

Endless 521

Chapter 521: Gaia's Rings [Part 2]

"Faerie Fire!" Fran shouted as she hurled a purple fireball at the Shade Reaper King.

In the past, she had only been able to cast fireballs that were about as large as basketballs. After months of secret training, her fireball was now six times bigger.

Shades were weak to Fire and Holy elemental attacks. The Shade Reaper King was no exception.

The purple fireball sent the monster crashing into a tree, making the Fairy's eyes widen in shock.

"I-I'm this strong?!" Fran gasped as she looked at her hands, which were still faintly shining from the aftermath of her attack.

"Don't lower your guard, Fran!" Medina warned. "It will take more than that to defeat that monster!"

The elf's arm, as well as her other injuries, had been healed by Fran's boosted Healing Magic. However, she still felt a bit exhausted from fighting against the Shade Reaper King as it drained the life force of its opponents.

This made her all the more wary and cautious.

Suddenly, Alex moved closer to the monster and aimed two throwing knives that shone with a golden light at it.

"Shining Shooter!"

The throwing knives were ordinary knives without any special properties. However, Alex had imbued them with the elemental power that was being released by the ring, making them effective against the Shadow Creature.

To his surprise, the Shadow Reaper King screeched in anger after the two flying daggers pierced its body, dealing elemental damage.

With a howl of pure rage, the Shadow Creature lunged at Alex, its scythe poised to strike. But a fireball slammed into the side of its body and blasted it away from the teenage boy.

“The only one that can bully Alex is me!” Fran shouted. “Die, you stupid monster!”

Alex pretended that he didn’t hear what the little Fairy had said and threw more knives at the fallen monster. If even a petty thief like him could injure the Shadow Reaper King with normal knives by borrowing the rings’ power, then he knew they had little to fear.

Clearly, Gaia’s Rings were extremely effective against Shadow Creatures.

Knowing that this was a good opportunity to finish it off, Fran unleashed consecutive Faerie Fires as she flew closer to Alex.

Powerful explosions reverberated inside the forest as Alex and Fran tag-teamed to deal with the monster, who had nearly wiped out their entire party.

“Die!” Alex threw one last dagger, imbuing it with the power within Gaia’s ring at the monster.

The flying dagger shone brightly like a miniature sun as it collided with the Shade Reaper King, who had decided to unleash a desperate attack against the children.

Unfortunately, it wasn’t strong enough to endure Alex’s attack and was finally defeated.

The body of the monster dispersed into black mist, disappearing completely. The only thing that remained was a black crown, which was proof of both its life and death.

As if waiting for that moment, the thick mists that covered the forests slowly dispersed. It was like waking up from a dream.

It was only then that Alex and Fran realized that they had been able to see their opponent perfectly even though they had been surrounded by mists earlier.

The rings on their hands lost their luster, as if they had completed their duty.

Now that Alex and Fran knew for certain that they had indeed won against such a powerful enemy, they finally allowed themselves to feel relieved and happy.

"It's finally over..." Fran landed on Alex's head. "I thought I was really going to die this time."

"Me too," Alex admitted. "That was a close one."

But before they could celebrate, they saw the two members of the Hero Party collapse on the ground.

At first, Alex thought that they were only injured, but when he came to check their condition, he realized that both of them were no longer breathing.

"T-They're dead..." Fran shuddered after confirming that she could no longer feel any life force from the two ladies, who had fought against the Shade Reaper King earlier.

Medina crouched down and used her hands to close their eyes, which were staring blankly at the sky.

She then placed the two deceased inside her storage ring, unable to bear the thought of leaving them lying on the cold ground for even a moment longer.

Before Alex could even ask what they should be doing next, they heard the sound of fighting nearby.

They then remembered that Ron, Carlo, and Sean were still fighting against the Demons in order to give them time to escape.

“Let’s save them!” Fran proposed. “We can do it! Alex and I are strong now!”

Alex turned to the elf. “Medina, let’s go save the others. They need our help.”

Medina hesitated for only the briefest of moments before nodding.

“Let’s go,” Medina replied before running towards the sound of fighting.

Alex and Fran followed closely behind her. Very soon, they arrived at the scene of an intense battle.

Sean had lost his left arm, but he still wielded his sword with his right.

Ron was kneeling on the ground, looking seriously injured, while Carlo was using his body to shield his friend from harm.

There were over twenty demons that were trying to kill the three of them, but they weren’t pushovers who would simply die due to being outnumbered.

Even when seriously injured, Ron continued to use his sword energy to unleash Crescent Blades at their enemies, keeping them at bay.

Carlo was clobbering any demons that came within his strike range while protecting Ron from danger.

Sean was the only one who was moving about the battlefield. He fought against the enemies as if he was burning up all of his lifeforce for one final battle.

He might have stanching his bleeding with some sort of spell. However, that didn’t mean he could brush off losing his arm.

Their situation was dire. If no one came to help them, their deaths were set in stone.

Fortunately, help arrived when they needed it the most.

Three arrows pierced the chest of one of the demons, making it cry out in pain before collapsing on the ground.

“Shining Shooter!”

“Faerie Fire!”

Alex and Fran also joined the battle, giving the men some much needed breathing time.

But when everyone thought that they now had a chance of winning, more Demons arrived, encircling all of them.

“Kill them!” one of the Demon Commanders shouted. “Don’t let the Hero escape! He must die today no matter what!”

Sean sneered at the Demon Commander as he channeled his aura to his foot. With a speed that surpassed all expectations, the Hero lunged at the commander and cut off his head in one fell swoop.

The Hero didn’t stop there. He continued his one-sided slaughter, forcing the Demons to ignore the others and focus on him.

Alex could tell that Sean was pouring everything in this battle. Whether they won or not, Sean’s fate was already sealed.

Carlo understood what the Hero was doing, so he picked Ron up from the ground and ran away towards Medina, Alex, and Fran.

“Let’s go!” Carlo shouted. “Go now!”

Medina nodded and used Wind Walk to speed up their movements, allowing them to flee faster.

The elf picked Alex up in a princess carry.

Fran, on the other hand, grabbed hold of Alex's hair so that she wouldn't be left behind in their escape.

"None of you will escape this place."

It was not only Alex's group who had heard this voice. Everyone—the adventurers, demons, and monsters fighting in the forest—had heard it.

The Demon Lord, Vanaac, had made his appearance. With his power, he had created a dome of darkness that covered the entirety of the forest.

No one, not even him, would be able to leave it unless he personally lifted the seal.

Now that he had managed to trap the Hero inside the forest, he intended to kill Sean once and for all before invading the human kingdoms.

He believed that as long as the Hero of humanity fell, the human kingdoms would no longer have any Champions to fight against him.

This would then allow him to finally fulfill the long cherished wish of the Demon Race, which was to take over the fertile lands of the Central Plains of the Continent so that their race could thrive and prosper.

"Sean, you will die here today!" Vanaac declared.

"So will you, Vanaac!" Sean laughed. "Thank you for coming. Now I don't need to travel all the way to the Demon Realm just to search for your sorry ass!"

“Impudent fool!” Vanaac roared. “Die!”

“You’re the one who’s going to die!”

Fervently hoping that he could take his fated enemy with him to the afterlife, Sean channeled all of his strength into one desperate strike.

Chapter 522: A Game Of Life And Death [Part 1]

Sean, Carlo, Alex, Fran, and Medina unleashed their strongest attacks to break the dome of darkness that was preventing them from escaping the forest.

However, no matter what they did, they weren’t able to create an opening. The black dome was simply too hard, and even their strongest attacks didn’t put a dent to it.

“It’s no use,” Ron said solemnly. “It seems that we need to kill the Demon Lord first in order to escape from this place.”

Fran had already tended to his injury. Although he hadn’t fully recovered, he had enough strength to fight for his life.

