

GREED 251

Chapter 251 Salazar The Blade Of Destruction.

He continued on his journey while his words reached the demon noble immediately after the death of the messenger. The demon noble obviously popped his lid in anger.

In A City Within The Domain Of Demon Nobles.

Planning, scheming, trickery and world invasion start at the high-rank demon level. That's why the domain of high-rank demons has fortresses constructed around abyss altars. An invasion needs an army, and an army needs order. So high-rank demons are the first pillar of order in demon society. While mid-rank demons manage territories and rear demonic beasts, high-rank demons manage fortresses and invade worlds.

Demon nobles take it one step further by constructing cities and forces that answer them. At this stage, demons can establish a house. A house is needed if a demon noble intends to fight for the seat of the demon Lord. There can be only one demon Lord in all of the abyssal plane. There are multiple planes in the abyss but lesser than a thousand. That means there are less than a thousand demon lords in all of the abyss belonging to the high heaven realm.

Demon Nobles have to compete for that special spot. The competition is intense, so much so that there are only 8 cities out of the maximum 9 around the capital city at the center of the plane where the demon Lord lives. That means, there are only 8 established demon nobles in all of the abyssal plane. There are more demon nobles in the plane but they are not strong enough to carve out a place for themselves in the plane. If something were to happen to the demon Lord, only these 8 have a real chance of getting the seat.

Even rarer than the number of established demon nobles is the number of them that has a spatial artifact. A demon Lord has one due to his or her unique position in the abyss. That leaves demon nobles to rely on themselves concerning that need.

If they could have a spatial artifact, they would be able to prepare for different scenarios and carry a lot more on their person. Ever been in a fight but your weapon gets destroyed? What do you do next? If you're lucky you probably have many weapons on your person that you carry around just for rare occasions such as these. If you're unlucky then you're the reasonable demon that doesn't carry multiple weapons that will weigh you down and hinder your movements around.

Something like a spatial artifact could change the balance between the nobles. So imagine the reaction of demon nobles when they heard that some mid-rank demon has one. They were surprised, jealous, and greedy for the spatial artifact and what else it may contain. Was it a fortunate boon or an unfortunate bane for that weak demon? Only time will tell. But regardless, a good thing needs strength to keep.

Even more outlandish is the disrespectful behavior of that obviously stupid demon at the request of a particularly powerful demon noble who thought his prestige should be more than enough to cower the mildly lucky demon. He even went further than disrespecting the noble, he insulted the entire noble house by killing the messenger. He even had the guts to say words of challenge to him.

"Didn't you hear that I killed a messenger before?"

"Insolent Demon." The demon noble shouted angrily from his seat.

It was offense after offense. Finding that spatial artifact had gone to the demon's head. He has become stupid enough to disrespect a glorious demon noble.

He beat his chest and said, "To think that I, Salazar the Blade of destruction, have fallen so low as to be ridiculed by some upstart demon."

Salazar, the blade of destruction is a lean demon more than 5 meters tall. His skin has a metallic sheen to it. He fights using his body so he doesn't need weapons. His body can morph into different bladed weapons so he doesn't have to worry about running out of weapons but that doesn't mean he doesn't need the spatial artifact. To be rejected like that felt disrespectful.

He felt really disrespected. It is one thing to have someone above you that has blocked your path of advancement, it is another thing for a lucky simpleton to make fun of you. As they say, when a big matter finally brings you low, small matters will have the opportunity to strut in front of you.

He wasn't the only one in the throne room. With him are 11 other high-rank demons that are the commanders of his army and members of the High Council of the family.

He said to one of them. "Alkazhi, you go and bring that demon to me. Dead or alive, I don't care. I only want the spatial artifact. This is your chance to prove yourself. Do not fail me now."

His voice was as loud as a roar. Alkahzi stood up from his seat and bowed. "You will is my command."

Then he left the throne room and began his quest for Aeternus' head.

Demon Noble Salazar watched Alkazhi go. Yes, he has been brought low by the demon lord and can be disrespected by insolent demons but that doesn't mean he will allow it to happen without swift and heavy retribution. Does the stupid demon not know how well he performed in the last plane war more than ten thousand years ago? Does the demon not know how he became one of the 8 to establish the city?

"And to think I was going to simply torture him slightly. I was a fool to be so generous. I opened myself to the ridicule." Salazar murmured to himself.

It is too late for that demon's ignorance now. He won't even take the demon in if the comes crawling to him pleading and begging for his life. The grace period he gave the demon is over. Now that demon will experience what it means to disrespect one of the 8. They say experience is the best teacher, but there are some experiences that kill you.

Salazar is confident of the success of his subordinate. A high-rank demon against some mid-rank demon smuck is more than enough. Alkazhi might be young and average among high-rank demons but he has the advantage of being the subordinate of a demon noble, he has a boost to his power.

Any demon that swears an oath to a demon noble will receive a sin ability from the demon noble based on the rank of the receiver. It will be based on the unique ability of that demon noble acquired over his/her evolution. So swearing an oath to a demon noble will make a demon more powerful. Yet, high-rank demons would rather stay in their fortresses and be their own boss rather than bow to a demon noble.

The thing is, if you, as a high-rank demon stay in your fortress and mind your business, no one will come to disturb you when the fight for the throne of demon Lord begins. If you are the subordinate of a demon noble, you will have to fight the subordinates of other demon nobles who have received the

same boost as you. So why bother swearing an oath of allegiance? That's why Salazar has only 11 high-rank demons as his subordinates.

Salazar would have loved to march over to the region of mid-rank demons and put Aeternus in his place himself but he is too powerful to even enter the high-rank demon's domain. The numerous expensive upgrades that he acquired during his evolution require a lot of sin energy to sustain and of a particular quality that can only be found close to the center of the plane. So he has to be content with sending a subordinate. Sending his subordinate on errands isn't the only benefit he gets from them, he receives a boost to his strength too.

Alkazhi flew straight for Aeternus. As a high-rank demon, it is a sign of your prowess and intelligence if you can fly. It is one of the reasons why he was accepted as Salazar's commander. The demon nobles might need high-rank demons as subordinates, but they won't take just anyone that shows up. So Alkazhi is unique and because he is a subordinate of a demon noble, he is powerful too.

He was able to reach the border between the domain of high-rank demons and mid-rank demons before Aeternus got there. The concentration of sin energy drops across this border enough to make any high-rank demon feel suffocated and lose their sin energy quickly. So he stood waiting, some distance away from the border.

He didn't have to wait for long before he saw the walking incarnate of darkness. Aeternus looked like a shadow without definite edges or lines, with a fog of darkness making him seem three-dimensional instead of the cut out of a shadow. His eyes were blazing in a dark red fire that locked onto Alkazhi.

Chapter 252 The Magical Cannon.

Alkazhi could see the fog become active as if excited about something when those eyes gazed at him. He could also tell that there was something ominous about this shadow, something dangerous even. But how dangerous could a mid-rank demon be? He had been one before and had experienced the empowerment of the evolution to a high-rank demon, that's why he has confidence in his victory.

Apart from confidence, he has responsibility and longing as two motivations for this fight. He had the responsibility to bring that spatial artifact to his lord. It is an order that he cannot betray. He also has the longing born from the intuitive knowledge that killing Aeternus will grant him a boon like no other.

This longing didn't cloud his wisdom, it instead made him wary. If Aeternus has something that he wants and could make a high-rank demon stronger, then Aeternus will not be easy to deal with at all. Alkazhi is a demon that works well with other demons in a prolonged fight but he has been sent to prove himself

as the new commander. It shouldn't be a problem for him to take care of a mid-rank demon but he needed to be careful since he is alone and isn't in his best environment.

So he tried diplomacy first. A high-rank demon is smart enough to pretend to be civil and try other methods of problem-solving apart from violence.

"I am Alkazhi, the 11th commander of the house of Salazar. You have something that my Lord wants. Hand over the spatial artifact and I'll let you go. Choose wisely, your decision could grant you the favor of a noble house or it could lead to the retribution of the full might of a noble house."

A heavy divine sense reached into Alkazhi's mind. Alkazhi turned around warily searching for an ambush. He thought another high-rank demon had approached him without him knowing.

The mental transmissions of a chuckle and amusement were sent to him. Then a voice boomed in his head. "So you're after my storage space. I had thought you were after my sword. Then again, you won't know something good if it hits you in the face."

