

Second World #Chapter 1871. The Effect of Horatio's Demise - Read Second World Chapter 1871. The Effect of Horatio's Demise

Chapter 1871. The Effect of Horatio's Demise

What Belphegor used was Ice Death. An instant death skill the same as the one used by Euphosine. But in Belphegor's hand, this skill was even more deadly. This skill instantly killed Horatio.

"Your Majestyyy...!!!" Darius cried. He was among those who were blown away by Belphegor's ice chakrams.

The other native soldiers stared with shocked expressions. They couldn't believe the person they were supposed to protect was killed so swiftly. They didn't know what to think. They wished this was all just a bad dream.

The players also didn't move. They stared at Belphegor with terrified expressions. Horatio was not weak. He also had a legendary artifact empowering him. Yet, he was killed in such a short instant.

Belphegor ignored all those stares. He bent down and swiped away the ice chunks on the ground. Horatio's body parts were still visible inside these ice chunks. He picked up the Book of the Damned. The book was so tiny in his palm.

"An artifact that gave others demonic power... What an affront. Too bad I can't destroy it," Belphegor muttered.

He started walking back to where he came from. The defenders were confused by the act. They thought the devil would continue assaulting them now that he was deep inside their defensive line.

"Murdererrr...!!!" fiery bat darts came assailing Belphegor.

Belphegor ignored those attacks. An ice shell appeared around him. The fire darts were extinguished when they touched this ice shell.

Vanessa rushed over once she saw Belphegor appear near Horatio, but she was too late. Belphegor's instant death skill took everyone by surprise. She channeled mana manipulation into her whip. The long whip turned rigid. It became an absurdly long rapier. She thrust this rapier-whip while using Drilling Thrust enhanced with the fire element.

Spiraling flame energy followed her whip as it stabbed into Belphegor's ice shell. The drilling caused friction that resulted in fiery sparks. Yet, Vanessa could only drill through

half the ice shell's thickness. Belphegor continued walking as if nothing had happened. The ice shell followed him.

Ezekiel also came. His pet, the blood vulture, turned into a red streak and struck the spot where Vanessa had stabbed earlier. This caused more cracks in the ice shell. Ezekiel's dual curved twinblades turned into a blur as he executed Penta Slash, causing more cracks. Vanessa added a Fireball spell, which finally broke the ice shell apart.

Belphegor grunted when that happened, but he didn't stop walking. He continued to walk at a normal walking pace.

Seeing their two relic marshalls assaulting Belphegor to avenge their sovereign, the native soldiers joined in on the assault.

"Wait!" William shouted. Taking action because of impulse would just jeopardize everything.

Yet, the natives ignored his warnings. They swarmed Belphegor, who was now covered in ice armor. Neither Vanessa's nor Ezekiel's strikes were able to penetrate this armor. Multiple ranged attacks and spells from the natives assailed Belphegor. The melee combatants rushed forward to strike his legs.

Belphegor finally stopped walking. He turned back and uttered, "What a nuisance."

A powerful ice energy burst from his body. Everyone who had come into his vicinity was hit by the burst. Some were frozen. Those who didn't became sluggish, including Vanessa and Ezekiel. Belphegor formed one hand into a fist. He then made two jabs, which hit the two relic marshalls. Even if they were not slowed by the ice energy, they still couldn't dodge because the jabs were too damned fast.

Belphegor then made a powerful stomp. The ground cracked and crumbled. Ice spikes pierced out of the ground, stabbing the native soldiers who crowded around him. Many died from that assault, especially the frozen ones. They received instant death effects when the ice encasing them broke.

Belphegor turned around and resumed his walk. He wasn't interested in finishing the soldiers here.

"We need to retreat!" William said to Darius. Darius was the only native who didn't rush forward to assault Belphegor. He was also enraged by Horatio's death, but he kept a cool head instead of lashing out in anger.

"... I'm afraid it will be difficult to do so," Darius said weakly.

With Vanessa, Ezekiel, and many native soldiers coming to this side to attack Belphegor, the parts where they originally defended had crumbled. More and more

demons breached through the walls. The siege weapons and defensive structures were taken out at an alarming rate. The worst was the native soldiers did things on their own. They no longer listened to orders. There was no chain of command. With the sovereign gone, the morale fell to a worrying level. The soldiers had not yet started fleeing but they were throwing their lives without consideration.