Carlo had also recovered somewhat. The older man was standing beside Alex and watching the battle in the distance.

A red ball of fire and a golden orb of light collided against each other. No one needed to be told that this was the Demon Lord’s and the Hero’s fated battle.

All kinds of fighting ceased immediately as everyone waited with bated breath to see who would emerge victorious.

Many believed that the outcome of this fight would decide the fate of the continent. That had always been the case whenever a Demon Lord and his Fated Hero or Heroes clashed in the battlefield.

As the battle continued, Alex noticed that the brilliance of the golden orb of light was starting to dim.

Of course, he wasn't the only one that noticed this.

Ron, Carlo, Medina, as well as the most powerful humans and demons that were inside the forest noticed it as well.

"Hahaha!" Vanaac's laughter spread far and wide. "What's wrong, Sean? Are you already tired? I'm just warming up!"

"Did you brush your teeth?" Sean replied. "My bad, I forgot that even if you brush your teeth, your breath stinks just like the fart of a skunk!"

"You should have picked something more worthwhile for your final words." Vannac sneered.

"Final words?" Sean laughed. "You want my final words, huh? Then these are my final words: F*ck you!"

The dimming light that surrounded Sean's body suddenly intensified. Its radiance was almost blinding.

Like a golden comet streaking across the night sky, Sean flew towards Vanaac while roaring like a dragon.

Vanaac smirked before taking a step to the side.

He instantly teleported a hundred meters away, effortlessly evading Sean's desperate attack.

"Fool, do you think that I don't know that you're already at death's door?" Vannac taunted. "If you want to die, then die alone. I have no intention of coming with you."

Sean forcefully redirected his attack. He circled around and charged at Vanaac's. The Hero's chin was covered in blood, but his gaze never wavered.

Still, the Demon Lord refused to engage him in battle because he understood that Sean's final burst of glory was something that he couldn't defend against.

Since that was the case, he would simply dodge over and over again until the Hero, who was already a spent candle, finally drew his last breath.

"Coward!" Ron roared in anger. "And you call yourself a Demon Lord?! You have no balls!"

Vannac smiled faintly, amused by the insult. He was a Demon, which the humans and the other races had branded as evil.

To him, the means justified the end. It didn't matter what people thought of how he won as long as he did win.

A few minutes passed and the golden brilliance that surrounded Sean's body finally dispersed completely.

Sean no longer had the strength to continue and fell from the sky.

But before his body could even hit the ground, a dark spear pierced his chest, impaling him.

"S.. Sorry," Sean said weakly as tears rolled down his face. "And... Thank you for coming to pick me up. We can... go... together."

The Hero of Humanity finally drew his last breath. Despite the tears on his face, a faint smile could be seen.

It was as if he was reuniting with his trusted friends, who had been waiting for him so that they could embark on a new adventure.

"Hahahahaha!" Vanaac's laughter echoed across the dome of darkness, making the Demons cheer and the humans despair.

It was very obvious that the Demon Race had finally won the war since the Champion of Humanity was dead.

“Well then, shall we all play a game?” Vanaac teased. “I believe that human children like to play this game called hide-and-seek, right? Well then, I—and my subordinates—will be it. I will count to thirty, and after that, we will start killing people.

“So, do your best to hide, okay? Let’s make this game very fun!”

The dome of darkness wasn’t an ordinary spell. In order to activate it, the Demon Lord had to use a lot of resources as well as his magical power.

However, that meant he would not be able to defeat the Hero so easily. He would also not have extra magical power to spare on strengthening the barrier. This had prompted him to add a condition to compensate.

He had added a law in the dome.

As long as his enemies were still alive, the barrier would not disappear. This was his safeguard just in case the Hero was able to pull a miraculous victory against him.

Even if the Demon Lord died, the dome of darkness would remain, trapping those inside forever.

It was a double-edged sword, but the Demon Lord was more than willing to take this gamble to ensure that the Demon Race would win the war.

“I’ll start to count,” Vanaac announced. “One... two... three...”

The majority of the humans refused to play the Demon Lord’s game and banded together in order to make their last stand.

The Dawnseekers were of the same mind, so they joined the ranks of the humans that were preparing to fight to the bitter end.

None of them knew the condition for bringing down the dome that trapped them.

Their only thought was to kill as many Demons as possible, including the Demon Lord, so that they would get to live another day and return to their loved ones in their respective kingdoms.

Chapter 523: A Game Of Life And Death [Part 2]

Despite the humans rallying to fight together, their morale was still heavily affected by the death of their Hero.

Also, the enemies still had their strongest Champion in this war, the Demon Lord.

Still, the humans knew they had no other choice but to fight. There was nothing left to do except grit their teeth and fight as if there was no tomorrow.

The Dawnseekers worked alongside the Rank S and Rank A Adventurer Parties that were trapped inside the forest at that time. Through their combined teamwork, they were able to deal devastating casualties to their enemies.

In fact, it made the Demon Lord realize that even without Sean, the humans would just not sit by and let him slit their throats without putting up a fight.

Alex's and Fran's participation in the battle also made a difference.

After using the power of the ring, Fran gained the ability to cast the spell, Sanctuary.

It was a wide-area healing spell that could heal even serious injuries.

As for those who were fatally wounded, it gave them enough strength to kill a few more enemies before finally succumbing to their fate.

Alex, on the other hand, gained incredible speed, which allowed him to use hit-and-run tactics against their enemies.

The teenage boy was very used to killing monsters and demons, so he didn't feel any aversion to ending their lives.

He and Fran were brimming with power as if their magic and stamina were endless.

It didn't take long before the Demon Lord noticed the two of them on the battlefield and knew that they must be eliminated at all cost.

However, the humans banded together to protect the two of them, using their own bodies to block some of the blows meant for Alex or Fran.

It was a brutal battle that lasted several hours.

Both sides were unrelenting, but the human side had more casualties than the demons and the monsters that served under them.

The Human Soldiers and the Adventurers knew that it was only a matter of time before all of them were wiped out in battle.

Even so, they vowed that they would take the Demon Lord's head before they perished.

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Within the temporary camp the humans had set up inside the forest...

Ron breathed heavily as Fran used her healing magic to stanch the bleeding of his left arm.

The Swordmaster's left arm was missing because he had been forced to use it to block an attack that would've otherwise taken his life.

Due to the intensity of the battle, he hadn't had the chance to retrieve his severed arm and have it reconnected.

He would have needed to put away his sword to pick up his arm. Needless to say, that would've been impossible during a battle of life and death.

"Stop crying, Fran," Ron said softly to the Fairy, whose tears were falling as she healed his arm. "I'm not dead yet."

Fran didn't reply and simply focused on making sure that their leader wouldn't bleed to death.

There were other people that also needed her help, but she prioritized healing Ron first because she already considered the Dawnseekers her family.

When the healing session finally ended, the Fairy tended to the other injured soldiers.

All the Clerics were busy helping their allies recover. Even those who knew only a little bit of magic did what they could. Everyone worked quickly because no one knew when the next battle would take place.

Medina made sure to stay by Alex's side because there were a few people who were eyeing the ring in his hand.

While they didn't know what kind of ring it was, they were drawn to its radiance.

After seeing a boy like Alex fight like some kind of divine warrior, they started to link his fighting prowess to his ring.

The greedy bastards thought that if they had the ring, they could do things better than Alex and might even help increase humanity's chances of survival.

No one dared to take the ring from Fran's hand because she had saved so many soldiers and adventurers during the heated battle earlier.

If they were to even touch or threaten the fairy, they would surely end up getting stabbed in every direction.

Since she was off limits, they shifted their attention to Alex and his ring, which seemed to have miraculous powers.

"I can't believe humans can be so greedy even at this time," Medina said in disgust.