Aeternus found it funny that all the ruckus was about his inventory. All of these demons want it for various reasons but the only thing he is using it for is to keep his chaos vessel. He had drawn so much attention to himself because of something he took for granted. He could only imagine how far up the demon hierarchy the news has traveled if they sent a high-rank demon to take it from him.

Alkazhi's attention returned to Aeternus and there was shock on it.

"Did you just use a divine sense to talk to me?"

Aeternus didn't reply. The answer was obvious. Instead, he continued walking towards Alkazhi. He had not stopped since he encountered this high-rank demon.

Alkazhi nodded as if he understood something profound. "I see. You have been able to access upgrades above your sin rank during your evolution. That will explain your strength and what's giving you confidence."

He believed he had cracked the mystery of Aeternus's source of strength. He was impressed and his anticipation also increased. Acquiring strength during evolution may be expensive and having access to higher-rank evolution doesn't mean you can afford it. Still, he wanted the opportunity to have higher-rank upgrades during evolution.

He was already thinking about where to get resources when he succeeds in killing Aeternus. The cost of upgrades increases with each rank. Or else, why will esteemed demon lords fight the high elves for life essence? A single drop of life essence is worth 1 billion units of biomass.

He stopped daydreaming when he noticed that Aeternus was coming dangerously close to him.

'First thing first. Kill the demon and take his power for myself.'

He took out his spell grimoire.

"Give up the spatial artifact. It is not yours anymore. The might of a demon noble is not to be scoffed at."

Aeternus cracked the rigid bones of his neck. He was less than 20 meters away from his target now.

He replied. "It's okay. Growth needs adversity."

"That is a bad decision. I hope you reconsider." Alkazhi said but he had already opened his grimoire and began to flip through its pages.

"Too much talking. Are we going to fight or what." Aeternus said before he shot forward.

NAME: Alkazhi

RACE: Demon of Vainglory.

BLOODLINE/SIN: Vainglory.

DEMON RANK: High-Rank Demon.

HEALTH: 100%

STAMINA: 100%

MANA: 9136

SIN ENERGY: 3328

ATTACK RATING: Physique:84. Spirit:175. MAGIC:180+100.

DEFENSE RATING: Physique:87. Spirit:170. MAGIC:180.

SIN RANK: High-8%

STRENGTH: Mid-28

CONSTITUTION: High-29

ACTIVITY: High-28

AGILITY: Mid-28

MAGICAL POWER: High-36

PHYSICAL RESISTANCE: Mid-29

MAGICAL RESISTANCE: High-30

SPIRITUAL RESISTANCE: High-34

SPIRIT: High-35

PERCEPTION: High-33

OTHERS

MANA AFFINITY: 49%

CHAOS AFFINITY: 1%

SIN ABILITY: Fake Power of Vainglory(RARE)- +6 Boost to whatever stat you use the more you use it.

Mana Bank(EPIC)- Ability that Increases Mana Storage by 2 times)

POWER FROM OATH OF ALLEGIANCE:

The Tempo Of Destruction (LEGENDARY)- +14 boost to whatever ability you're using the more destruction you cause with it.

STATUS: Anxious.

Despite the seemingly unworthy benefits of making an oath of allegiance, some still go ahead to make it. One of the reasons why they do it apart from prestige, reliance, and wealth, is a match in ability. The boost from the LEGENDARY rank Tempo of Destruction is already half the stats of a high-rank demon.

Alkazhi is a mediocre high-rank demon when it comes to physical stats. He sacrificed most of the resources he gained as a mid-rank demon to upgrade his magical stats and acquire an EPIC sin ability that improved his mana capacity. He even maxed out his magical power and opted to let the other grow stronger as he eats.

His decision to prioritize his mind power over his body has made him unique. His two sin abilities enhance each other. The more mana he uses, the higher his capacity and regeneration become. And the more he casts spells, the higher his magical power increases. The increase in mana makes sure he will be able to last longer in battle and cast more spells.

Add in the boost from his oath of allegiance then he will become an unstoppable spell caster. The three abilities are flexible but when their effect is focused on a single aspect, his maximum boost will make his magic power reach 280. That has already left the range of high-rank demons level of power and almost into the domain of demon nobles.

A normal high-rank demon has a state of existence of 5 and a power rating between 140-180 while demon nobles have power ratings between 296-360. This Alkazhi demon can defeat every high-rank demon he comes across as long as he gets his full boost.

He is a dedicated magical cannon. Why else would he carry a heavy evil-looking grimoire? He needs Variety and many options for all that mana. His ability isn't infinite. It needs to be fueled by sin energy but the returns on the consumption of sin energy are higher than normal. His abilities are why he was accepted by the demon noble of destruction. As long as he had protectors, who will guard him and help him stay longer in a fight, he would be able to exert his full strength.

The moment Aeternus saw the stats of this demon he knew he couldn't allow the fight to be prolonged. That is just asking for trouble. So he brought out his full power to end the fight as soon as possible. The fog of chaos around him thickened and he coated his claymore in chaos flames. The wind howled and the air he left darkened to form a trail of corruption. Even the very air he passed by didn't escape the influence of his chaotic flames.

His evolution made him capable of using up to the 2nd step of weapon mastery. He still couldn't sense the momentum of the world because of the chaotic energy he possesses. Using the 3rd step and higher required world harmonization, something that can't happen easily with how chaotic he is. So he was confident of killing Alkazhi if he can get close to him.

A fire Lance about 2 meters long appeared beside Alhazhi. He shot that toward his approaching opponent while more began to materialize around him. He also began to levitate. He intends to maintain the high ground while he rains down destruction on his foe. He won't even mind if his opponent dodges the lances because he will get their boost as long as he destroys something, the ground included. Unless his opponent can fly too then this fight is already his.

Aeternus conjured a shield that blocked the fire lances. He noticed his opponent rising into the air so he threw bolts of chaos at him. He mustn't allow his opponent to fly or he will be doomed. His recent evolution didn't make him capable of flight.

Chapter 253 A Race Against Time.

10 bolts of chaotic energy materialized around him in the blink of an eye and shot toward Alkazhi. It might be chaos energy that he is manipulating not mana, and it may be difficult to make intricate spells with it but he can dish it out a lot quicker. He has a powerful soul and a chaotic power rating of 189 which is enough to overcome Alkazhi's magical defense.

Alkazhi paled when he saw the attacks. He sensed that they were very dangerous. Even looking at them felt like his eyes were being stabbed by black spikes. The bolts of chaos overwhelmed the number of lances of fire he had. He had only 2 fully formed ones. One of them had shot towards Aeternus while another had fully formed. More were still forming but he needed time.

He understood that he wouldn't be given that time. He had to do something about the incoming attacks, so he stopped attempting to levitate and switched to another strategy. He also stopped trying to create more lances of fire and instead focused all of his mental prowess on creating a shield barrier. A rectangular barrier of fire appeared in front of him that continued to thicken as time passed. The bolts fell on the barrier and were stopped one after the other. He had succeeded in blocking the attack.

The barrier of fire also became wobbly and unstable but Alkahzhi had faith in his barrier. The barrier would thicken then he would morph it into a dome that covered him. With him safely ensconced within the dome, he will morph the outer layer of the barrier to create whips and tentacles of flame. He would be able to defend and attack at the same time which would buy him enough time for the barrier to transform into a giant fire octopus monster.

If the fire monster that he creates isn't resolved early and he is allowed time to boost his magical power then more attacks can be brought into play. Even if the fire monster is resolved, he still has another strategy locked and loaded that he can easily switch to.

The fire monster is capable of exploding to cause massive destruction that will boost its power again. Alkazhi will make it explode before it is breached if there is a way to resolve it. The explosion will also clear the immediate surroundings of enemies. It will give Alkazhi enough time to use the dregs of the spell to form fire lances while he tries to ascend into the sky again and begin raining down destruction.

High-rank demons are like that. They have had time and the necessary intelligence to figure out their strength and weaknesses and to create a fighting style. Their most powerful tools are their skills not their upgrades from evolution and the most powerful high-rank demons are the ones with enough intelligence to utilize their skills effectively. All Alkazhi needs to win a fight is time.

Too bad that he is facing an entity of chaos. His barrier of fire truly stopped the chaotic flames but they paid a price for it. The chaotic flames began to burn on the shield and created small holes within it. The barrier couldn't grow and thicken. It was snuffed out instead and it caused significant damage to his psyche that stunned him.