"Vanessa! You have to get through to your mother! Get her to issue the retreat!" William said to Darius.

Darius looked in Vanessa's direction. She had charged back to Belphegor. He doubted anything he said would get through to her, but she was indeed the most likely candidate to get the soldiers to listen. Darius gritted his teeth and ran toward her.

In the meantime, William started sending messages to the players, telling them to prepare for the tactical retreat. He asked them to wait for his signal. If they just left, the native soldiers blinded by rage would be slaughtered.

While he was sending the messages, a loud roar resounded in the sky. He looked up and saw Jygorth. A mana-empowered voice came out of the black dragon flying above.

"Sangrod soldiers! Retreat!! We will make our stands in the Sangrod Empire!"

Jygorth's voice got through many native soldiers. Not just because of his mana-empowered voice, but also due to his status as Sangrod's country guardian. The soldiers regained their levelheadedness and stopped rushing forward blindly. Vanessa was the same. She looked up at the black dragon before observing the situation on the battlefield. Everything was a mess. They were losing fast.

"Ezekiel, hold!" She called.

Ezekiel was about to rush forward again, but he stopped after hearing Vanessa's call.

"Issue the retreat command!" She told Ezekiel. She then took out a horn and blew it. The shrill voice of the horn reached the entire battlefield.

"Retreat! Retreat...!!!" She called.

The same calls started sounding all over the battlefield. The defenders began to move away from the defensive walls. Their formation was a mess already, so they still suffered during the retreat. One thing they should be thankful for was Belphegor continued to ignore them. The devil resumed walking back without a care for the defenders.

After hearing the retreat call, Wrath's maids also stopped fighting Belphegor's mini-clones. They disengaged and joined the retreating soldiers.

Belphegor called his nearest demon commander. He gave the Book of the Damned to this commander.

"Take this to Lord Lucifer," Belphegor ordered.

The Book of the Damned was an atrocity to their race. It was created by a demon sorcerer who wished to gain ultimate control over the demons and usurp the devil's dominance in the underworld. He failed but successfully sent his prize work through a secret portal into the upperworld. He was unable to escape using that portal, but at least his legacy lived on in the book.

The Book of the Damned was classified as an artifact and was protected by the world system. Even Lucifer couldn't destroy the book, but at least he could keep the book from falling into another's hand.

"I've put a seal on this book," Belphegor warned his commander. "If you try opening it, I will know. You will then regret ever doing it, so don't!"

"I... I understand, Lord Belphegor," The demon commander bowed as he accepted the book.

"Go!" Belphegor commanded.

He turned back to the defenders after the demon commander left. They were in full retreat motion now. He was thinking about whether to rush over and do some damage.

The mini-Belphegors came to him as he was gazing away. They jumped and hugged his muscular body. As they touched, the mini-belphegors turned into jelly and were absorbed into Belphegor's body. Fat covered his muscles again. His form was back to the extraordinarily obese devil.

Lethargy plagued his mind when that happened. He didn't feel the desire to chase the defenders anymore. He felt very tired after all the exercise just now. He sat on the ground and watched his demon army harass the retreating defenders. That was until the defenders activated the traps that covered their retreat. Then, it was the demons whose formation turned into a mess.

Belphegor chuckled. He was amused by the foolishness of his army. After experiencing the traps so many times, they still fell for it.

He put one hand to prop his head. He wished this war was over soon. He didn't like treading across the whole world just for the sake of conquering it. It's too much work. He just wished to lay down and rest.

Palgrost's Northern defense ended up being the first to lose its ground. The fleeing Sangrod army retreated until the border and continued in the direction of their country.

Darius and Vanessa took temporary control over the army. They didn't have the time to decide on a successor. They were pretty sure the nobles in Sangrod would quarrel over the throne once they learned of Horatio's demise. Even with the world at risk, greedy people always look for an opportunity to seize profit.

If only there was another Maxius, the decision of a successor would be easier. But Horatio was the last of the Maxius blood, or so they thought.

Chapter 1872. Tri-Elemental Cataclysm

While the battle in Northern Palgrost had ended in defeat, the other fronts were still valiantly defending. In Southern Hydrurond, the two opposing sides were still heated in battle. Two defensive lines left before the Southern Hydrurond Front had to leave Hydrurond's territory and cross the border into Themisphere.

