

Multiverse 115

Chapter 115: Isn't That a Bit Too Weak?

Kuroka dragged Koneko Toujou away.

That girl still had some things weighing on her heart, and only her sister could help her work through them. Otherwise, there was a high chance she wouldn't listen to anyone and wouldn't reclaim her identity and power as a Nekomata.

Although Kuroka might not be the most reliable person, her concern for her little sister was second to none. She was also quite adept at provoking reactions. Handing Koneko over to her shouldn't be a problem.

Well... probably?

In any case, Kaiser felt this arrangement was sufficient. After all, he couldn't be expected to counsel a little Nekomata who hadn't even reached full maturity yet, right?

Having one Kirin Toudou in his life was already enough; he definitely didn't need another.

The same went for Yuuto Kiba—Kaiser had no intention of advising him either. Even if Kiba continued to harbor hostility toward the Church and Holy Sword wielders, that was his own business, the Church's business. What did it have to do with Kaiser?

So after handing over the wristband that forcibly awakened the Balance Breaker to Kiba, Kaiser left him alone to decide what to do next.

Rias, on the other hand, returned briefly to the Human World with the wristband. Her half-vampire peerage member was sealed in the old school building of Kuoh Academy.

In the end, only Akeno Himejima remained in place, neither staying nor leaving, simply standing there in awkward silence.

Kaiser ignored her and returned to the villa on his own, continuing to enjoy his vacation-like days just as leisurely as before.

And so, time passed until nightfall.

When the sky had completely darkened, Kaiser left the villa.

He took out the activation core of Gravisheath and activated it, manipulating the gravity around him as he slowly floated toward the horizon.

"Boom!"

Suddenly, a bolt of lightning tore through the night sky, shooting from the direction of the villa. It illuminated everything in its path as it hurtled toward Kaiser.

"Bang!"

Kaiser swung Gravisheath through the air, dragging a streak of blood-red light behind it. It clashed with the incoming lightning, slicing it apart with a muffled explosion.

After cutting down the lightning, Kaiser rested Gravisheath on his shoulder and looked ahead. His face showed no surprise or irritation at having been attacked.

In front of him floated a girl with a single long ponytail, dressed in a shrine maiden outfit. Devil wings spread from her back, and her expression was grim. One of her fingers was still extended, with lightning flickering at its tip—clearly identifying her as the attacker.

"What do you think you're doing?"

Kaiser asked in a calm voice.

"...That's what I should be asking you, isn't it?"

Akeno Himejima's lovely face was taut with tension, and a fiery glint burned in her eyes.

It was anger.

"You want to stop me?" Kaiser ignored her anger and said, "Aren't you the one who hates your father the most? Why are you trying to stop me?"

"That's my business," Akeno replied coldly. "It has nothing to do with you."

"It has everything to do with me." Kaiser raised Gravisheath, letting the blood-colored blade shine with an eerie glow in the night sky, making him look like a reaper cloaked in darkness. "Why do you think I came here? Isn't it for your master's sake?"

"What?" Akeno blinked in surprise. "Rias?"

"Yes," Kaiser said openly. "You're her Queen and her first peerage member. You should know this better than anyone."

"Rias Gremory is engaged, and she's strongly opposed to it."

At those words, Akeno fell silent.

She did indeed know about the engagement—and even who the fiancé was.

It was a pure-blood Devil family from the same 72 Pillars as the Gremorys: the House of Phoenix.

Phoenix—the legendary sacred beast said to govern life, revered by many. Its tears were said to heal any wound, and drinking its blood could grant immortality.

Though the Phoenix was a sacred beast, in the Underworld there existed a Phoenix family aligned with the Devils. They held the rank of Devil Marquess and were one of the 72 Pillars. That was the family to which Rias's fiancé belonged.

The Phoenix family within the Devil world also governed fire, wind, and life. Their abilities were nearly identical to those of the sacred beast. Their flames could even burn dragon scales, and even if reduced to ashes, they could instantly revive—earning them the title of Immortal Bird.

In terms of reputation, the Phoenix family was in no way inferior to the Gremorys—perhaps even surpassing them. Their status in the Underworld was high, and they were respected by many factions.

Rias's fiancé was the third son of the Phoenix family, a young Devil of the current generation who had debuted only a few years ago. He was slightly older than Rias and, aside from some character flaws, surpassed her in nearly every aspect.