He didn't get time to recover because Aeternus had already shot out several more chaotic bolts at Alkazhi. Alkazhi had lost his composure. His mind was in a mess and his plans have gone off-track. Still, his instincts kicked in. He began creating shields to stop the bolts.

While Alkazhi was focused on the bolts, Aeternus was preparing something else. He had been focusing on his claymore since the fight started, and now he swung it at Alkazhi a few meters away. A blade of flaming chaos shot out of his claymore and streaked toward Alkazhi.

During his time practicing chaos energy, he found out that he can enhance his chaos energy with his soul force by using his chaos vessel as a conduit. The process is more like compression. His chaos power has a stat higher than what a mid-rank demon should have, adding his soul force to it increases its rank and its power rating. Chaos energy resists changes to it but he can compress it within his chaos vessel and shoot it out.

The blade of flaming chaos tore through the impromptu shields that Alkazhi put up and cleaved his body into two. The blade went through his body and also split the ground behind him to create a deep gorge. Aeternus rushed to save the grimoire while chaos set about to destroy Alkazhi's body.

He nodded his head appreciatively at the effect of the attack. Theoretically, he can boost his chaos energy power rating up to the limit that is the addition of both his Magical and Spirit attack rating. The more time he spends focusing on the compression, the higher his attack will be, but it can never reach a power rating of 486. The problem is his conduit.

His chaos vessel likes to absorb both chaos energy and soul force. He needs to hold off its appetite which consumes more soul force from him. It won't be efficient to try and reach the limit of compression because of the prohibitive cost in energy and in time.

In a way, he and Alkazhi are similar in that they can boost their power rating over the norm if given time. The one that will win in such a fight is the one that reaches the boost the fastest. His chaos vessel gives him an edge in that regard. Alkazhi's boost might last longer while Aeternus can only boost each individual attack. He can boost the attacks the quickest and so he won.

He put the grimoire away into his inventory before turning his attention to the surroundings. His divine sense reached out to the high-rank demons hiding around him.

"Are you going to come out or what?" He asked.

Several high-rank demons came out from various hiding places. They are about 14 in number and they are also part of the reason why he had to kill Alkazhi quickly. If they joined in, then Alkazhi will have more time to accumulate his power which will be bad.

This group of high-rank demons had been waiting here for Aeternus even before Alkazhi came. Alkazhi was right to suspect that some high-rank demon had approached him without him being aware. They aren't the only ones watching him but the rest aren't hostile. Even the powerful divine sense watching him isn't hostile to him, yet. This particular divine sense has been watching him since his ambush.

They approached him and stood less than 3 meters away from him. One of the demons stepped forward.

"You're strong. That much is true. But you're outnumbered. That is also true. The entire plane is boiling over because of the spatial artifact. You will only face more and more danger. You can't keep the artifact. That is a fact."

Aeternus snickered. How is it a fact that he can't keep it? It is more of a fact that he can't give his inventory away. The thing is bound to the system which is attached to him. He doesn't have any power over the system.

"So what do you suggest? That I should give you?" He asked as if he was interested.

"No. We want you to join us. We intend to use the artifact as a bargaining chip to negotiate with a demon noble or the demon Lord himself. If you join us, you will get our strength and support. We will also split the gains into 16 portions. You will take two portions while we will each take one. It is reasonable right? We can form a contract for it. What do you say?"

Not all high-rank demons have fortresses. A fortress can only be built around an abyss altar. There is a limited amount of abyss altars per plane. You can build anything anywhere but it won't be relevant if it isn't built around an abyss altar.

There are only 666 abyss altars and thousands of high-rank demons. That means that there are many high-rank demons without a relevant fortress. These 14 are among the unlucky many. Without a fortress, there's no way to invade worlds and harvest resources to grow stronger. They can't fight other high-rank demons because they aren't strong. If they were so strong, they would be among the 666 high-rank demons with a fortress.

Their stats didn't look impressive for high-rank demons.

ATTACK RATING: Physique:165. Spirit:145. MAGIC:140.

DEFENSE RATING: Physique:150. Spirit:140. MAGIC:84.

A normal high-rank demon's power rating ranges from 140-180. These demons are average and to top it off they don't have impressive boosts from their sin ability. It is not a wonder why they are the bottom feeders of the domain of high-rank demons.

Chapter 254 Predator Vs Scavengers.

They heard of the demon with the spatial artifact. Some didn't believe it but these 14 did. They came here waiting for Aeternus to offer him a deal. They need resources and access to abyss altars. They hoped that can get it from Aeternus in exchange for their collective strength and protection.

Maybe that wasn't their plan before. There's no way 14 demons skulking about can be up to any good. But they changed their minds when they saw his fight with Alkazhi. Aeternus undoubtedly had the

strength of a high-rank demon and he was stronger than them individually. So they chose not to fight him and to offer him safety in numbers.

Aeternus nodded his head. "Sounds reasonable. But like I said earlier. Growth needs Adversity."

Fog bellowed out of his body to form a cloud that covered them all. His chaotic power is above their magical resistance but his attack was spread too wide so it will take time before their defense is eaten. But the cloud obscured their vision and senses. They couldn't see or hear anything from within the cloud.

It made them fumble and unable to react properly as he swung his claymore for their lives. Their first instinct was to run away from him in the opposite direction but the cloud moved around with him as the center, so they couldn't escape the cover of pure darkness.

It felt like being within pure darkness because all their senses including their very important divine sense were not working within the cloud. The opposite is true for him. His soul force had permitted the cloud and created a sort of domain for him. They were not able to see him but he could see them.

He could do more than see them. He could cast spells with the chaos energy within the cloud. Chaos spells were forming within the cloud while he also used his claymore. Chaos bolts attacked them from every direction and blades of chaos came out of his weapon to put down any stubborn foe. The cloud was also wearing them down mentally and physically. He was attacking them from all sides.

Apart from the handicap of sensory deprivation, and constant passive and active attacks, they also couldn't retaliate at all. No spell could form within the cloud at all and they couldn't target him to attack him because of the sensory deprivation and mental disorientation. So they were like sheep to the slaughter, rendered incapable of putting up any resistance.

He was like a deathly reaper in the darkness as he hunted them down. Chaos blades tore them apart limb from limb while chaos bolts drilled into them and ate into their flesh. The ones that cried out in pain had chaotic energy forced into their mouth and down their throat. It spelled their doom. Two of them got lucky enough to reach the perimeter of the cloud but a blade of chaotic flames cut them down before they could escape. He didn't need to be near someone now to attack them with his claymore. So they all died.

The cloud of chaos receded and stuck close to his body making it hazy. There was nobody left apart from him. Even their armor and weapons have been destroyed. The only thing left was some items that he decided to preserve, some grimoires and information stones.

They have more possessions but they will be in their lairs and hideouts. The lack of portable storage devices has made it necessary for demons to have a base and it has also made it unlikely for them to have their valuables on them. He went about picking up his spoils before he continued his journey.

He pitied these demons. The demon society is full of competition. If you fall behind, then you become irrelevant and uncompetitive. Even if these few manage to scrape resources together and evolve, they would never be able to compete with the established noble families. Their plan was well thought out and their offer wasn't bad but he isn't like them. He is a predator, not a scavenger.

News spread about his deeds at the border about how he killed a noble demon's envoy and 14 high-rank demons. It wasn't difficult to track him. Anyone could just follow the trail of grey ashes he left behind on the ground. He ignored the surveillance because there was nothing he can do about it unless he decides to move underground. He continued his journey until he reached a fortress. Even then he might not be able to escape the divine sense that had locked onto him.

The demon lookouts and sentries on the wall of the fortress spotted him easily. He is something out of place even in the abyss. He looked like an expanding dot of darkness in a world of red due to the heat and lava. The lookouts went to inform their commander immediately.

The commander grinned when he heard that the ominous reaper and darkness had come to his doorstep. Had he come to pledge allegiance or to hand over the spatial artifact to ask for protection?

"Either way, he has made a good choice." He said grandly as soon as he heard the news.

This demon of pride felt proud that Aeternus chose him. He is a top high-rank demon with 3 other high-rank demons as his subordinate. They are more like his lackeys because he is way stronger than the three assistant commanders. They are in no way his equals or partners. He simply took them in because he needed strong subordinates to keep the mid-rank demons under control and they were also weak compared to him. So he is doing well and will do better once he gets the spatial artifact.