Ron and Carlo didn't even bother to defend the rest of humanity because they were also pissed off by the people who were eyeing the ring that Sean had entrusted to them.

The Hero had stated that it mustn't fall into the hands of their enemies. But right now, the humans on their side didn't look too different from the demons that they were fighting.

In fact, these people even believed that they could use the rings as a gift to persuade the Demon Lord to spare their lives.

Of course, they were not aware that the dome of darkness would not disappear until all of the Demon Lord's enemies were killed.

"Maybe we should leave," Carlo said in a volume that only Alex, Medina, and Ron could hear. "That way, they will no longer look at Alex as if he's a beautiful maiden who has unwittingly entered a bandit's den."

"I would love to do that, but we can't," Ron replied calmly. "Unless this dome of darkness disappears, all of us are trapped here. Besides, what good will it do to leave? There's nowhere to run, there's nowhere to hide."

Medina nodded. "Either we stand and fight or be hunted one by one. As much as I think that the humans targeting Alex are scum, not all of them are useless. We need their help to survive."

Carlo clicked his tongue because he truly understood that his friends were right.

However, he was also getting very annoyed because it was one thing to fight the enemies before them. It was quite another to be stabbed in the back by people they were fighting for in the first place.

Alex remained calm and simply ate the beef jerky that was part of their party's food supply.

The Dawnseekers always prepared at least a month's worth of food and water before setting off on an adventure. This was a protocol that allowed them to deal with unforeseen changes.

Each member had their own food and water supply so that they would be able to survive even if they got separated from the others.

Fran didn't need to eat or drink. All she needed was the mana in the surroundings in order to survive.

Since mana was everywhere, the Fairy had no problem when it came to survival.

The only thing that Fran needed to worry about was being killed or captured by the Demons, who had already labeled her and Alex priority targets.

"Are you alright, Alex?" Medina asked. "You're not hurt anywhere, are you?"

"Fran already healed my injuries earlier," Alex replied. "Also, I am filled with strength. Even now, I feel like I can run for miles without feeling tired."

The beautiful elf smiled and lightly patted his head. "That's good. If you are ever in danger, just run away."

Alex was still feeling optimistic because his party members were all strong. Since Fran could heal any injuries as long as they were not fatal, he believed that they had a strong chance of surviving this battle and returning to Arian City.

Unfortunately, he would learn the next day how naive he was to think that way.

Chapter 524: A Game Of Life And Death [Part 3]

Explosions rocked the Shadow Forest as both sides resumed their battle to the death.

Alex didn't stay too far from his teammates, playing a supporting role like Fran.

They were able to fight as a team, protecting each other to the best of their abilities. It was then when the Demon Lord suddenly launched a sneak attack at Medina, catching the beautiful elf by surprise.

"Medina!" Alex saw this sneak attack too late. The only thing he could do was watch as the Demon Lord's cursed sword pierced the chest of the kind and gentle elf who always looked after him.

"Noooooooooo!" Fran shrieked in despair and rage as one of her family members was stabbed in front of her.

"Damn you!" Ron roared as he used a skill to instantly appear right beside the Demon Lord and cut him down.

But the one who ruled the Demons had already pulled back his sword from Medina's body. It was not difficult for him to block the swordmaster's strike.

Carlo had also lunged at the Demon Lord fearlessly, unleashing devastating punches and kicks that hit their mark.

But the Elite Guards of the Demon Lord joined the fray, preventing Ron and Carlo from dealing more injuries to their leader.

“Medina, stay with us!” Fran cried as she desperately tried to close the wound in the elf’s chest with her healing magic.

“Medina, please don’t die!” Alex pleaded while holding her hand. “Please don’t leave us.”

The beautiful elf gave Alex’s hand a light squeeze as tears fell from her eyes.

“Alex, Fran...” Medina said through labored breaths. “Live. Both... of you... must live.”

She then sighed one last time, and both Alex and Fran felt a gentle breeze pass by them.

For a brief moment, both of them felt as if they had been hugged tenderly by Medina, who always looked after the two of them.

“N-No!” Fran teared up as she continued trying to heal the Elf’s injury. “Why?! Why is this wound not closing?! Why?!”

The Demon Lord’s sword was a cursed sword that had the power to both corrupt and inhibit healing spells.

Since he had aimed for the Elf’s heart, it was already a miracle that Medina had been able to say her last words to Alex and Fran.

Only through her sheer willpower had she managed to stay long enough to bid them goodbye before finally succumbing to her injury.

Alex was still in denial because everything had happened so quickly. His brain refused to acknowledge that Medina had died by the hands of the Demon Lord.

“No... this... this is impossible,” Alex muttered. “Medina, don’t scare us like this. See? Fran is healing you. You will get better soon, so please get up!”

The teenage boy then looked at Fran, who was still using her power in vain.

The Fairy's heartbreaking cries made him feel a lump rising in his throat. He then forcefully shifted his attention to Ron and Carlo, who were still fighting to protect the two of them.

Carlo's light-weight armor was soaked in blood, both his own and from the demons that he had slain.

Ron seemed to have transformed into a God of War, killing enemies left and right as if to avenge the woman who had helped him become the Adventurer that he was.

Suddenly, a voice filled with amusement reached his ears.

"Are you sad? You don't have to because you are going to where she is right now."

Alex's body moved on instinct, rolling to his right just in time to evade a sword that buried itself in the ground he had been kneeling at.

The Demon Lord had decided to take this opportunity to eliminate Alex and Fran as well as take the rings from their hands.

"Damn you!" Fran roared. "Faerie Fire!"

Fran unleashed a purple fireball at point-blank range, but the Demon Lord managed to block it with his sword.

He skidded a few meters away, but the attack didn't do much damage against him.

However, just as he was about to deal with the annoying fairy, he saw a silver blur from the corner of his eye.

The sound of steel clashing against each other spread in the surroundings as Alex launched his own sneak attack at the hateful demon for killing the elf who had been his close friend, his older sister, and his protector.

With a speed that defied all logic, Alex wielded his dagger as if he was possessed.

Sparks flew as he clashed blades with the Demon Lord while waiting for an opportunity to land a killing blow on his body.

However, compared to his opponent, the teenage boy was still an inexperienced fighter.

The Demon Lord did a feint, baiting Alex to come closer to him.

His plan worked and he managed to land a punch on the teenage boy's chest that sent him flying.

But before he could follow up his attack, a purple fireball as big as a car seemingly materialized out of nothing beside him.

A loud explosion shook the forest as the Demon Lord was blasted away by Fran's attack.

The fairy hurried to Alex's side and started healing his injuries. Fran's face paled instantly when the teenage boy continued lying motionlessly on the ground.

"Alex, don't die on me!" Fran pleaded. "Don't leave me alone!"

"Calm down, Fran." Alex coughed out a mouthful of blood before opening his eyes. "I'm not dead yet."

Fran finally breathed a sigh of relief

"But you'll be dead soon," the voice of the Demon Lord reached their ears, causing the two to look at him.

This time, he had sustained significant damage from Fran's desperate attack. However, but, he had more than enough strength to kill the two annoying pests who kept refusing to die easily.

But just as they were about to fight, they heard Carlo's blood-curdling scream from behind them, which made Alex and Fran feel as if their heart had jumped out of their chest.

"Roooooooooon!"

The Swordmaster had tried to parry a killing blow that was meant for Carlo. However, he was already seriously injured, so he lacked the strength to unleash a counterattack.

After parrying the killing blow, Ron wasn't able to block the attack of a second demon that had appeared to join his comrade.

The demon's sword slashed across the man's chest, digging deep into his flesh.

Carlo tried to defend his friend from getting slashed one more time, but the demons that were fighting him weren't so foolish that they would let the perfect opportunity slip by. Without mercy or hesitation, they stabbed his back .

At his very last moments, Carlo glanced in Alex's and Fran's direction. Time seemed to have slowed down considerably as the three looked into each other's eyes.

