of the beautiful Asphodel Meadows he had been glancing all this time.

"I can tell that you are surprised. You can interpret this land of deception in any way you want. But you know, every time I visit the Asphodel Meadows, it is like a reminder to me that many times appearances can be deceiving and that the darkness can lurk beneath even the most captivating façades".

"There is no true peace and solace in this world, only deception spun inside a cocoon of illusion. If one wants true peace they need to create it with their own power" Oswell spoke uttering some deep words at this moment.

Simon snapped out of his daze and nodded his head as if understanding what the other party was trying to convey. Now that the true essence of the Asphodel meadows was laid bare in front of him, he could see the duality that exists in the world.

The pond, the Empty Lagoon that acts as a medium, a gateway between the illusory realm above and the stark reality beneath. It serves as a conduit for those seeking to see beyond the deceptive surface, offering a rare opportunity to witness the truth that lies hidden in the depths of the meadows.

"Alright, let's go. All the other demon nobles must have arrived by now, the Hexennacht will be starting very soon" Oswell stated turning around to fly where the venue was.

Seeing that no other demon came from the direction of the pond after them, Simon guessed that they were among the last demons if not, the last ones to arrive. He and the others hurriedly unfurled their wings and took to flight.

Soon, the venue appeared in front of their vision. Having dived and submerged himself inside the Empty Lagoon and seeing through the deceptive façade of the Asphodel meadows, Simon saw a stark contrast from what he had witnessed of the grand stage before.

Chapter 668 668- Invitations From The Various Factions (2)

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The once beautiful attendants, who had appeared radiant and graceful, had been replaced by wretched looking beings with multiple arms and weird body shapes. Their forms distorted and their countenances twisted and grotesque.

These were the true nature of the elegant figures that attended to the demons. As for the melody that once enchanted the air, it now took on a sinister and demonic theme.

The once soothing tunes morphed into dissonant, eerie notes that evoked a sense of violence and malevolence.

As Simon stepped foot into the grand stage, an overwhelming sense of seriousness engulfed his body. He realised that this gathering will mark a turning point in his life from which there is no going back.

This was the Hexennacht, the social gathering of the demons and the pivotal juncture of his life that will determine the fate of his territory and his standing among the demon hierarchy. The stakes are high, and failure was not an option.

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Quite some time had passed since Simon and the other stepped into the venue and mingled with the crowd. Most of the high ranking demons and those making their way from the Ten Thousand Bones Mountain Range, had also arrived.

Nevertheless, the event hadn't started yet. The reason for that was simple, the host of the event, that is the Demon Lord of Envy was yet to arrive. Besides, the Hexennacht usually went on for days to even weeks depending on the issues discussed. As such, nobody was in a hurry for the start of the event.

For the demon nobles whose lifespan extended for aeons, their sense of time was quite distorted. To them, the passing of a few days, weeks or even a year, felt like nothing more than a gentle flicker of a candle flame.

It was more so for the demon's ranking above Demon Marquess. Their long lifespan of hundreds of years has afforded them a high level of patience and wisdom. Compared to that, what was waiting for a few days or weeks amount to?

The Hexennact was unlike all the other demon gatherings, here they not only discussed various issues of the demon world, but they also used this chance to associate with other demon nobles and expand their network.

For high ranking demons, the Hexennacht was a stage where they can grow their faction and as for the average ranking ones, it was their chance to join one.

One need not even explain how beneficial joining a faction was for demon nobles like Demon Earl and all. Doing so not only provided them with benefits from that high ranking demon, it also protected them from the retaliation of other demon nobles and factions.

The power and the force that an average ranking demon noble can muster is only so much. It is nowhere enough to deal with unforeseen danger for say, a dungeon war, where another demon noble had suddenly declared war on them or when their dungeon is on the verge of getting destroyed because the levels of the adventurers were simply too high to deal for them.

During such events, the benefits of joining a faction becomes more evident. Not only do the faction behind them back them up with additional forces to safeguard their dungeon, but they might also go as far as to start a dungeon war on the other party.