"Get everyone ready for battle. The fortress is on high battle alert mode from now on." He ordered his lackeys as he strode towards the castle walls.

The proximity of the spatial artifact to him may be good news but it is bound to bring problems. The Ominous Reaper of Darkness brings calamity with him wherever he goes so he must be prepared for anything. The commander is preparing for the attacks that will be made against him when he gets the spatial artifact. So Aeternus arrived to find a fortress that is battle ready.

The army commander noticed his rank from the fluctuations of his mark of sin.

He was surprised. "He is really a mid-rank demon. I had thought it was an exaggeration."

High-rank demons with access to an abyss altar can communicate with other abyss altars through the network that they formed with each other. So information and news spread faster among the top of the high-rank demon hierarchy.

"For a mid-rank demon to have the prowess of a high-rank demon he must have something good, something powerful to rely on. It is probably that cloud of his. Is it some sort of artifact?" He mused to himself.

"That lucky bastard." He said in jealousy.

He had news that those that the cloud of darkness touches will die and had even seen images. He conjectures that Aeternus might have gotten lucky with more than a spatial artifact. A spatial artifact is bound to contain something good when the ominous darkness found it. Considering the power of a demon needed to use a spatial artifact, the things it contains must be powerful too. His anticipation for the spatial artifact increased.

He puffed up his chest and said. "It is a good thing that he knows his situation very well and has come to seek protection from someone truly worthy."

He considers himself to be better than a ragtag team of 14 high-rank demons. He may not have the advantage in quantity of manpower but he has quality. He has a fortress and that's what matters. He may have just three high-rank demons as subordinates but that goes to show how strong he is. He is so

strong that he can allow the threat of three high-rank demons to be constantly near him. As a demon of pride, he had no weakness to exploit.

The mid-rank demons that made up his army were fidgeting because of the feeling of terror and wrongness that they could feel from Aeternus. They were the same rank as him but they could feel the threat of an existential crisis. It's like their existence knows that a single contact with him will lead to their demise.

These mid-rank demons are different from the ones lazing out in their territories. These have been trained and have invaded worlds, their sense of danger is higher because of their experience. So is their sense of order. They held their ground and stayed in formation because Aeternus is an unknown threat to them, while their army commander is a known and highly dangerous threat to them if they desert. Besides, they have a fortress and their commander standing between them and the Ominous Reaper. What could possibly go wrong?

Chapter 255 Danazel The Demon Of Pride.

Better the fear you know than the unknown in this situation. There's a lot to fear in the demon realm if you're weak. And those are known sources of fear. If you constantly fear the unknown then you will die of fear. That is a real possibility because of the existence of demons of fear who can empower themselves with fear.

So fear is a very harmful luxury for the weak. No matter the amount of dread that they felt, the army commander's presence held the soldiers in line. They didn't bolt away, but that's all they could manage right now. When Aeternus got within shouting distance of the fortress, the army commander was the one to ask for Aeternus's purpose since no one else could ask and his vice-commanders didn't dare do anything without his consent.

"What brings you here, the ominous reaper?" Danazel asked proudly with his chest all puffed out and his height of 3.9 meters fully displayed.

NAME: Danazel

RACE: Demon of Pride.

BLOODLINE/SIN: Pride.

DEMON RANK: High-Rank Demon.

HEALTH: 100%

STAMINA: 100%

MANA: 6837

SIN ENERGY: 5185

ATTACK RATING: Physique:180. Spirit:180 MAGIC:180

DEFENSE RATING: Physique:180 Spirit:180. MAGIC:180.

SIN ABILITY: Power Of Pride(EPIC)- +9 boosts to whatever stat you are lacking in a confrontation).

Armor of Pride(LEGENDARY)- Ability that reduces the effectiveness of any ability that you have resolved before by 70%)

STATUS: Feeling Smug.

Unlike Alkazhi that needed time to power up, Danazel is an all-rounder ready to do battle at any time. His first sin ability shores up any weakness, and his second ability reduces powers and abilities that he has overcome before. Only something well above his power level and new to him could be a threat to him. But if that thing doesn't kill him now, it will likely never do. Whatever doesn't kill him, makes him stronger.

Aeternus answered, "Danazel is it. I'm taking this fortress. Begone if you care for your life."

Actually, that's not what he wants. He wants to fight and kill Danazel. Ideally, he would prefer it if Danazel comes out and they fight but he knows that's not going to happen. Danazel might be a demon

of pride but he isn't foolish. So instead, he will go for the one thing that Danazel must care about. Either Danazel fights then or not.

Meanwhile, Danazel didn't feel creeped out that the ominous reaper knew his name. No, he felt very angry and frankly insulted instead. But he kept his cool, something fishy must be going on here or the ominous reaper is one bat-shit crazy demon.

So he asked coldly. "Oh yeah, you and what army?"

Here he is, a lord of a fortress behind the defense of his fortress and with ten thousand mid-rank demons in his army. He has a network of alliance that can come to his rescue, for a price of course, if he is ganged upon. And yet, one mid-rank demon full of himself or highly confident is telling him to scram without a fight.

'He must have confidence in something. I just need to experience it once and I'll become stronger.'
Danazel thought to himself.

There's no way he will just run away like that and give up what is his. He had to see and experience what it is. His confidence lay in the fact that his power rating could reach 225. No ordinary high-rank demon can reach that level and the extraordinary high-rank demons stronger than that have failed in killing him or else he won't be standing here alive, well, and feeling smug.

Aeternus didn't answer, he continued to approach the fortress. He had said his piece, now was the time for action.

Danazel shouted to his soldiers, "Attack him. Kill him now and put an end to this nonsense."

He would kill the Ominous Reaper, then he would get his loot. He has archers, spell casters, cannons, ballista, and catapults ready at the top of the walls. The fortress is a structure 500 meters long on each side, its four walls are 50m high and 20m thick. It was built with the lives of thousands of mid-rank demons and highly durable abyssal stone. Only a betrayal, the assassination of the commander, or the attack of several high-rank demons can overcome its defenses.

Every means at Danazel's disposal rained down on the line figure that his Aeternus. Arrows, spells, and cannon fire were shot at him. In response, he dropped his claymore into the ground and commanded it to grow. The claymore sank into the ground as it grew taller and wider. It protected him from the barrage. Danazel's mouth was wide enough to swallow a cannonball.

"My turn." Aeternus' divine sense informed the attackers.

Chaos spells started to form in the air. They were copies of the magical attacks that they shot at him, except they were three times in number and very much powerful. It was like high-rank demons three times the amount of the mid-rank demons that shot spells were attacking the fortress. That's without adding the advantage of chaos energy over mana.

These conjurations that he created with chaos energy are in the form of the original spells except they are black and smoking. He couldn't create this many attacks on his own with chaos energy but his sin ability helped him with that. It is another thing to see if he could control it though.

His soul ordered the attack to rain down on the wall of the fortress. The attacks bombarded the top of the walls and even extended into the fortress. Explosions rang out as the chaos spells wreaked havoc. The orderly formation made it easier for the spells to cause maximum damage. Soldiers and siege weapons on this side of the walls were destroyed. The durable stone prevented the fortress itself from taking any damage but it had begun to burn. Black flames were spreading all around and burning everything.

Danazel exclaimed in shock when he saw the large thing that appeared in front of Aeternus like a shield that protected him. But now he is barking orders and trying to keep morale up but his army was in shambles. The fire couldn't be put out and it was still spreading. The fire was black and gloomy like the stuff covering the ominous reaper's body.

'Has he always been on fire? Is this his trump card? How did he do it?' Danazel asked himself.

He has a lot of questions swirling in his mind but doesn't have the leisure to have them answered. His demon soldiers were crying and trying to flee. He couldn't wrap his head around what had just happened but he had to keep the army together. Then he heard a loud boom and he felt the support beneath his feet going down. His mind realized what was going on immediately. The wall was crumbling. A lot more questions popped up in his mind but the most pertinent one is, 'How did he do it?'

There could only be one person responsible for this but his attention had left the ominous reaper while he was trying to extinguish the black flames and keep his army together. The wall was supposed to be very difficult to break. They didn't make it 20 meters thick for it to breach so easily.