"Alex, Fran, Run!" Carlo shouted with all of his might before falling on the ground.

The demons then jumped on him and repeatedly stabbed his body, making sure that he would no longer be able to say another word again.

A pained sob escaped Alex's lips before he resolutely grabbed Fran and fled.

Due to his incredible speed, he was able to gain a good distance away from all the fighting. He sprinted towards the western side of the forest even if he knew that the dome was waiting for him there too.

The thought of staying and fighting alongside the other humans crossed his mind, but the fear that gripped his heart after seeing his comrades die one by one was simply too much to bear.

Fran didn't resist, allowing Alex to whisk her away from the battlefield while she cried on his chest.

Just like him, she was truly heartbroken because her family had died.

The Demon Lord watched them go with a sneer.

"You can run, but there's no place in this forest where you can hide," the Demon Lord stated. "I will find the two of you, kill you, and take those rings from your corpses for my own use."

A chuckle escaped the Demon Lord's lips because this was a hunt that he was starting to enjoy.

He believed that it was only a matter of time for the human army to be completely annihilated.

After that, he would march his own army towards the Central Plains and claim the land that he and his ancestors had long wished to possess.

The ground was soaked from the blood of both humans and demons.

However, now that the tide had shifted in favor of the Demon Race, it was only a matter of time before the human armies were annihilated.

Chapter 525: Find Them Even If It's The Last Thing You Do! [Part 1]

Somewhere in the Shadow Forest...

Fran wept, clutching to Alex's shirt. Her tears streamed down her face uncontrollably as she mourned the deaths of her loved ones.

Alex also cried, his tears dripping onto Fran's body. Mutually sorrowful, the fairy voiced out no complaints.

The hot tears from Alex also served as a reminder—she was not alone in her grief over the passing of Medina, Ron, and Carlo.

The three adults had always been around to protect the two of them.

Alex and Fran understood that they couldn't fully trust the human armies, especially now that their party members were gone.

Since all they had left was each other, they let out all the grief in their hearts. At this time of great sadness, what else could they do but cry?

An hour later, they finally had no tears left to cry.

Knowing just how vulnerable they currently were, the two looked for a safe place to hide.

"I should have taken their bodies before we ran away," Alex muttered. "The least we could've done is give them a proper burial."

"Don't blame yourself," Fran replied. "At that time, we were in no position to do anything but escape for our lives."

They were silent for a few minutes before Fran asked something that made the young man sigh internally.

"Alex, what do we do now?"

Alex didn't answer right away. He also wanted to know the answer.

In the past, they had been surrounded by reliable adults who happily guided them. But now, he had to think of something himself.

A few minutes later, he finally opened his mouth to speak.

“For now, we must do our best to survive,” Alex stated. “Medina, Ron, and Carlo will be sad if we follow them to the afterlife right away.”

Fran nodded as she had no better alternative.

“Alex, we must make them pay,” Fran said with determination. “We must avenge the other Dawnseekers.”

“Yes. We will avenge them.”

Now that he had finally calmed down a bit, Alex could now feel anger rising up in his chest.

He then looked at the ring in his hand—a mysterious artifact that had given him powers strong enough to kill multiple demons during the previous battle.

They might not be able to kill the Demon Lord right away, but killing his subordinates wouldn’t pose any problem to them.

“I will analyze this dark barrier and see if there’s a way for us to escape,” Fran declared. “If there’s none, we can just kill all the demons here. However, let’s not go back to the human camp anymore. I don’t trust any of them, Alex.”

“I understand.” Alex nodded. “I also don’t trust them either.”

After deciding on a plan, the two decided to rest for the time being. If they wanted to avenge their teammates, they had to regain their strength first.

Several hours later, the battle between the humans and demons came to a stop. Both sides retreated to their respective camps, where they tended to the injured and dying.

It was then that Alex and Fran snuck to the border of the barrier, allowing the fairy to analyze the conditions to break it.

Gaia's Ring was an extremely powerful artifact. Alex thought that it was a Legendary Accessory, but it was, in truth, a Divine Artifact.

Its purpose was to awaken a person's latent power as well as drastically enhance all their other abilities.

Alex had always been quick on his feet, so the ring magnified his speed several times, allowing him to move at a ridiculous speed for brief moments.

As for Fran, it was magic-related, so her spells grew more powerful. She also gained ancient knowledge, which gave her the confidence to analyze the barrier that the Demon Lord had used to trap them.

Half an hour later, the Fairy pulled back her hand from the barrier and frowned.

"The Demon Lord is quite cunning," Fran said. "But his plan will also become his own undoing."

"What did you discover, Fran?" Alex asked.

"Listen, Alex, this barrier will not disappear until all the humans are killed," Fran said.

Alex frowned. "Only humans?"

"I mean non-demons, including me," Fran corrected herself. "As long as even one of the Demon Lord's enemies is left alive, this barrier will not disappear. That's the condition the Demon Lord has put in place. Even if he dies, as long as we are not dead, this barrier will remain strong and active."

The frown on Alex's face deepened, but the hint of a promising idea suddenly popped up in his mind.

"Let me confirm something," Alex said, struggling to contain his excitement. "You mean even if the only survivors are the two of us, this barrier will not disappear, correct?"

Fran nodded. "Exactly."

Alex fell silent for a few moments, ironing out the details of his plan.

"Let's go hunting, Fran," Alex declared.

"Hunt Demons? Okay. Let's go!" Fran had rested well the past four hours, so she was more than ready to take action.

"Not demons," Alex corrected. "We will hunt beasts while making our way back to the east side of the forest. Let's see if we can retrieve Medina, Ron, and Carlo."

Fran was confused why Alex wanted to hunt beasts, but since the young man seemed determined and confident, she decided to cooperate with him.

The two made sure to distance themselves from the human camp and took a detour. Along the way, they came across wild boars, which they killed without too much difficulty.

Due to the power of the rings, Alex and Fran were now many times stronger. Dealing with such beasts was practically a walk in the park for them.

"Do you sense anything?" Alex asked in a volume that only Fran could hear.

"I don't sense any enemies in the immediate vicinity," Fran replied.

“Good.” Alex slowly made his way to the place where he and his teammates had fought against the Demon Lord to check if their bodies were still there.

“They’re gone.” Fran’s face fell after seeing that only the blood stains on the ground remained. “Did the humans perhaps take their bodies back to the camp?”

“Maybe,” Alex replied. “I hope they did.”

Alex and Fran didn’t want to return to the human camp since their Guardians were no longer around.

However, Fran thought of an idea.

Since she was a healer, and healers were very much needed in the human camp, she told Alex that she would return to the camp temporarily to check if their party members’ bodies were there.

Alex wanted to persuade her to abandon such a dangerous idea, but Fran was determined to see it through.

“If they ask me about you, I’ll tell them we got separated during battle,” Fran said. “Don’t worry. They will not harm me.”

Fran then chanted and pressed her hands on the back of Alex’s right hand.

A symbol that looked like a rose appeared on the back of the young man’s hand, and he wondered what it was.

“This is a Fairy Mark,” Fran explained. “With this, I can find you wherever you are. Don’t loiter too near the human camp lest they discover you. Hide a good distance away and wait for me to find you later.”

Alex reluctantly agreed to Fran’s plan because this was the only way to check if the bodies of their team members were indeed in the human camp.

Whether they were really there or not, Fran had no intention of staying there for a long time and would hurriedly return to Alex's side the moment an opportunity presented itself.

Chapter 526: Find Them Even If It's The Last Thing You Do! [Part 2]

"I'll stay as close as possible to the human camp without coming too close," Alex said. "If you ever sense danger, just escape and hurry to me. I'll take us away in a flash."

Fran nodded and planted a kiss on Alex's cheek before heading toward the human camp.