Thus when a demon noble joins the faction, not just anyone can start a dungeon war on them willy nilly. The other party would have to think about the variables coming from the target's factions and the consequences of their action.

It is for this reason that the venue was buzzing with conversation, bootlicking, banter and shameless self promotion of the various demon nobles.

For the average ranking demon nobles, if they could associate with a high ranking demon noble or at the very least socialise with someone in their factions, it raises their chances of getting into a faction dramatically.

That's right, not just any demon nobles are allowed into a faction. The high ranking demon who leads their factions only pick those demon nobles that can actually empower or strengthen their faction in some way or other.

For the high ranking demon nobles, the faction was their force and represented their status in the demon society. As such, they wouldn't allow any demon noble in if they didn't see any benefit in them.

To that extent, every average ranking demon nobles here were very fervent to get into a faction. Hence the hubbub.

Most factions that had some status and were famous in the demon society, glossed over the Demon Earl who created their dungeon and mostly focused on Demon Marquesses. That said, it was not like the Demon Earls weren't getting any offers.

There were always exceptions to the rules like for example there happened to be a Demon Earl who was quite close to a very famous Demon Duke and garnered much attention from the many high ranking demon nobles present in the venue.

It was only natural for such an exceptional Demon Earl to get invitations from some famous factions that not just any demons can get into.

"Thank you for the invitation, I will think over it and let you know" Simon spoke with a smile and politely kept the invitation in his pocket.

How many times had he repeated those words? Simon sighed in exasperation. Including the card he got just now, he had already received more than seven invitations.

"Woah, look at all these invitations, even the biggest faction led by a demon duke, the Demonic Enclave is also interested in you. So what are you going to do?" Oswald asked laughing at his predicament.

"Please, the one they are interested in are you. All those factions are sending me invitations because they happened to see us together. In the first place, this is all your fault. I told you before that we should mind our own business once we reach the venue. So why are you still following me?"

Simon spoke a little vexed by all the attention that he was getting from the surrounding demon nobles. It might not look like it, but Oswald had a very high status in the demon society. He was not only favoured by various Demon Archduke factions, but even some Demon Lords are also interested in him.

Naturally, walking side by side with him, Simon was bound to garner attention. His plan of keeping a low profile was thrown out of the windows.

"Don't be like this, aren't we best friends? Besides, I don't want to deal with those pesky Demon Dukes and their factions. Having you by my side makes things easier for me... Haha. Hey, that food looks delicious, let's go and try it". Saying that, Oswald strutted towards a table decorated with food.

Simon could only sigh helplessly and tag along. The other party did help him a lot on the way after all. As such, he had no choice but to accept the role he was thrown into all of a sudden.

Sighing for the umpteenth time since coming to the venue, Simon was just about to follow Oswald, when a demon noble stepped in front of him.

"Ah, a moment please".

Screaming in his head 'Not again' Simon glanced at the demon standing in front of his path. Extravagant dress and decorated in ornate items, they gave off a commanding pressure. Their presence was like a vast mountain, grand and immense. It was enough to give him a faint pressure that originated from his bloodline.

There was no mistake, the demon in front of Simon was no average demon but a Demon Marquess. It needs to be mentioned that a Demon Marquess is a formidable entity within the demonic hierarchy, possessing immense power and authority.

They possess their own armies and are masters of intermeditate tier dungeons. They are cunning and extremely ambitious as they navigate the intricate politics and power struggles among demon nobles, ever seeking to increase their dominion and influence.

Their strategic acumen was what made them a force to reckon with. Be that may, this wasn't the reason why Simon was so surprised, it was because, for some vague reason he felt like the other party looked familiar to him.

Especially that kind of dressing sense, those flowing garments that blends the rich colours of the desert, those intricate embroideries reminiscent of winding serpents or flames and their attire that incorporates deep shades of gold and ebony, representing both the infernal essence and the blazing sun of their domain.

Where did he see a demon noble like him before?