Aeternus had retrieved his claymore. He focused on it and compressed chaos energy with his soul force. Then he lifted and brought it down on the wall. He increased its length and weight as the claymore came down on the wall. It tore through the walls easily before unloading the compressed chaos energy within it. The resulting explosion from deep within the wall broke its structural integrity and made it crumble.

The explosion didn't create flying rock shards. Chaos energy within the explosion caused everything to turn to ashes. A large hole was created within the wall from which more chaotic flames spread throughout the walls causing it to crumble. The claymore shrank and returned to Aeternus' hands. Then Aeternus dashed into the fortresses over the ruins of the wall.

He aimed straight for the castle. He created more flames that he spread wantonly along his way to the castle. Most of Danazel's wealth will be stored there. He made his actions eye-catching and aim obvious so that Danazel will be able to pinpoint his position among the chaos and come to stop him. If Danazel doesn't come to stop him then he will have to be content with the death of thousands of mid-rank demons and the goodies that Danazel has been hoarding. One cannot eat their cake and have it too.

Danazel appeared to stop him when he reached 100m of the castle. He roared at Aeternus, "What have you done?"

'Looks like I get to eat my cake and have it.' Aeternus chuckled to himself.

He would have licked his lips or grinned if he had a mouth. For now, he will settle with the increase in the intensity of the glow of his eyes.

"You will pay for what you've done. Nothing but your life will do." Danazel promised gory vengeance as he hefted his twin flaming hammers and lunged for Aeternus.

Chapter 256 Like Master Like His Pet.

They clashed soon after. Aeternus's claymore and Danazel's hammers created an explosion as soon as they made contact. It became clear that Danazel was stronger because Aeternus was thrown backward from their clash. He crashed into several buildings before stopping.

Aeternus stood up immediately. His body was damaged a bit but he wasn't capable of feeling pain just like he doesn't get tired. His broken bones snapped together and healed using chaos energy. He was good as new and ready to react to Danazel's next attack.

Danazel had run and jumped up. He intended to smash Aeternus into the ground. But Aeternus began swinging his claymore at him. Danazel's instincts screamed to keep away from the blades of flaming darkness that were thrown at him. He knew that if he could just overcome the attack, he wouldn't need to fear it anymore. But he also knew that the chances of surviving the attack are too low. So he deflected the blades with his hammers.

His hammers clashed loudly with the blades and he was even pushed back from descending on Aeternus. His mana fell significantly and it was still falling due to that clash. It was enough proof for him to realize that his decision to block was right. He didn't get to feel happy for long. The little amount of hair he had on his body straightened in fear when he sensed a serious danger.

While Danazel was preoccupied with the blades, Aeternus was focusing on his claymore. The flaming darkness on it began to concentrate. Then he swung it in a wide arc behind him. The claymore released a sharp attack that tore through the air and created a shriek due to its rough passage.

The three high-rank demons that wanted to ambush him were torn apart. The sharp blade of darkness began to widen as it continued on its journey. It cut everything in its path and burned them. There was cone shape scene of destruction that started from Aeternus and reached the walls.

"Now it's just you and me," Aeternus said to the stunned Danazel.

He continued. "There's that peeping tom but he won't be joining this fight."

Aeternus is referring to the divine sense watching them that only he could sense.

Danazel remained silent. He reviewed his situation and assessed the fortress. There was destruction everywhere. Buildings had caved in or had been cut apart and that dreadful fire was still burning. There was no sight of his soldiers but he had called his allies. High-rank demons of similar strength to him will be here soon. Support was on its way and all he has to do is stall for a while so he made his decision. He turned around and ran. Relying on the punctuality of demons in your time of need is folly.

"Let me go." He shouted to Aeternus as he ran. "My helpers are coming. If you delay then you will be surrounded and you will die."

"Who said I'll need a long time to kill you? Besides, the more the merrier." Aeternus transmitted his amusement and glee very clearly to his prey.

He made his point known, he won't let Danazel go.

"You will tire yourself out. How many attacks of such Caliber can you make again?" Danazel tried to reason with the ominous reaper.

That last attack was very powerful and it must be energy consuming. A demon has to make sure they don't run low on energy or they will become easy prey to their peers. A smart demon should be conservative especially since more enemies are coming.

"You have no idea." Saying so Aeternus grabbed the flames in the fortress and pulled them towards him.

The wind howled as the flames rushed towards Aeternus from every direction. Danazel was cornered without any path to escape through. He didn't despair much before he was covered and burned away.

The flames continued and entered Aeternus' body leaving him alone in a decrepit fortress. Only the castle was largely intact and the completely unaffected abyss altar at the center of the fortress. The haze of darkness around him had grown stronger because the flames on his body had grown stronger.

He ignored the abyss altar and made his way to the castle. There were some mid-rank demons still alive but he ignored them. He searched through the castle floor by floor with his divine sense. Nothing could hide from his perception and he had time for a full search.

He found Danazel's stash at the top of the castle. He had expected a secluded corner underground of the castle somewhere but it was out in the open in a large room on the top floor. The entire floor was fortified with wards, alarms, and traps of various kinds all there to protect his wealth. They did nothing to stop Aeternus's advance.

Even the giant demonic snake that was guarding the door didn't confront him at all. The snake slithered away while trying to camouflage itself somehow, but his senses couldn't be fooled at all.

Aeternus shook his head. "Like master like his pet. Not bad."

The master had chosen to run so did the pet. It might be considered cowardice but it spoke of intelligence and wisdom. Danazel had raised a demonic beast to the high-rank level. Low-rank and mid-rank demons are equivalent to mana entities and transcendents respectively. High-rank demons have the strength of low-rank gods while the strongest high-rank demons like Danazel that can jump ranks are equivalent to mid-gods and lords of laws.

Aeternus is impressive to be able to fight and kill such powerful beings while only being the equivalent of a transcendent but to create such a demonic beast is more impressive. It would require a lot of resources on the part of the master and a good bloodline on the part of the pet.

Demons are like dragons in a lot of ways. They both are immune to the suppression of the divine plane because of the unique energy type that they have that is equivalent to Origin energy. They are also highly virile and can reproduce with a lot of things. Demonic beasts are the result of demons reproducing with beasts. These unfortunate offsprings are capable of living in the abyss but are most often food to be raised for slaughter by mid-rank demons.

They don't have sin marks that demons acquire when they become low rank. So most demonic beasts stay at the low rank all their lives but if they can break through to the mid-rank on their own, then they must be special. It means they have the potential to grow stronger.

Demons can't grow stronger without a sin mark that allows them to evolve but demonic beasts are part beasts and can have the potential to grow but it is rare to see. Encountering a mid-rank demonic beast among other demonic beasts is a 1 in 1,000,000 chance. So there's no way Aeternus will allow this snake to go.

"Come here." He ordered the snake.

The snake turned around and slithered to where Aeternus was standing just at the door to the room with the stash. Then it lay down on the ground and looked at Aeternus fearfully while he examined it.

The snake had gleaming scales of draconic pattern and small stubs on its head. Those are signs of a dragon bloodline. It also has four eyes, two on each side of its head, and a forked tongue with barbs and fangs that can pierce through steel as if it were paper. A pair of small wings are on its back.

"I doubt those wings can help it levitate at all." He mused.

NAME: Xander.

RACE: Demonic Beast.

BLOODLINE: Draco-demonic.

DEMON RANK: High Rank

HEALTH: 100%

STAMINA: 100%

MANA: 2471

ATTACK RATING: Physique:80. Spirit:60. MAGIC:50

DEFENSE RATING: Physique:100. Spirit:65. MAGIC:110.

STATUS: Petrified.

"So it has dragon bloodline." He said to himself.

It isn't rare for a demon to reproduce with a descendant of a dragon. The two races breed a lot so there's bound to be an interaction between the two bloodlines, it just doesn't turn out well. The

bloodlines will inevitably clash. The pride in the dragon bloodline will not coexist with the chaos in the demon bloodline so they create an inferior species. But hybridization and mutation across several generations can create a demonic beast with its own unique bloodline and the potential to grow.

The serpent has features similar to dragons and demons just like those two races have similar features. Dragons and demons have tails, wings, horns, and true sight. Dragons even have the sin of pride, greed, wrath, gluttony, sloth, and lust. They are proud and arrogant, greedy for treasures, easy to anger and highly destructive when angry, eat a lot, like to sleep, and will have sex with almost anything.

But dragons don't envy anyone. Their massive pride and ego won't let them. That's where they draw the line in similarities with demons.