The teenage boy watched as his last family member went to a place he deemed more dangerous than the demon's camp.

Human greed knew no bounds. If they were to ever target Fran for her ring, Alex vowed that he would make them pay the full, bloody price even if they were fellow humans.

When Fran arrived at the camp, the humans happily received her.

Of course, they asked about Alex's whereabouts, but the Fairy stuck to her story about accidentally separating from the teenage boy during their escape.

She was then asked to help tend to the wounded, which she agreed to. However, before going, she asked about her deceased teammates.

"Yes, we have them," the temporary commander of the human army, Luke, said. "We can't possibly leave them behind. Who knows what those demons might do to their bodies?"

Fran asked if she could see their bodies and the commander agreed to take her there after reminding her to prepare herself emotionally.

When she finally saw her teammates, the tears she thought had already dried up fell once more.

She also noticed that their armors, weapons, and storage rings were now gone, probably taken by the humans who had retrieved their bodies.

Fran really didn't care about those things, but it still hurt to think that the people she cherished so dearly were treated just like that.

Without bothering to ask for permission, Fran loaded their bodies into her own storage ring before heading to the infirmary to tend to the wounded.

Luke didn't say anything and allowed her to do what she wanted. For him, having less corpses to deal with during this trying time could only be a good thing.

A few hours passed, and Fran soon finished tending to all the injured soldiers and adventurers in the makeshift infirmary.

She then waited for the right moment before slipping away to reunite with Alex.

Fran was very careful, ensuring that no one was following her when made her escape.

Not long later, she found Alex, and they both returned to their original hiding spot earlier.

Only after they had hidden themselves did Alex finally breathe a sigh of relief.

"I'm glad you found them," Alex said. "Now we can bury them properly."

"Yes," Fran replied. "But we need to find a better hiding place. Let's rest for now and move again after a few hours."

The Fairy then summoned six small wisps of light and ordered them to spread out to serve as lookouts while she and Alex slept.

Although they looked fine on the surface, they were reaching their limit and badly needed a proper rest.

Truth be told, both of them desperately wished that all of this was just a nightmare.

They wished that when they woke up and opened their eyes, the loved ones they had lost would greet them with bright smiles and cheerful voices.

Unfortunately, this was their new reality, and they would have to accept it if they wished to survive.

— — —

Three days later...

“Argh!”

“They’re here! Help meeeeeeeeeee!”

“N-No! I don’t want to die!”

Fran sneered as she unleashed a purple fireball at the demon begging for his life.

“If you didn’t want to die, you shouldn’t have come here,” Fran said coldly before glancing at Alex, who had just finished killing another demon without showing a hint of mercy.

The two had been actively targeting demons moving in groups of four or five, using hit-and-run tactics until they finished them all off.

Alex also looted their supplies, taking away their food, weapons, and their armors. Whatever valuable item he could remove from their bodies, he took and stowed in his ring.

They also interrogated a few demons in order to get a general understanding of the war.

And just as they expected, the humans were losing this battle. A significant chunk of their force had already perished during the past few days.

The demon they were questioning even said that as long as Alex and Fran surrendered, they would be spared by the Demon Lord.

He added that many humans had already surrendered to their King and were being treated well in the Demon Army.

Fran sneered at those words. If not for the fact that she had already analyzed the barrier of darkness, she might have believed him.

Unfortunately, she had already seen through the Demon Lord's lies, so she and Alex would never surrender to the one who killed their friends.

"You already told the Commander, as well as the other officers in the army, what you learned about the barrier, right?" Alex asked.

"Yes," Fran replied. "I told them about it before I left so they will fight the demons to the death. But it looks like some of them didn't believe me."

Alex felt disgust at the thought of some humans betraying their own kind to become the Demon Lord's lackeys.

But since this was something outside of their control, they decided to just focus on their own task instead.

Days passed...

Weeks passed...

Months passed...

The battle in the Shadow Forest ended with the Demon Army's victory, and yet, none of them were happy about it.

Why?

Because the barrier that nearly covered the entirety of the Shadow Forest was still in place.

The Demon lord had already wiped out all the humans, including those who had allied themselves to his cause, and yet the barrier refused to budge.

"Have you still not found them?!" the Demon Lord, Vanaac, roared in anger.

"No, My Lord," the demon that was kneeling in front of him reported. "We have already spread out to check the northern and southern parts of the forest, but we still can't find them."

"Useless fools!" Vanaac slammed his fist on the armrest of his throne, smashing it to bits. "Find them even if it's the last thing you do!"

The other demons kneeling on the ground all bowed deeper before rushing out to execute his orders. None of them wanted to spend even one unnecessary second in his presence.

It had already been four months since the battle ended. There were still no signs of Alex and Fran, who seemed to have disappeared without a trace.

They had stopped ambushing the demons and had completely gone into hiding, frustrating Vanaac and his officers.

Not to mention, the demonic army's food supply had been dwindling rapidly. The beasts in the forest were nearly extinct.

Before Alex and Fran had disappeared completely, they had raided the food wagons of the Demon Army, taking everything they could get their hands on.

Whatever they couldn't take, they had set ablaze with Fran's fireballs to ensure that the demons would have nothing to eat when winter came in two months.

Alex and Fran were also responsible for hunting down all the beasts in the forest, making sure that the demons would have a hard time securing food.

Unlike Fairies who didn't need to eat, Demons had a very strong appetite.

In order to deal with the food shortages, they had started to eat the human corpses, a very common practice for demons during wartime.

Even so, the moment winter came, the Shadow Forest would become their mass grave.

This was what Alex and Fran were aiming for, which would deal heavy casualties to their enemies.

They were still playing that deadly game of hide-and-seek. The Demons were still it, except they were more like ravenous and desperate predators than childhood friends.

If they found Alex, and Fran, they would be free from the Shadow Forest.

If not, all of them would perish, not by the hands of the two vengeful Dawnseekers, but due to the force of nature that no one, not even the powerful Demon Lord, could contend with.

Chapter 527: The Unsung Heroes

During the past five months, the demons had done countless perimeter sweeps throughout the entire Shadow Forest in search of Alex and Fran.

The great battle had ended a long time ago, but it wouldn't be truly over until the two kids were dead.

Unfortunately, attempts to find them ended in vain.

Although the demons occasionally caught sight of them and even engaged them in combat, the pair was simply too slippery and would slide right out of their grasps, escaping to safety.

Of course, Alex and Fran didn't always act passively.

From time to time, they took the initiative to attack. And whenever this happened, devastation followed suit.

Slowly but surely, Alex and Fran were learning how to use the power of the Gaia Rings. Thanks to this, their fighting prowess had reached the level of Heroes.

Winter had also come. Snow had started to fall within the forest, and it was especially bad at this time of the year.

Staying outside was near impossible, forcing the demons to take shelters on caves. Some even dug their own underground shelters just to stay warm.

But there was one big problem.

Food.

The Demon Army numbered in the thousands, and everyone naturally had to eat something everyday.

In the first three months, they rationed what remained of their food supply—corpses of the humans that they had defeated.

The commanders of the Demon Race had even issued the order to hunt Alex and Fran regardless of the terrible weather, wanting their useless underlings would perish.

With less mouths to feed, their food supply would last longer—hopefully enough for them to stave off hunger until the winter ended.

But things didn't go according to their plan.

Alex and Fran were more than happy to kill these sacrificial pawns. But to make sure it would be a loss for the demons, the Fairy burned the corpses into inedible ashes. That way, the Demons couldn't profit from their trouble.

One month later, the situation on the Demon Race's side had reached a dire point.

The first one to break the taboo was the Demon Lord, Vanaac, himself.

Perhaps out of anger, shame, and frustration, he killed one of his subordinates in charge of finding Alex and Fran.

In front of everyone, he set the pitiful body ablaze until it was medium rare before eating it.