The defender's number here was still more than half compared to when they first engaged the underworld forces. This was due to the rune tree from the mobile fortress. The constant healing provided the troops with high survivability, especially those with high HP. This allowed them to put up fierce resistance throughout every defensive line.

The steady reinforcements from Themisphere also kept their number strong. Added by the aid from the Council of Elpo, which boasted many powerful natives, they could give the underworld forces a run for their money, even when the demon army was led by the strongest devil.

"Hah...!!" Satan gave Eoranth a slam using his hammer. The slam sent the dragon reeling to the side.

Hundreds of golden lightning streaked through the sky and struck Satan. These lightning strikes were unable to touch Satan's body, though, because runic symbols appeared all over his skin. These runic symbols formed a protective layer that stopped all attacks.

"Harharhar. We have been fighting for so long, and you are still holding back?" Satan said to Honuren, who had cast the golden lightning spell.

"... It's the same with you," Honuren returned.

"If I don't hold back, it will be all over by now. The remaining march will then be as boring as hell. Our battles at least give me something to be excited about. But I must say, this repeated clash is getting boring. Perhaps I have to force you to go all out."

Satan spit out a fire lance. The fire lance was very fast. Honuren only had the time to erect a magic shield to block the attack. He staggered from the impact. Satan already cast a spell by the time Honuren regained his balance. A giant flaming hand materialized near Honuren and attempted to grab him.

Honuren aimed his staff at the flaming hand. Lightning and light bombarded the flaming hand and kept it at bay.

While that happened, Satan charged forward. Eoranth tried chasing after Satan, but the flapping of Satan's wings generated flaming hurricanes that prevented Eoranth from getting near.

"Perhaps if I destroy that mobile fortress, you will go all out. Harhar!" Satan laughed as he flew toward the mobile fortress. The defenders tried to block his charge but were blown away by the fiery winds he generated.

A dark shadow suddenly came into Satan's path. Following the shadow was a huge black sword.

"Hm?" Satan swung his flaming hammer. It collided with the black sword. The black sword shattered.

The dark shadow recoiled from the impact. The dark shadow was Arlcard in his Dark Lord Incarnation. After the constant battles these past two months, he was now level 91. Jack tasked him with protecting the mobile fortress. Even if Satan was the one targeting the mobile fortress, he wouldn't back down.

"Not bad, vampire," Satan said.

"I'm not done, yet!" Arlcard yelled. He created a shadow clone before casting a spell. His shadow clone rushed forward to draw Satan's attention.

A streak of fire flashed across the air in front of Satan, and Arlcard's shadow clone was sent crashing to the ground. The speed of Satan's hammer swing was uncanny. Satan then stomped his foot on the shadow clone and kept it pinned there.

Arlcard was taken aback but didn't stop casting. Satan didn't move. He simply stared at Arlcard with a grin.

"Damn it!" Arlcard cursed. Satan was letting him finish his spell. The devil completely underestimated him.

"You will regret this!" Arlcard exclaimed as he completed his spell. It was an eight-rune spell.

Multiple gigantic black swords started raining down from the sky. These massive swords flew as if homing missiles, and they all went toward Satan. This was one of the new spells Arlcard gained after leveling up, Dark Lord's Judgement.

"Harharhar!" Satan laughed despite the pressure from the giant black swords. A ring of silver and dark purple covered by runic symbols appeared above him. This ring was his Soul and Chaos Ring of Defense.

The giant black swords crashed into this ring. They broke into pieces when they touched the ring. Arlcard controlled the black swords to spread out. They flew in an arc and came stabbing at Satan from every direction.

"Harhar! You think because this defensive skill is shaped like a ring, it can only defend from one side?" Satan asked with a mocking tone.

Satan's arms spread, and his protective ring enlarged. It then spun around his body at such a high speed that it became a sphere. None of the black swords that came stabbing was able to penetrate this sphere. When the last of the black swords was gone, the ring stopped. When this ring stopped Eoranth's Annihilating Soul Beam, it suffered many cracks. This time, it was still as good as new.

The ring went behind Satan. It blocked the attack from Eoranth, who came charging, as well as a soul beam fired by Honuren. Satan ignored the two and let his protective ring deal with them. His attention was on Arlcard.

Arlcard was still in shock because his powerful spell was useless against Satan. This opened him up to Satan's attack. The huge flaming hammer slammed into him. He managed to put his rapier forward to parry, but he was still sent crashing into the ground.