Chapter 257 Allies To The Rescue.

It shouldn't be rare that a hybrid of the two races exists because of all these similarities, but it is rare. It is like the two races are the best and won't let up for the other. Because of their unique energy, dragons and demons are one of the few races with their own refinement path different from the common path of refinement of the void universe.

"Are you new master?" The snake asked.

"Yes. You belonged to Danazel. I killed Danazel that means you're mine."

"Will master kill Xander?" It asked with pitiful eyes.

"I'm thinking about it. I'll kill you unless you have some use." Aeternus answered.

His answer made Xander tremble in fear. Yes, there's a chance he might kill the snake to fuel his growth. He can't simply let the snake go. The snake must be useful to him in some way and he doesn't see a use for it.

Keeping it as a pet won't work either. He can't be around a pet because of his chaotic energy. He has to make a conscious effort not to burn things or the world. That's if the pet is even useful to him somehow. Apart from that, there's no way he will keep something useless around him. It won't be a pet but a prey if it isn't useful.

"Xander has uses." The snake said then it tried to camouflage itself.

Its figure blurred and disappeared. It melded into the world as if it isn't there. Even a divine sense will be fooled.

Aeternus shook his head and said. "That's not bad but it is not good enough."

He could still see the snake. Sure the snake could hide very well but it isn't strong. A high-rank demonic beast only has the body on par with a high-rank demon and some abilities. Since it doesn't have the mark of sin, it doesn't have sin energy so it isn't as strong as a high-rank demon. Its soul isn't complete too, that's why demonic beasts aren't as intelligent as demons.

The snake became frantic. "Xander can also do this."

Its divine sense opened up to Aeternus and marked him. Then Aeternus became able to see through Xander's eyes. One pair of Xander's eyes turned crimson and began burning with fire the same ones as Aeternus's eyes.

Aeternus considered his decision carefully. The new development brought more options for Xander's usefulness.

"Alright. I'll keep you. But you're weak. So you will go to the domain of mid-rank demons and hunt. You have to evolve and become stronger." He gave his verdict.

He could use the snake as a spy. Several demons have been spying on him. The most irritating of all is that powerful divine sense always lingering on him. It would be nice to have a spy of his own. But he prefers to have long-term benefits from the snake, short term advantages are never the style of Legion.

That means the snake has to become stronger so that it can reach some really secure places that he would like to sniff around. Places like the stash location of a dead demon Lord. Demonic beasts have the advantage of being able to transverse the abyss plane however they wish without restriction on ambient sin energy concentration because they don't have sin energy. Xander will be safe in the domain of mid-rank demons and it can feast on both the demons and demonic beasts there.

"So Xander won't die?" It asked hopefully.

"Xander won't die." He replied.

The snake became ecstatic. It began shaking his tail, raising it, and slapping it against the floor in happiness. It raised its head and wanted to taste Aeternus with its tongue but it was afraid of the flames burning around him.

"But Xander can still die. If you don't grow stronger, I'll kill you." Aeternus told it sternly.

The snake lowered its head again and spoke. "Xander will grow stronger." It promised him.

He nodded. "You better. Now go."

The snake bolted away as if it had gotten a new lease on life.

Aeternus shook his head at the sight. "I didn't know it could run so fast."

The snake had been trying to sneak away earlier so its speed was slow but its plan failed. Even now Aeternus could still see through its eyes. He could see some figures possessing a lot of energy coming to the castle in Xander's vision. And he would also be able to find the demonic beast no matter where it is in the plane through the mark that he placed on its divine sense.

"About time." He said. "I could have looted this place and run away if I wanted to."

It's not like he could hide in the plane but he could make it difficult for them to catch him if he were afraid of them. So he struck the door with his claymore and broke in into the storage room. The room was filled with all sorts of things that Danazel was proud of. Only a small portion of the things could be considered wealth. The heads of various creatures and races that he has killed hung on pedestals and displayed on walls are certainly not wealth. The eerie heads took the most space in the room.

There were also weapons, and armor of once mighty gods being shown off. Aeternus went straight for a rock placed by the side. He carefully split it into two and took the soul storage placed inside. He went there and there taking stuff hidden in plain sight. He took the weapons, the armor, the information stones, the spell grimoire, and the soul storages.

While he was looting the place with a carefree attitude and wild abandon, 9 high-rank demons were hovering in the air above the castle, waiting for him. They had varying shapes and sizes but they were mostly large. The smallest of them is 3 meters tall while the largest is 5 meters. Some of them are even longer than 5 meters.

"We are too late." The one that looked like she is made of blades said.

She wasn't particularly sorry about being late to the rescue. She was just stating the obvious. The blades stuck all over her body were blood-red.

"Danazel is dead now." Another one said. This one looked like the generic goat demon.

This one wasn't feeling sad either. In fact, none of them were feeling emotional that a member of their alliance has died. An alliance is important among high-rank demons because while they may be insecure with having subordinates that share in their loot and might backstab them, they recognize the need to have help once in a while. Of course, the help isn't free, and neither is it cheap, but one will only need to pay for it when it is needed.

One of them asked. "Since we are here already, what do we do?"

The one that asked looked like a scorpion with large pincers and a stinger. It also had wings.

This sort of alliance between strong demons usually works. In the case of a demon like Danazel, he is strong enough to hold on for rescue to come. Even if he can't hold on, he can run away. The alliance will help him recover the fortress as long as he is alive. But what if Danazel is dead, what comes next?

The fat, disgusting worm with insect wings spoke in a nauseating voice. "We certainly aren't here for revenge."

The other demons shared a chuckle when they heard it. Revenge is not on the agenda. Danazel was a business partner, not a comrade. Their contract states that they will do everything possible to help Danazel retain or regain his fortress as long as he is alive and can pay for their services. They are here now and do not plan to go back empty-handed. So they will help themselves to some of Danazel's wealth. It's the least he can do after making them waste their time by coming here.

A serpentine demon with vertical pupils spoke, "So we do the usual, but we have to be careful. This demon has to be very strong to kill Danazel so quickly."

"Relax. Which one of us isn't strong? Strong or not, we outnumber him 9 to one." The disgusting worm fly said.

This isn't the first time they are looting a dead member of the alliance. Their alliance affords them quick notification of the death of their mates. Being his alliance mates has given them some advantages that they intend to use to maximum effect. They got to know about Danazel's death first and so, they get to raid his castle first.

What they'll do right now is wait for Aeternus to finish looting. They know about his spatial artifact. So they'll wait and ask him for their share of the loot after he comes out. If the negotiation goes well, and Aeternus is still alive by the time the loot has been divided up, then they will offer him a chance to join their alliance and keep the castle.

Chapter 258 Something Smells Fishy.

They'll kill him if he refuses to join their alliance. Only a member of their alliance gets to keep the castle or it will weaken their alliance. Of course, they will give it up if a stronger alliance asks for the fortress. It's the general protocol that is executed in situations like this.

The flaming serpentine demon maintained. "I'm just saying. There is something fishy about this entire thing. How did a single high-rank demon take down a fortress in such a short time? Look at the fortress, it looks like it was eroded by something and I can smell a wrongness in the air."

The fat disgusting worm fly snickered and said. "I can't smell anything in the air. The fortress probably looks like this because of some unique spell. You're just a coward."

Its body vibrated with the snickering and mucus fell from it to drop on the ground. Then the mucus began to steam as it corroded the surface it fell on. It was even capable of corroding the abyssal stone

but at a snail's pace, nowhere fast enough to damage the fortress in such a short amount of time. It's not like the worm fly can make the large amount needed to damage the entire fortress. So the display is not proof that even the worm can erode the fortress.

The blade demoness jumped in before their argument escalated. "I don't care about what you guys pick as long as it's not the spatial artifact."

Some of the silent ones turned to her after that statement. They had kept quiet till now because they didn't have anything to say and didn't care about the topic of discussion enough to join in. But now, something very important has cropped up.

One of them asked. "What do you plan to do with the spatial artifact?"

She answered curtly, "That's none of your business."

That declaration immediately caused toes to be stepped on and bottom lines to be crossed. As iconic and rich high-rank demons constantly engaged in strife, they have experienced the pain of losing their wealth many times.

In conflict, sometimes they win, and other times they lose and retreat. But their wealth stays behind to be looted by their enemies. Having a spatial artifact will change things and this demoness has the audacity to claim it for herself over the interest of others. She has to be out of her mind.