No one said anything back then, but it was the trigger that prompted the demons to actively cannibalize their own people in order to survive.

They truly had become demons.

Alex and Fran found out what was happening after capturing a few deserters and interrogating them.

"They've eaten Mark!" a Demon cried in desperation. "He hadn't done anything wrong. They just ganged up on him and killed him before roasting him like a pig! They're monsters!"

"I see," Alex said softly. "Very well. Go to sleep and forget everything that happened."

With a swing of his dagger, Alex beheaded the Demon and asked Fran to burn the body.

“It looks like your strategy worked, Alex,” Fran commented. “With this, we don’t even need to do the killing. They would just kill each other. How many demons do you think will be left when winter ends? A few hundreds? Or less than a hundred?”

“I don’t know,” Alex replied. “But I don’t think it’s a good idea to clash with them after winter ends. It’s very dangerous to fight desperate demons. They will go all out, not caring for their own safety.”

Fran nodded in agreement. She knew how dangerous desperate people could get. After all, she and Alex had been in a similar situation—desperate to survive and desperate to avenge their friends.

“Let’s hide for now and check on them once winter ends,” Fran proposed.

“Okay,” Alex replied. “Let’s use that time to master using the Gaia Rings.”

The Gaia Rings were true Divine Artifacts, and the two of them had only scratched the surface of their abilities.

They still needed time to fully understand how the rings worked, and winter was the perfect time for them to focus on their training.

While Alex, Fran, and the Demon Army were trapped inside the Shadow Forest, the Kings of the different human kingdoms had gathered to assess the situation.

According to the Commander who had camped out of the Shadow Forest, a barrier had appeared and covered nearly its entirety.

No one knew what was happening inside the barrier, but one thing was for sure. The Demon Lord hadn’t been seen for the past few months, giving the humans an easier time as they advanced into the Demon Realm.

The fighting only stopped because this year's winter was exceptionally bad, forcing both sides to defend their positions.

"Commander Tyler, is the barrier in the Shadow Forest still active?" one of the Kings of humanity asked.

"Yes, Your Majesty," Tyler replied. "There have been no changes, and if our guess is right, the Demon Lord might be trapped inside of it."

"Is there still no news of Sean and his party?" another King inquired.

"No, Your Majesty," Tyler answered. "Ever since the Hero Party had gone missing, no one had managed to confirm whether they were dead or alive."

A moment of silence fell inside the conference room, but it didn't last long.

"We must strike while the Demon Lord is absent on the battlefield," the King, who first spoke, stated. "We will prepare all the manpower and resources we can muster for a spring grand offensive."

"I agree with that plan, Your Majesty," Tyler commented. "We do not know until when the barrier in the forest will remain. But as long as it holds true, we could fight the Demon Army that has lost their leader. We shouldn't waste the sacrifices of our people in the Shadow Forest."

The kings all voted to unite under one banner and charge at the Demon Realm.

This was a turning point in the war, and they had no idea that it was all thanks to a teenage boy and a fairy making sure that the Demon Lord and his Army wouldn't be going anywhere.

They were the unsung Heroes of this war, and perhaps, no one would ever know how much they had sacrificed to come this far.

Chapter 528: Unwavering Resolve [Part 1]

"Happy birthday to you... happy birthday to you~"

“Happy birthday... Happy birthday.... Happy birthday to you~”

Fran sang happily as she wished Alex a happy birthday.

Actually, today was also her birthday.

It was a weird coincidence, but Alex’s and Fran’s birthdays were the same.

The other members of Dawnseekers used to tease them about it, telling their youngest members that they might be each other’s lost twin despite the difference in age and race.

“Today is the 13th day of the Empress in the 345th Era of The Fool.” Fran spun in the air as if she was dancing. “And you are now fifteen years old, and I’m eleven years old. We’ve grown older!”

“Happy birthday, Fran,” Alex said with a smile.

A fleeting thought reminded the young man of the Fairies’ long lifespan, which usually extended up to five hundred years. The stronger the fairies, the longer they could live.

“What are you thinking?” Fran asked, noticing that Alex had suddenly become quiet.

“I was just thinking that when I become a very old man, you’ll still look the same,” Alex replied. “It must be nice to have a long lifespan, huh?”

“Of course!” Fran raised his chin in arrogance. “Fairies are superior to humans. When you die, make sure to wish that you’re reborn as a fairy. I will raise you properly when that happens.”

“And why would I want to become a fairy?” Alex arched an eyebrow. “I’d rather become an elf. Their lifespan is even longer. Even becoming a red-headed Half-Elf with green eyes is fine.”

“Um? Why are you being specific?” Fran landed on Alex’s shoulder. “Why do you want to become a red-headed Half-Elf?”

“Just following a trend.”

“What trend?”

Fran blinked in confusion, but Alex just chuckled and no longer continued the topic.

Spring was almost upon them, and with it, the snow would melt, and the demons would stir once more.

Alex and Fran had refrained from attacking them for the past few months, hoping that they would eat each other until no one remained.

Of course, that was simply wishful thinking.

Still, they hoped that the number of demons had reduced drastically until they only numbered in the hundreds.

Suddenly, the two felt a ripple of power spreading through the entirety of the forest.

It felt so vile that Alex’s and Fran’s faces turned pale from the pressure that spread like wildfire.

“W-What is happening?!” Fran asked, while taking refuge inside Alex’s shirt.

“I don’t know,” Alex replied. “But whatever it is, I bet that Demon Lord is behind it. Fran, can you use your magic to check where it is coming from? Depending on your answer, we may need to change our hiding spot.”

“On it!” Fran nodded and started to write runes directly on Alex’s chest.

She could have done this by writing on the ground, but she was too afraid to leave Alex's side at the moment.

Also, they recently discovered that Fran's power was amplified whenever she cast buffs at the young man, which made her assume that her scrying magic would also become twice as powerful if she used him as a medium.

Alex wondered why Fran was scribbling on his chest but decided not to stop her. Although it felt ticklish, he endured because he didn't want to break her concentration.

When the spell was completed, Alex's body shuddered.

By the time he regained his senses, he found himself no longer in their hiding place but in the sky, from where he looked down on the Shadow Forest like a soaring bird.

In the distance, a dark pillar rose up to the sky and hit the barrier, causing it to groan and shake.

'The Demon Lord is trying to break the barrier!' Fran's voice spoke right beside Alex, but he couldn't see her.

Alex didn't know if he wanted the Demon Lord to succeed or wish him to fail. If he succeeded, that meant that he and Fran could finally leave the forest.

If not, then all of them would continue to be trapped there.

"Breaaaaaaak!"

A loud, overbearing roar reverberated in the forest, confirming their suspicion that the Demon Lord was indeed attempting to break the barrier he personally made.

Cracks started to form on the barrier, making Alex subconsciously clench his fist. But just as it was about to break, something golden seeped through the cracks, and the barrier repaired itself once more.

Outside the Shadow Forest, several Elven Mages were chanting to restore the barrier, making sure it would not break apart.

The spies of the human kingdoms within the Demon Realm had confirmed that the Demon Lord was still trapped inside the forest.

Since that was the case, the humans had asked the Elves, as well as the other races, to help them contain the Demon Lord inside the barrier while their armies marched to the Demon Realm.

They planned to finish the war as soon as possible, making sure that by the time the Demon Lord returned, he would no longer pose any great threat within the continent.

“Damned Elves!” The Demon Lord cursed angrily because he also realized what had happened.

Only Ancient Elven Magic would be strong enough to contend with his Demonic Magic.

The Demon Lord had augmented his magic by creating blood magic crystals made from the flesh and blood of his subordinates.

He believed that it was a necessary sacrifice to destroy the same barrier he had created to trap the Hero and the Human Armies inside the Shadow Forest.