"Ahem" While Simon was lost in his own thought process, the Demon Marquess facing him coughed and introduced him.

"I'm Demon Marquess Vargel. Listen well demon, I came here on behalf of my father, the Demon Duke of Sphinx to give you the invitation to join his faction, the BloodMoon Pact. Consider it as your greatest stroke of luck and strive to work hard for the faction".

The Demon Marquess introducing himself as Vargel, spoke. Although his tone was haughty and condescending, it was still far better than others who came to Simon before.

Simon took the invitations and spoke some vague words saying how he will think over it and let him know. Although Vargel was a little unsatisfied with the response, he nevertheless did not say anything and turned around to leave.

Seeing the Demon Marquess leave, Simon sighed in exasperation. This made it the Eighth time. Seriously, it was turning out to be more hassle than he thought.

It was not worth it to make enemies with all these factions. Fortunately, he kept his answers vague which left a path for him open.

Chapter 669 669- Presentation Of Power

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Simon's vague answer left a possibility that he might join their faction. As such, unless he did something foolish by himself first, all those factions shouldn't make things difficult for him first.

Of course, they were only extending their favourability towards him because of Oswell. Had it been any other Demon Earl, they would not even get an invitation from these factions. And even if they did, they might not be in a position to reject or shake off the invitation like Simon.

In the latter's case, he was only accepting the invitations from the various factions because Oswell told him to keep playing them off and maintain a neutral stance till the very last second of the event as it would help him later on.

If not, Simon had no interest in joining any faction. It is true that joining a faction secures and increases the survivability of a demon and their dungeon. However, all those benefits are just superficial.

Joining a faction had a lot of limitations and constrictions too. The High ranking demon nobles are not protecting the other demon nobles and their dungeon out of the goodness of their heart. They expect a sum, a fee of sort in return every year for allowing you to join their faction and extending their protection to you.

Not only that, those demon nobles who join any faction are also required to transfer a portion of their assets to the leader of the faction, like their territory, DP, subordinates and the other various things that their dungeon produced.

It is in return for all these that the faction protects you. The faction is in essence a private force of that high ranking demon and is in no way established to support the demon nobles.

For Simon, these factions appeared just like a trap to prey on other demon nobles who cannot survive without their protection.

His dungeon was not in a position where it needed protection from a faction, so why should he join one? In fact, staying away from them was the best thing he could do.

Simon appeared beside Oswald who had already started stuffing his mouth with various food kept on the table. The glutton was the one who had fed all those words to him. Oswald had much more experience dealing with the demon nobles and their pesky tactics. As such, he knew the right words to say in this situation.

"Nom.. ugy grdilly grr bhinvg a dhrd itme agrtn ugy?" (You really are having a hard time aren't you?) Oswald spoke with a mouth full of food.

Simon clicked his tongue in frustration and glanced at the latter in surprise. Even though he could see that the food is being served by such hideous monsters, how could he have the appetite to eat the food?

"I don't have any bias towards food. Food is food, it doesn't matter who cooks it. As long as they are delicious, this lord will eat it all. After all, food has committed no crime, it is just fulfilling its purpose. In this world full of deception, the food is the only constant that represents the truth" Oswald proudly stated after cleaning up a portion of the table.

Hearing his words, some people might think that he was just fooling around. However, Simon who got to understand this demon from them travelling together in these past few days, knew that the latter was completely serious. He actually believed in those words.

Simon shook his head and observed his surroundings. The venue was a market of hubbub, all the demon nobles were busy making connections or doing their own thing.

Some came to him extending their invitations; however, all of them were sent back after a few vague words from Simon. Every demon here wanted to make connections with Oswald and even though he didn't want to, he ended up becoming a shield for the other party.

"Does that make twelve? Whiste~ somebody sure is popular?" Oswald chuckled.

"Shut up!! This is all your fault. Anyways, why isn't the event starting? It has been a day already since we arrived here?" Simon asked. Unlike the other demons, his sense of time wasn't as distorted.