They were already about to fight when Aeternus finally came out. If he had delayed any longer, they would have been at each other's throats.

He sauntered out with his claymore over his shoulders. They all turned their attention to him.

The blade demoness became excited as soon as she saw his weapon. She said to the others. "You can do whatever you want with the others but I want that blade of his. I must have it."

The other demons didn't talk back this time around. They understood that the blade must be something good for her to change her mind but they are just glad that they have lost one more competitor. She is a

really strong one too, so no one complained. They all descended to float above Aeternus and pressure him with their numbers.

He said to them. "Just 8 of you? I guess that will have to do.

"What foolishness there's 9 of us...."

Aeternus attacked before the disgusting worm could finish its condescending sentence.

Dark flames of chaotic energy bellowed out of him and spread into his surroundings. It started as a pillar that spread with him as the center because of the excitement of the chaotic flames. He had been holding them in when he drew them into his body during his fight with Danazel. Now he could let loose.

The tide of energy rose as high as 100m and hit the levitating demons with the force of a storm. They fell from the sky in unflattering manners. They weren't damaged because each of them had been alert. They hadn't been alert against him but against each other. You never know, anything can happen. Backstabbing is common among demons.

They were right to be alert. Anything did happen. The Ominous Reaper attacked them outright. He didn't cower or beg or even negotiate. Who saw that coming? Probably the flaming Serpentine demon who tried to warn them.

That demon is also the 9th demon that escaped before the fight started. He certainly suspected something bad. He didn't know what he suspected but he knew it was bad.

"Thank the abyss that I trusted my instincts." The serpentine demon said as he flee while looking backward at the pillar of Darkness that was consuming the castle within the fortress.

NAME: Gooro.

RACE: Demon of Fear.

BLOODLINE/SIN: Fear.

DEMON RANK: High-Rank Demon.

HEALTH: 100%

STAMINA: 100%

MANA: 5224

SIN ENERGY: 4985

ATTACK RATING: Physique:180. Spirit:180. MAGIC:180

DEFENSE RATING: Physique:180. Spirit:180. MAGIC:180.

SIN ABILITY: The Spirit of fear(EPIC)- +9 attack on spirit attacks.

Fear Empowerment(LEGENDARY)- an ability that boosts +9 to all attacks based on the amount of fear in the environment or within the target of an attack.

STATUS: Scared Shitless.

A demon of fear has a good nose for fear. They know how to manipulate it to their advantage and how to sense it. A place like the destroyed fortress should make the place the best battleground for Gooro. He gets empowered by fear and the fear that the defenders should have felt as they were defeated and killed would give him the maximum boost to his stats. Yet, there was no fear.

The place should have been full of negative emotions. Fear and anguish ought to abound, but it was like something had wiped everything away. The fortress felt bare and that is out of place for a place in the

abyss. The disgusting worm was right, there was nothing to smell in the fortress and that's why Gooro could smell the wrongness.

Even odder is that there was no corpse either. Where did all the dead bodies go? Everything about the fortress was unnatural. Gooro thought so. He had been fidgety but he didn't dare show weakness amongst that group of hyenas. He tried to warn them, maybe arouse their suspicions. But no one listened to him. They were all focused on their greed.

He had promised himself to bolt at the first sight of danger. Even another anomaly would have made him run, so when he saw Aeternus, he created a fear clone and ran with his tail tucked between his legs. The clone wouldn't have fooled them if they were paying attention to him.

"That's no demon. That's an abomination." Gooro said shakily as he flew away.

Aeternus was more than an anomaly, he was an abomination. He is something that shouldn't exist. As a demon whose major means of attack is attacking with the soul, he could spot the spirit defenses of another demon. If he were to put it lightly, then Aeternus's soul is abnormally strong. The only other way to describe that soul is that it put the fear of God in Gooro's heart.

"I might have seen things. I might just be paranoid." He said as he stopped a safe distance away from the fortress.

No, he doesn't intend to return there, at least not yet. He decided to spectate the battle a little, maybe an opportunity will show up for him to take advantage of. It has to be a really good opportunity too because he doubts he can be of any use in a fight against Aeternus. But anything can happen in a fight.

His mind began to change as he saw dark flashes coming out of the pillar of darkness. Curved blades of flame flew out of the pillar and cut through anything they encountered. They carved long furrows into the ground, which then began to expand as it was eroded. It was a scene right out of a demon horror show.

He could only imagine what they were going through there. Thankfully he didn't have to imagine what was going on. The notification of the death of his alliance mates by their joint contract is enough to tell him that things are going badly for them. Nothing good is happening in that pillar of darkness.

Gooro turned around and began to run again.

"I'm not running away but to my Abyss altar. What if they send a message for help and I'm not there to receive it? That will be betraying our contract."

He said in consolation while he deserted his alliance mates. The contract states that they must come to help if the fortress of a member of their alliance is under attack and help is requested. Danazel is dead and none of their fortresses is under attack. If these ones want to join him in death then they can go ahead, but Gooro doesn't intend to join them.

Instead, he will do his job by faithfully waiting at the abyss altar for a call for help. If one of them survives and calls for help, only then does he have to get involved. Even then, it will not be at the cost of his life.

Chapter 259 And Now There Were Three.

Meanwhile, Aeternus was having a field day at the fortress. This group of demons is tougher meat, but meat nonetheless. They resisted even though it was ineffectual. They resisted because it was all they could do. Black flames enveloped them. It had robbed them of their senses and it was still trying to kill them.

Still, they resisted. They burned through mana trying to keep off the corrosion. The corrosive property of the chaotic flames is their immediate threat. If they don't hold it back, they will lose a lot of their essential body mass to it. It is not the kind of weight loss that anyone will appreciate.

Their resistance reduced the corrosion to a level that was more like suffocation. Their resistance won't last long of course, but it bought them time. They had heard about Aeternus using something like this. They had laughed back then and had not taken it seriously. Now that they were in the shoes of those that they mocked, they could finally feel what they felt. They felt confused at first.

That's how it all starts. Alert and ready as they were, they still felt confused by what happened. It is an outsider that will be able to tell that they are enveloped in a cloud of darkness or a pillar of burning flames. It is an outsider that can laugh and say, 'Just run straight forward. How bad could it be?

Those that are inside didn't know what was going on. One moment they are glaring at a demon that can't count. He counted 9 as 8. They were feeling superior because of their numbers and his mistake that was caused by how terrified he was. The next moment, all they could feel is terrifying darkness.

Next comes resistance and determination. They couldn't tell left from right. They can tell up from down because they are on the ground and can still walk. They used this functional frame of reference to coordinate their resistance. They picked a direction and ran straight. It is what they thought was the answer to the problem back then when they eat watched the videos of those that fell for the cloud of darkness.

They are wrong. They couldn't get out of the darkness. Running in a straight line didn't seem like the correct answer. They were running in circles. It is an outsider that will be able to tell that the pillar is rotating. The ones inside the pillar don't know that they are being subtly pushed around and made to run in circles. Then came the attacks.

This group of demons might have been robbed of their senses but their Instincts remained and so is their determination to survive. So they managed to put up an ineffectual resistance. It was then that fear and despair set in. They could feel the death of 2 of their alliance mates through their contract. Nothing was working. So determination turned into despair. Their doom was all but certain until one of them made a decision that bought them a chance of survival.

The threat of death and the hopelessness of the situation called for desperation. The disgusting worm chose to explode itself after realizing that their fates were sealed otherwise. It combined a highly reactive Fusion of his sin energy and mana with the massive store of acid it has within a pouch in its body to create an explosion that blew the pillar of darkness apart.

Aeternus appeared when the pillar was scattered.

"And now there were three." He said as he swung his claymore around playfully.

The explosion saved them, but only 3 remained. One of them exploded while the explosion killed 2 more. The pillar had scattered because it was overwhelmed with energy and went out of his control. All the chaos energy returned to his soul and brought with it all the energy from the death and destruction he had caused. His sin mark grew stronger.

He had used his control over the chaos energy to prevent it from returning to its source, so all the energy it acquired from killing the defenders of the fortress was bottled up in it making it more powerful. It's why a pillar was created instead of a cloud. His mark of sin had grown stronger with the scattering of the flames but he has lost a powerful aid.