Now that he had eliminated all of his enemies, except for Alex and Fran, he decided to just break it by force and leave the forest to return to the Demon Realm to recuperate.

Unfortunately, the great minds of humanity were a step ahead of him. They had long prepared to deal with his attempt to escape the Shadow Forest.

When the pillar of darkness finally dispersed, Alex and Fran returned to their own bodies.

“Alex...”

“I know.”

A look of determination appeared on their faces after watching the Demon Lord’s attempt to break the barrier.

Although it wasn’t long, they had seen him collapse on the ground, physically, mentally, and magically exhausted from his recent action.

The Demon Lord was strong.

Extremely so that Alex and Fran both understood that they couldn’t win against him even if they fought side by side.

But now, there was a chance to win.

As long as they killed the Demon Lord, they would be able to avenge their comrades and finally free themselves from the constant fear and anxiety they had buried deep inside their hearts.

Had they fought alone, the loneliness and sadness might have broken them completely.

Fortunately, they had each other.

Thanks to that, they managed to cope during the long winter nights, seeking each other’s company and warmth.

“We only get one chance,” Alex said quietly. “If he recovers, we won’t survive another winter.”

Fran clenched her fists. "Then we won't let him recover."

She fluttered into the air and hovered in front of him, her expression uncharacteristically serious. Runes shimmered faintly around her body, responding to her resolve.

"I can suppress him," Fran continued. "Not completely, but it will be enough for you to deal the killing strike."

Alex looked at her sharply. "Fran, that will drain you."

"I know." Fran puffed her cheeks. "But it's our birthday. That means we're allowed to be a little reckless."

Despite himself, Alex laughed softly. "You're unbelievable."

"Hehehe." Fran grinned, then pointed a finger at him. "And you're not allowed to die. If you do, I'll really have to raise you properly in your next life."

"Then I'll do my best to stay alive," Alex replied.

The two smiled and nodded in unison before leaving their shelter behind, slipping through the snow-covered wonderland and toward the heart of the forest, where their most-hated enemy was staying.

Chapter 529: Unwavering Resolve [Part 2]

"Not a lot of Demons are left now," Fran said as she scouted their surroundings with her ability. "They originally had thousands, but they're now down to roughly three hundred. The Demon King must've sacrificed them to break the barrier."

The Fairy somewhat understood the Demon Lord's way of thinking.

Why must he waste his time trying to look for a fairy and a teenage boy when he could just completely destroy either the barrier or the forest?

While Vanaac did consider tearing the forest apart, he had already lost patience by then and didn't want to waste more time after spending months looking for Alex and Fran.

For this reason, he settled with what he believed was the most logical choice—destroy the barrier.

As the one who cast it, he fully understood how it worked. With enough time and resources, he confidently believed that he could break it.

And he was not wrong. If not for the Elves' intervention, he would've already succeeded and would've been back to the Demon Realm, raising another army to invade the human kingdoms.

Naturally, the humans had a rough idea of what he would've done once he was out, so they asked the Elves for help.

As long as he kept the Demon Lord trapped within his own barrier, he wouldn't have the chance to return.

Vanaac had enough resources for a second attempt to break the barrier, but he could already guess the outcome after doing it once.

That left him with one option—kill Alex and Fran. Little did he know that the pair held the same intention toward him while he was still weak.

"What now, Alex?" Fran asked. "There might only be three hundred of them, but from what I can tell, the Demon Lord kept his elite subordinates. They are at least on the level of Rank A, and Rank S Adventurers."

Alex pondered a bit, weighing the pros and cons of what they planned to do. After carefully thinking about it, he deemed that killing the Demon Lord's subordinates using hit and run tactics would also be beneficial for them.

“Fran, let’s crush them with a pincer attack,” Alex replied. “You will attack them from a distance, and once you get their attention, I will hit them from behind. The moment the Demon Lord appears, we retreat and try again later.”

“Great plan!” Fran nodded. “Let’s do it!”

“Good. Wait for my signal.”

“Okay!”

Alex carefully made his way to the other side of the Demon Army’s temporary base and positioned himself properly.

He and Fran had already done this many times, so they already knew what to do if ever they were about to be overwhelmed by their enemies.

“I am in position, Fran,” Alex said to the Gaia Ring in his hand, allowing Fran to hear his voice.

“Understood,” Fran replied before taking a deep breath.

She then started to chant creating dozens of magic circles in the sky.

“O wandering stars that sleep beyond the firmament,

Hear my call and answer my will.”

“Tear through the veil of the skies,

Burn away false dominion,

And return all things to ash.”

“Meteor Fall!”

Dozens of blazing boulders rained down from the sky.

Fran had used the strongest spell that she had learned after wielding Gaia’s Ring, which she believed was the perfect spell for mass destruction.

It was also a great spell to cause confusion and chaos, giving Alex the perfect opportunity to strike while everyone was panicking.

Powerful explosions boomed across the forest, making the land tremble.

The Fairy had cast this spell not only to distract the demons but to also annihilate as many of them as possible with a single spell.

Dozens of Demons died, and more were injured from the blasts.

Alex then swooped in and went for the kill. With superhuman speed aiding him, he managed to kill a dozen demons in less than a minute.

He especially targeted the strong-looking ones and left the injured behind.

Of course, not all of his killing blows managed to claim an enemy’s life.

The stronger Demons had sensed his presence and engaged him in combat. However, Alex had no intention of trading blows with them.

As soon as the element of surprise disappeared, he didn’t hesitate to run away.

Fran did the same and retreated to safety after casting Meteor Fall.

They could always use hit and run tactics against their enemies, which was the reason why the Demon Lord's army failed to capture them for the past few months.

The two didn't retreat too far from the Demon's Camp since they still planned to kill the Demon Lord today.

Even if the recent incident caught them by surprise, and they would probably be more watchful of their surroundings, that wouldn't stop Alex, and Fran from whittling their headcount.

"Let's place traps around the camp," Alex proposed. "That way, when they pursue us, we can lead them to our traps and kill them."

"Sounds like a plan." Fran nodded.

This time, Alex didn't leave her side and helped create traps that were perfect for ambushing pursuers.

He planted ropes on blind spots that would trigger the trap when someone steps or trips on them. Meanwhile, Fran used magic circles that would activate when stepped on. She made sure that the traps wouldn't react to Alex even if he stepped on them by adding his magical signature to the formation.

As they worked on the traps, Fran's wisps of light scouted and kept watch on the Demon Camp, ensuring to monitor their movements.

Inside the Demon Camp, Vanaac was fuming in both anger and humiliation.

Angry that the Elves had gotten in the way of his attempt to break the barrier that covered the forest.

Humiliated because not only did he fail, but the two pesky insects also used this opportunity to launch a surprise attack on them.

Truth be told, Vanaac was truly exhausted at the moment.

He had given everything he had to break the barrier, and it would take him at least a day or two to fully recover.

This was his most vulnerable moment, so he ordered his subordinates to make sure to kill the teenage boy and the fairy the moment they saw them.

Three hours later, Fran and Alex struck again, and this time, the Demons chased them, hoping to end their lives once and for all.

Chapter 530: Unwavering Resolve [Part 3]

“Ahhhhhh!”

“Damn it! I’ll kill you!”

“Don’t let them escape! Kill them!”

“Help me!”

“Follow me! They’re over here!”

“Fool! They’re not there! They’re over here!”

“Nonsense! Can’t you see they’re running in that direction?!”

Shouts of anger, resentment, frustration, and helplessness spread inside the snowy forest as the Demons fell to the traps that the two had prepared for them.

Alex and Fran were greatly disadvantaged when it came to numbers, but they didn't lose when it came to cunning.

They used every trick that they knew, including using poison and illusion to kill and trick their enemies.

However, some of the Demons were truly powerful and were able to shrug off the damage they received from the traps without getting seriously injured.