"Can't tell for sure. It can be today or tomorrow. It all depends on the host of the event after all. Though I don't think it will take much longer after all, we are quite close to the demon lord of Envy's dungeon and besides leaving a few Demon Archdukes that rarely show their appearance, all the other high ranking demons are here. I'm sure the event will start soon" Oswald answered.

Simon dropped the issue after he was told that the event would start soon and changed the topic.

"You just said that the Demon Lord of Envy's dungeon is nearby didn't you. Have you seen their dungeon? What kind of dungeon is it and what rank? Can you tell me more about it".

When discussing about the topic of the dungeon, there was a weird gleam in Simon's eyes. His bored face finally showed some signs of interest.

"Hoh, so dungeon interests you more than food huh? You are a peculiar demon, aren't you? Well, to answer your query, Yes I have seen Belial's dungeon. I have been invited by him and the faction behind him on multiple occasions".

"On some cases, where I was unable to reject him, I had to come to his domain personally. At that time, I was able to see his dungeon. It is a huge dungeon whose entrance is hidden inside the mist that covers the centre of this land".

"There is a huge teleportation gate installed by the humans there who come to dive inside his dungeon. I am not exactly sure how many floors his dungeon has but for its rank, I can tell you that it is a [S] tier peak rank dungeon".

"Though it hasn't been too long since his dungeon had risen to that rank. So it cannot be said that Belial's dungeon is a full fledged [S] rank yet. Does this answer your question?".

Simon nodded his head. [S] rank huh... He had expected the dungeon of a Demon Lord to be of that rank. Though he was still a little fazed when he heard it.

A dungeon possesses the title of a peak dungeon after it evolves from a high ranking dungeon, that is [A] rank. Leaving aside the great dungeons that existed since the primordial times, the [S] rank dungeon is the highest rank a dungeon can reach.

It was no wonder that the Demon Lord of Envy's dungeon was also a [S] rank. One of Simon's goals was also to increase his dungeon, Laplace's rank to peak tier in the future.

"Mine is also an [S] rank dungeon and compared to Belial's it is much more amazing. Hehe, are you amazed?" Oswald rubbed his nose and spoke proudly.

It would be a lie to say that Simon wasn't amazed, he didn't expect the glutton's dungeon to also be a peak rank dungeon. He had thought that only the dungeon of the Demon Lords and the ancient Demon Archdukes have reached that rank.

To think that Oswald's dungeon was also a special rank. That said, it all made sense why the Demon Lord of Envy and so many factions are so interested in him. A Demon Duke possessing a [S] rank dungeon, if that's not enough to call him special, then what is.

"You know, if it's you my best friend, I can give you a free tour of my dungeon. At that time maybe you can bring those chefs of your..."

Oswald who was about to invite Simon to his dungeon in his excitement, suddenly stopped talking. He then looked up and muttered, "They are here".

Immediately after his words fell, a mighty pressure descended onto the venue. The hullabaloo of the Demon Nobles ceased as all eyes turn towards the sky.

In that dramatic moment, a figure emerged in the sky, silently standing there emanating an aura of awe-inspiring power that commands attention. The figure clad in regal ancient clothes adorned with intricate patterns and symbols, exuding an air of elegance and authority, was none other than Belial, the host of the event.

With his three pairs of bat like wings unfurled, he stood there tall and imposing. The demon slowly descended down from the skies and stood before the other Demon Nobles.

Right after his appearance, he immediately became the centre of attention. But he was not alone.

"Haha, everyone I thank you all for coming"

An old ancient voice sounded out. Immediately, all eyes looked up. There standing toweringly, were five figures emanating powerful auras and presence unmatched by other demons of the realm.

Simon recognised the man who had spoken just now. In fact, he recognised all of them. The five figures were none other than the five Demon Archdukes that supported Belial.

The middle aged man with short black hair mixed with some whites and standing imposingly was none other than Gareth, the Demon Archduke who had lived for more than six thousand years.

The ones around him were also famous Demon Archdukes. Goliath, with skin as black as obsidian. Agares had a blazing red hair, Orca was short statured demon with gentle looking face. Boros had green eyes and a crafty looking face just like a snake.