The three demons alive were worse for wear. They had been through a lot in this short moment and they wanted it to be over. But they understood that it wasn't going to end unless they tried to escape now or stayed together and get rid of Aeternus. It wasn't a matter of getting his spatial artifact or his blade anymore, it is a matter of survival.

The three demons looked at each other and agreed. The Balde demoness, the scorpion demon and a demon that looked like a single giant eye decided to fight him.

The beholder said to the other two. "Hold him back while I use my trump card."

"You better be quick." The scorpion replied.

The blade demoness nodded before she dashed towards Aeternus with her arms drawn. Her two arms were blades so her Blades had been drawn. Blades stuck out of her back, neck, legs, and almost every part of her body. Her body wasn't made of flesh but metal which made her very durable. She is the incarnation of carnage, a demon sculpted to rip flesh apart and make the blood of her enemies flow.

As a demon of carnage, she gets a boost from the destruction that she causes and she had a sense for determining the weak, vulnerable parts of her opponents. But she couldn't sense any from Aeternus. She even doubted he had flesh behind that view of darkness he wore around himself. Even so, she has to fight, her life depends on it.

The scorpion brandished its 4 pincers and 3 stingers and followed behind her. It shadowed her ready to reinforce her while the beholder staying behind began to glow. They were very fast and they showed impressive footwork technique. The demoness reached him first and their blades clashed. His claymore cut through her arm and would have cleaved her in two had her partner not come to the rescue.

Well, technically, he didn't come to the rescue. The scorpion ignored her cry of pain and struck with all three of his stinger from three different directions. He aimed to use her as fodder to distract Aeternus while his stingers pierce Aeternus. Aeternus felt a little threat from the stingers so he released one of his hands from his weapon and he used it to smack the stingers aside in one quick movement. The blade demoness went with the flow of the blade and was thrown aside.

"Hmm. The first step of blade mastery. Impressive." He said as he considered the blade demoness.

She had sustained a big injury instead of being cut in two. Her left arm was gone and she was missing some blades that made up her side. She and the scorpion were circling him all too content with prolonging the fight.

"If you don't come to me, then I'll come to you." He said as he began to conjure blades of flames with his claymore.

The scorpion dashed forward this time. It used its pincers coated with mana and sin energy to deflect blades of chaotic flames while its empowered sting acted as spears. The scorpion became a spear user with four shields. The blade demons joined in once in a while but she wasn't so enthusiastic. That first encounter with his blade made them realize how sharp it was so they were wary of it. They tried to dodge if possible or deflect it. Blocking it was a bad idea.

"Truly impressive." Aeternus applauded their performance.

The fight continued at a fast pace. Weapons clashed numerous times in less than a second. The environment didn't escape from the consequence of their fight. The two of them worked seamlessly. It turns out that they had both acquired the first step of weapon mastery. Their sense of momentum and manipulation of it helped them to enhance their corporation and display a fighting prowess beyond the simple combination of the one plus one.

The pincers of the scorpion demon could be used as a shield for defense, a club for smashing, or large scissors for attacking. The changes between each stage occurred seamlessly. The demoness was like an assassin. She tried to hem him in, restrict his movements and when possible take cheap shots at him. Each of their movements was meant to cover each other's weaknesses.

The scorpion is a demon of weakness. In a society with a strength-based hierarchy, weakness is a sin. The scorpion doesn't grow stronger in a fight but it makes its opponents weaker with each of its attacks. It can sense weaknesses and create them. Even more, it can exacerbate an already present weakness. All it needs is to stick one of its stingers into its opponent. If there is a weakness, it will be enhanced. If there is none, then one will be created.

Chapter 260 Fight

In a normal fight against a normal opponent, each contact that the scorpion demon has with its opponent will weaken them. But Aeternus isn't normal and this isn't a normal fight. The scorpion could

weaken the blades of flame with its pincers and successfully defect them or even break them apart. But Aeternus isn't slowing down.

Aeternus would make contact with the pincers but the sin energy of the scorpion would be burned away once it comes in contact with the chaotic flames on his body instead of affecting him. The stingers the scorpion demon usually relied on didn't work because Aeternus never allowed them to touch his body. That left their only hope to the beholder.

The two demons intended to work in concert to ground Aeternus down but he is no slouch himself. Try as they might they couldn't get away scot-free from each of their exchanges. He wielded the large two-handed weapon with ease. Sometimes it was large with a longer reach and other times it was short for quick withdrawal so that he can easily react to the scorpion's stingers and the demoness's sneaky attacks.

Some of his attacks were feints. They would block his weapon only to realize that it is light and there is no force behind it. Other times, his casual attacks will weigh a ton that will throw them aside like toys. If not for the distraction caused by the beholder, they would all be dead.

Even so, they were the ones being grounded and Aeternus wasn't even serious. He was just enjoying the sensation of fighting two skilled opponents who knew weapon mastery and waiting for the beholder to finish preparing that trump card of his.

The beholder had delayed the casting of its ultimate technique by interfering with the fight. If it hadn't, then it would be left alone to fight Aeternus. The smaller eyes on tentacles attached to its large single eye fired various spells at Aeternus but all they did was distract him. The eye could create small mirrors that reflected attacks at Aeternus.

It surrounded the two frontline fighters with these small mirrors to protect them and it saved them from untimely death. The mirrors could help block some attacks but the reflection ability wasn't effective on Aeternus. Blades and bolts of flaming chaos that are deadly to others were harmless to Aeternus.

The eye was frustrated. Its basic sin ability of copying abilities wasn't working on Aeternus. It couldn't copy Aeternus' abilities and the ability reflection wasn't working either. Which left the trump card. The trump card was so powerful that it even had to pull energy from the surroundings to create it because of his lacking energy storage.

'With it, I should be able to incinerate the bastard.' the beholder thought to itself.

It had confidence in his trump card. But the need to assist the others in holding Aeternus back made the fight longer because it was still loading the attack. It took it 1 minute and 27 seconds to prepare the attack. To the two demons holding Aeternus back, it felt like 1 hour and 27 minutes. They were stressed to the bone.

"It is ready. Withdraw." The beholder said to the two.

NAME: Niva

RACE: Demon of Envy.

BLOODLINE/SIN: Envy.

DEMON RANK: High-Rank Demon.

HEALTH: 100%

STAMINA: 78%

MANA: 4524

SIN ENERGY: 4185

ATTACK RATING: Physique:180. Spirit:180. MAGIC:180.

DEFENSE RATING: Physique:180. Spirit:180. MAGIC:180.

SIN ABILITY: The Envy of Power(EPIC)- Make two copies of any magical ability or skill that you see at equal power.

The Thorns of Envy(LEGENDARY)- Reflect a magical attack at its source at higher power.

STATUS: Pretty Confident.

The two vanguards withdrew from confronting Aeternus. He didn't stop them but watched them go. Meanwhile, his eyes were twinkling and he would be smiling if he had lips. The three of them formed a triangle with him as the base.

"You can still surrender. You're a strong demon. Our alliance has lost a lot of strength today and we could do with your strength." The scorpion said to him.

The demoness joined in. "Demons die every day. There are no eternal enemies or friends. Only benefits matter. Of course, you will have to pay for the damages you caused. I'll take your blade and the other two will take your spatial artifact."

Aeternus's amusement increased. Demons are realistic creatures. While their emotions influence them most of the time, they prefer to focus on the benefits. These demons had their lives at stake earlier and didn't even dare to beg for mercy. But now that they consider themselves of equal strength with him, they decided to negotiate.

They understand that strength is needed for negotiation. In their opinion, a dead demon is of no use to their currently weak alliance. In a way, their normal protocol is still on track. They will ask him to hand over his loot or they will kill him.

"Niva is it? You must be feeling pretty confident." Aeternus said to Niva the beholder.

"Surrender." The beholder said to him.

Aeternus nodded in understanding. "You know, I am a demon of envy too. A mid-rank of course. Not nearly as evolved as you but I know a thing or two about demons of envy."

The eye chilled at that revelation. The first sin ability of demons of envy is the ability to copy attacks. It can copy all attacks as long as it sees them, but it can only create a limited copy of a single attack. Even worse, it needs the proper amount of energy to reproduce the attack and there's a limit to the amount of attack it can copy. That means a demon of envy can copy a demon lord's attack if it has the mental space for it, but it requires energy and time to put it together.

Niva has invaded numerous worlds and has faced off against a lot of gods. That has allowed it to see stronger entities at play and to witness abilities far beyond his level.