They had locked on to their real targets and ran after them with determination.

"Alex, those three are strong," Fran said as she peeked through their enemies from Alex's collar.

"They must be the Demon Lord's Generals," Alex replied without even turning to look at the demons who were chasing them.

Gaia's Ring had blessed him with superhuman speed, so he wasn't afraid of being chased by anyone.

In fact, he even welcomed it. Their enemies were basically giving them the opportunity to strike at their enemies after they were separated from the bulk of their army.

After nearly half an hour of pursuit, the Demon Generals finally stopped running.

But whether they stopped or not didn't matter to the two that they were hunting earlier.

The moment they stopped the chase, the roles had been reversed in the blink of an eye.

Purple fireballs rained down at them from the sky, forcing them to evade.

A second later, one of the Demon Generals groaned in pain as a throwing knife hit the side of his cheek and sliced through his ear.

Alex had imbued divine magic on his throwing knives, amplifying their speed and sharpness.

Divine and Holy Magic were exceptionally effective against Demons.

Through Gaia's Ring, Alex and Fran could imbue their weapons and magic with divinity, which was the main reason why they managed to kill many demons despite the majority of them being stronger.

"Got you!" Fran shouted as she snapped her fingers.

The area where the Demon Generals on was filled with the magical land mines she could remotely detonate.

She didn't want to alarm their enemies of its position because they might scatter before the majority of their forces fell into their trap.

A series of powerful explosions rocked the forest, which could be heard even from miles away.

Alex and Fran maintained a safe distance from their enemies, waiting for the white smoke to disperse.

Fran didn't want to wait for a long time, so she waved her hand, summoning a gust of wind that blew away the smoke from the blast zone.

There, they saw two of the three generals kneeling on the ground, covered in wounds and bleeding all over.

Alex and Fran didn't celebrate. Instead, they upped their vigilance and used their senses to feel their surroundings.

Suddenly, Alex felt dizzy, which made him sway on the spot.

Fran panicked and wondered what was happening to her partner, when he heard a shout coming from above them.

“Got you!” one of the Demon Generals dived down from the sky.

A pair of bat-like wings could be seen from his back, which was how he managed to escape the trap that Fran had triggered.

This Demon General specialized in sound wave attacks, which were invisible yet very deadly.

Alex’s ears were bleeding, his eardrums had been ruptured by the super sonic attack that had come from the sky.

In that instant, he lost his sense of hearing, so he failed to hear Fran’s scream and warning.

Fortunately, the Fairy managed to point at the sky, giving Alex a clue about what was happening.

But it was already too late.

The Demon had already thrust his spear downwards, aiming to pierce through Alex’s head.

“I won’t let you!” Fran shouted while gathering her magic in her hands.

Another explosion was heard in the forest as Alex was blown away from the collision of Fran’s spell and the spear that had almost taken his life.

“Fran?” Alex propped himself up from the ground, and immediately looked at his surroundings. “Where are you, Fran?!”

Alex had completely forgotten that he had lost his hearing, so even if the fairy answered, he wouldn’t be able to hear her.

At that moment, the ring in his hand pulsed with power, allowing Alex to sense where its other half was located.

There, he saw the bat-like Demon raising his spear to stab the Fairy lying unconscious on the ground.

“Nooooooooo!” Alex roared as he lunged at the Demon with great speed, tackling him.

In the end, the spear strike hit the ground an inch away from Fran’s chest.

The Demon grabbed Alex’s neck, raised him from the ground and squeezed hard in an attempt to crush his neck.

The teenage boy struggled for a bit as he grasped for breath.

“I’ve long waited for this day!” the Demon General laughed. “You’ll die by my hand, insect—arghh!”

The Demon doubled over as the sharp blade on Alex’s shoe pierced his stomach.

This was one of Alex’s trump cards, which he only used in dire situations when he lost the weapon in his hands and was forced to kick his opponents.

The blade had been imbued with Divine Magic, and it tore through the Demon’s defenses, dealing serious damage to his body.

The Demon General’s grip loosened as the sudden pain enveloped his senses, allowing Alex to break free from his hold.

Scooping up Fran from the ground, the young man ran away in haste.

He could have finished the three demon generals, but saving Fran was his top priority.

“Fran, wake up!” Alex said as he gently nudged the fairy’s body with his finger. “Don’t die on me!”

“Alex, shut up,” Fran replied as she raised her hand to stop the finger that was repeatedly poking her. “I’m not dead yet.”

Although he couldn’t hear her words, seeing that she had finally opened her eyes put the teenage boy’s heart at ease.

The fairy then used her healing magic on herself, allowing her to recover from her injuries in less than two minutes.

After that, she flew to one of Alex’s ears, and used her healing magic to help him recover from his injuries.

The moment he regained his hearing, Alex was finally able to sigh in relief.

“Are you really fine?” Alex asked. “Don’t push yourself and just rest.”

“Sounds like a good idea,” Fran replied as she snuck inside Alex’s clothes and settled on his chest, feeling his warmth, and heartbeat.

Her body shuddered not from coldness, but from the fear she felt when she thought she was about to see Alex die right in front of her eyes.

Back then, only one thought remained in her mind—she must block the spear aimed to pierce his head. And so, she channeled her magic to create a barrier.

But since it was hastily made, the barrier wasn’t completed and didn’t fully block the attack.

At the least, it prevented the worst-case scenario, allowing both of them to keep their lives and escape to one of their hiding spots in the forest.

“Alex, don’t die on me, please,” Fran said, her body shuddering uncontrollably.

Her tears soaked Alex’s chest, but the teenage boy didn’t complain. He lightly placed his hand over his chest, holding the Fairy who was finding assurance in the sound of his heartbeat.

“Don’t worry. I don’t plan on dying anytime soon,” Alex said. “I’ll accompany you for a few more years.”

“Not a few years,” Fran corrected. “Accompany me for five hundred years,”

“Humans don’t live that long.”

“Then try harder! You can do it!”

“Don’t be unreasonable, Fran.” Alex felt a bit sad after understanding that even if the Demons were all killed in battle, he and Fran would still be trapped inside the Shadow Forest.

The barrier wouldn’t disappear even if the Demon Lord was killed. The only time it would disperse was when all of the Demon Lord’s enemies were killed, which included the two of them.

In short, unless both of them died, the barrier would remain intact for hundreds of years.

“Did you kill these Demon Generals?” Fran asked after regaining some of her composure.

“No,” Alex replied. “I chose to run away with you instead of finishing off.”

“Stupid. You should have killed them first before running away.”

“My bad.”

Fran used her small fists to pound Alex’s chest, but the most it did was tickle him. Physical strength wasn’t really one of her fortes.

“We must kill the Demon Lord by tomorrow,” Fran stated. “Otherwise, we will be forced to hide again.”

“That doesn’t sound like a bad plan,” Alex smiled faintly. “With the Hide-And-Seek Queen with me, they will not be able to find us even if they try.”

“Naturally!” Fran regained a bit of her confidence. “No one can find me once I put my heart and soul into hiding. They’re a thousand years too early to fight me!”

“Right?” Alex chuckled as he leaned on the wall of the small man-made cave that they were hiding in.

The entrance was protected by illusion magic, so unless they stumbled into the entrance by accident, no one would know that there was a cave right before their eyes.

“Alex, they will be ready this time,” Fran said in an anxious tone. “They will definitely expect us to come and fight them.”

“I know,” Alex replied. “But even if they know that we are coming, what can they do about it? We’ll just hit them with spells from afar until they cough out blood.”

Fran giggled after hearing Alex’s plan, knowing that she would be doing all the heavy lifting once they went ahead and did it.

However, as long as it would ensure Alex’s safety, she was more than willing to use her strongest spells and decimate whoever wished to kill the person whom she held very dear in her heart.