Goliath, Agares, Orca and Boros all of these Demon Archduks were also present in the Walpurgis. How did Simon know about them? That was because during the last Walpurgis, a certain Demon Viscount announced their names near his ears even though he didn't want to hear them.

Chapter 670 670- Presentation Of Power (2)

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Thanks to that Demon Viscount introducing those five Demon Archdukes, Simon still remembered their names. He glanced at the five of them in the sky before quickly averting his gaze.

The bloodline suppression was truly an annoying thing. Simon was still able to relatively handle the pressure. However, some demon nobles weren't all that lucky. A few Demon Earls who were too late to avert their eyes away from the Demon Archdukes, immediately fainted on their spot.

The Demon Marquesses fared relatively; however, even they didn't dare to stare for too long. As for the Demon Dukes, other than their brows twitching from the pressure ever so often, there was no visible change.

It was only after they retracted their auras, did the atmosphere in the venue returned to normal. Though there was still an unspoken tension in the air.

As Belial and the Demon Archdukes make their way through the venue, a wave of power and authority preceded them. The hubbub that once filled the air dissipated instantaneously as if swallowed by the sheer force of their presence.

Attendees, both lesser ranking demons and influential beings alike, were overcome with a mixture of awe, respect, and a healthy dose of trepidation.

The air crackled with an electric energy. The mere gaze of these powerful entities sends shivers down the spines of those in their vicinity. It was a nerve-racking experience, as each step they take further solidifies their dominion and reminds all the demons of their place within the intricate hierarchy of demon society.

Whether it be them or the ones Simon had seen in the auction. They are the ones who stood at the peak of power and influence.

With the presence of the Demon Lord of Envy and the Demon Archdukes, the crowd which had become hushed silence started clamouring with conversations going all around.

"Everyone, I thank you for coming. As you all know, this year the Hexennacht is being hosted by my son. This will be his first huge undertaking ever since becoming the Demon Lord of Envy. As such, he will be the one to be the judge and make the verdict this time. Us old timers will take a back and watch from the distance"

Gareth spoke. His eyes then turned towards the sky as he added "This works for you all too right?".

Who was he talking to? Simon also looked up; however, other than the clear sky, he couldn't see anything.

"Alright Belial, we will be seated. If you need our help or wisdom do not hesitate to call us. Though I doubt you would need it" On the stage, Gareth patted his son and took the other Demmon Archdukes along with him as they found a seat in the distance and sat there leisurely.

It appeared that the Demon Archdukes meant when they said that they will not interfere.

"Everyone, I hope that you all enjoyed the treat prepared for you all and are revived from your exhaustion from the travel. If so, then I officially announce the start of the Hexennacht for this year".

"I'm sure that everybody has some qualms and doubts about me being the new Demon Lord. I might have been chosen by the Fragment of Envy; however, I am yet to be chosen by my own brethren".

"And so to prove my worthiness in front of all the Demonkind today, that I Belial am worthy to lead the demons in times of need and stand true to my title of the Demon Lord, I have prepared a small show for you all. I hope all those who are gathered here in the venue and those peering from the distance, will enjoy it".

With an air of haughty confidence, Belial began his address, his voice carrying across the expanse of the Hexennacht gathering. His words carefully chosen, reflected his elevated status and the power he now wields.

Belial's speech intertwined the grandeur of the occasion with his own ascent to power. His words were laced with subtle hints of envy, and an acknowledgement of the desire to surpass even the most esteemed attendees.

Prepared to prove himself worthy of his title, the newly crowned Demon Lord of Envy stood before the illustrious assembly at the Hexennacht. His eyes blazed with a fire of determination and wanting to command respect and envy from all.

Belial waved his sleeves and immediately, a large complex array appeared on the stage of the venue.

"This is... the Distance View Array!!" Oswell commented observing the array that appeared on the stage.