Although Akeno was Rias's peerage member, the two were the same age and had been together the longest. They were more like sisters than master and servant, which was why Akeno often called Rias by name.

And precisely because of that, Akeno knew just how much Rias detested this engagement.

"She really doesn't want to go through with it, but she's still a noble daughter—heir to the family. Matters like marriage are, as everyone knows, not something she can decide on her own."

"So what can she do?"

"It's simple. She has to rebel."

Kaiser spoke as if he were prophesying, calm and certain.

"If this continues, the Gremory and Phoenix families will inevitably do something about it."

"The Devil world values strength above all—power is everything."

"It's called a Rating Game, right?" Kaiser said with a faint smile at Akeno. "Don't you think, knowing how stubborn your master is, that the two families will eventually propose settling this engagement with the most popular competition in the Devil world?"

Akeno's expression changed slightly.

She suddenly realized that what Kaiser said might actually come true—that both sides could end up deciding the engagement's outcome through a Rating Game.

The Rating Game was the most popular and respected competition among Devils, comparable in prestige to the Festas in the world of Asterisk Wars.

A Devil's performance in a Rating Game could determine their status and whether they could rise in rank.

A King who performed well might be promoted to Ultimate-class Devil. A peerage member could be elevated to Middle-class or even High-class Devil. It was a path to prominence in the Devil world.

When faced with conflict, a Rating Game often became the standard way for High-class Devils to resolve disputes and decide matters.

However, if Rias were to challenge her fiancé in such a match, her chances of winning were slim.

"That third son of the Phoenix family has already debuted and has a full peerage. He's participated in several Rating Games. He has both strength and experience."

"And what about the Gremory peerage?"

"You're not even at full capacity."

Kaiser pointed this out.

A Devil's peerage wasn't unlimited in size—it had a set number.

The system was modeled after chess. The High-class Devil acting as King had one Queen, two Rooks, two Bishops, two Knights, and eight Pawns—for a total of sixteen pieces.

To this end, the current Lucifer, Beelzebub, developed the Evil Piece System for reincarnated Devils. By implanting Evil Pieces into those they wanted as subordinates, a master-servant contract could be formed, reincarnating individuals of other races as Devils.

Each High-class Devil could receive a set of Evil Pieces. The King was the Devil themselves and didn't require a piece, leaving fifteen others to reincarnate peerage members. Once all the pieces were used, no more could be added.

These Evil Pieces also had unique traits. Merging with a piece granted the corresponding abilities and power boosts.

Rooks had enhanced attack and defense and were worth five Pawns.

Bishops amplified demonic power and were worth three Pawns.

Knights had enhanced speed, also worth three Pawns.

The Queen combined all of the above, valued at nine Pawns.

Akeno Himejima was Rias's Queen, possessing all the Evil Piece traits. Her power made her the peerage member closest in strength to Rias.

Yuuto Kiba was a Knight, Koneko was a Rook, the sealed vampire was a Bishop, and with Akeno as Queen, those were Rias's current peerage members.

In other words, she still had eleven Evil Pieces unused and needed eleven more peerage members to be at full capacity.

And the Phoenix family's third son?

He had already filled his peerage—no Evil Pieces left.

If the two sides entered a Rating Game, even counting the King, it would be five versus sixteen—a more than twofold difference in numbers.

Moreover, his King was the so-called Immortal Bird with Phoenix regeneration. Forget strength—defeating him was nearly impossible.

"In other words, once the game starts, there's no doubt you'll lose."

Kaiser pointed this out bluntly.

"But I owe Rias Gremory a favor, and I don't want to see her lose."

"So what should I do?"

"Obviously, I need to help you all grow stronger—make up for quantity with quality."

Kaiser narrowed his eyes as he stared at Akeno.

"I know you all carry painful pasts, but come on—it's already come to this. As Rias's peerage, are you really going to let your unresolved issues keep you from unleashing your full strength and just sit by while your master loses her happiness?"

"This is the so-called deep bond of the Gremory peerage?"

"Then your bond is far too weak. I feel sorry for Rias!"

Kaiser's merciless rebuke didn't anger Akeno this time.

She simply stayed silent, her eyes dimming slightly.