The Distance View Array was one of the higher grade arrays that one can buy from the [Shop]. It is a highly complex array and needed a lot of resources and materials to lay down. However, once this array is set up, it creates a spherical bubble of sorts that allows one to look at long distance places.

Of course, Simon who had delved a little bit into this matter, knew what kind of array it was. Though what he didn't understand was why the demon lord chose to use the array here.

What did he want to show to the assembly? Many demon nobles had the same query.

The answer soon appeared to them as the array finished forming. The Distance View Array revealed a sight that struck the assembled demons to their very core.

From beyond the horizon displayed in the array, an army emerged. It was an unstoppable tide that stretched as far as the eye could see.

Legions of monsters, beasts and all kinds of races stood in perfect formation, their ranks stretching like a tide of shadows that swallowed the horizon. Each soldier was adorned in gleaming armour and wielded weapons infused with dark magic.

'This was...' the observing demons in the venue had no doubt 'This was a presentation of power. The newly crowned Demon Lord of Envy was showing off his forces to all of the demonkind'.

As the forces advanced, a rumble echoed through the hall, shaking the very foundations of the Hexennacht venue. Massive constructs called the Golems, forged in the fires of demonic forges, trundled forward with an ominous aura of power. Their massive bodies bore the mark of Belial's dominion, and their cores crackled with a powerful mystical energy.

Siege engines capable of toppling cities, terrifyingly scaled monstrosities bred for war, and infernal contraptions belching forth fire and brimstone were all on display, a testament to Belial's military might.

That was not all, behind the ranks of soldiers and war golems, three figures strode forward, their presence commanding attention and respect.

Each of the three embodied a different aspect of envy, radiating an aura that sent shivers down the spines of those who dared to gaze upon them. They hailed from a myriad of demonic races, each unique and possessing their own brand of power.

"Everyone, let me introduce them to you all. The figures in the backlines are my three commanders, the Commandments of Envy. At the forefront is the General of Jealousy. He has been a long standing subordinate of mine, someone who I summoned through sheer luck and has led my forces to countless victories and many bloody battles over the millennia. He embodies my envy and ambition".

The General of Envy was a towering figure with a body full of scales and a crown of twisted horns, exuding an aura of authority that demanded obedience.

"Beside the General of Jealousy, is the Mistress of Desire. She is also one of my old subordinates, powerful and cruel".

The Mistress of Desire was an enchanting succubus with an alluring grace and a bewitching figure. Her gaze had the ability to charm others and her hourglass figure instantly mesmerised those looking at her.

Next in line, Belial introduced his third commandment. The Commander of Resentment who has newly joined his ranks. The figure was cloaked in a robe completely and only their eyes which glowed with an eerie light could be seen.

According to Belial, he was one of his most powerful subordinates who could strike fear on the hearts of even the most mightiest of foes.

As everyone observed the scene displayed by the array, the venue echoed with the murmurs and conversation of the demons. The vast legion that carpeted the land like a black carpet was one thing, but those three figures standing behind the ranks of war machines and siege engines were another.

Those three commanders of envy, even though the Demon Lord did not introduce their strengths, just their presence was enough to tell these demons that they were extremely powerful and not to be messed with.

It was not only the Demon Earls or the Marquesses but even the Demon Dukes came to the same conclusion. As expected of a Demon Lord, his military might and even his subordinates were not something that could be underestimated by other demons.

As the power presentation continued, Belial raised his hand, and a resounding silence fell upon the venue. The sheer magnitude of his military might, the wealth of his riches, and the calibre of his commanders had rendered the audience breathless, their eyes widened in a mixture of fear and admiration.

Belial's gaze swept across the assembly, relishing in the awe and envy that danced in the eyes of his fellow demonkind. However, it didn't stay on them for long and moved towards the sky as if wanting to know what the reactions of those people were.

"My fellow demons, behold the might of Envy, the power that will fuel my rise, and the force that shall leave its mark upon the realm. Envy is not some simple emotion, it is the inextinguishable fire that burns within all of us demons. It is the drive that motivates, commands and ensures our dominance stays forever over all who stands in our path."