When Satan swung his hammer for the second time, Arlcard turned into a swarm of bats to escape.

"Harhar. Nice trick," Satan laughed. He was about to unleash Infernal Fire Breath from his mouth, but he stopped when he sensed a strong spell being cast not far away.

He turned to where the mobile fortress was and saw a human mage forming a spell formation. This human mage was Emris. The spell Emris was casting was a mega spell, and it was in the process of forming its fifth rune.

"Shit!" Emris cursed. He was hoping Satan was distracted enough by the others, but it seemed the devil's mana sense was incredibly advanced.

Satan's protective ring was still blocking Eoranth and Honuren. Out of frustration, Eoranth grabbed the ring. He was assailed by soul and chaos damage for touching the ring, even when his claws were covered by the silver fire from his Soul-infused Fist.

He roared in pain but didn't let go of the ring. His act allowed Honuren to get past the ring and cast a spell that conjured a thick lightning lasso. This lightning lasso coiled around Satan's body and prevented him from moving.

"Good!" Emris exclaimed, but he then noticed Satan's expression. Satan was grinning calmly. Just like with Arlcard, Satan was letting Emris complete his spell.

"Hmph," Emris grunted. He was offended but was also grateful for Satan's arrogance. He continued casting.

"Clear the area!" Emris shouted when his spell formation was completed.

Eoranth, Honuren, and Arlcard left the area. Honuren had to let go of the lightning lasso restricting Satan. But in reality, the lightning lasso was not needed. Satan remained there out of his own will. He could free himself anytime he wanted.

Linda and Tip had also sent commands for everyone in Satan's vicinity to vacate the area since Emris started casting his mega spell.

Emris pointed his staff at Satan. Massive orbs of fire, ice, and lightning appeared around Satan. Satan sensed the strong aura from these orbs. His grin slightly wavered. His Soul and Chaos Ring of Defense had run out of duration. He used another skill for protection. A fire shell powered by runic symbols encapsulated his body just before the three elemental orbs exploded.

Their blast covered a very wide area. Not as absurd as Satan's Soul and Chaos Chain Reaction, but still considerable. The spell didn't end with the blast. The three elemental energies of fire, ice, and lightning raged inside the blast radius, creating a powerful storm that ravaged everything.

Nobody could see Satan inside the elemental turmoil. Everything was covered by the elemental storms. They doubted anything could survive this elemental calamity.

Emris watched the elemental storms anxiously. This mega spell was the strongest spell in his possession. Its name was Tri-Elemental Cataclysm. This was also the mega spell he failed to cast when he was inside the Eldritch Beholder.

Emris had left his post to aid this place when he saw the mobile fortress in danger. Luckily, Tip had summoned the guild army earlier. He had recently activated the Oriental Guardian Beasts, so the four guild guardians were strong enough to tackle the eternal-grade demons scattered throughout the demon army.

When the elemental storms receded, they saw Satan again. He lost less than five percent HP from the mega spell. Emris felt disappointed but not surprised. If the devil could be so easily defeated, this war would have ended by now.

Chapter 1873. Celestial Dragon Lifeforce

Satan chuckled. "Not bad, human mage. Let me give you a spell in return."

Satan cast Infernal Flame Wrath. Multiple giant fireballs rushed toward the mobile fortress. Emris cast Ice Wall. The Sentinels, Paladins, and spellcasters inside the mobile fortress used their defensive skills and spells. These skills and spells were blasted to smithereens when the fireballs exploded after crashing into them.

More than half of the fireballs landed on the mobile fortress. Each explosion sent the mobile fortress staggering back. Its rune diagram flared brightly while its shield dimmed. Three of its eight legs broke. The people inside the mobile fortress fell to the floor while the entire fortress shook.

Satan was laughing when he saw the mobile fortress getting pushed back. The demons from his rear uttered a war cry as they charged forward. Many demons at the front perished when Emris' Tri-Elemental Cataclysm hit the area. They were now charging toward the mobile fortress, which its protective shield almost ran out. Satan also walked forward.

But before they could get far, a huge golden lightning slammed into them from the sky. The lightning explosion sent all the demons flying away.

What had landed was a titanic lightning being, or so they thought.

"Hehe, finally going all out, eh?" Satan chuckled.

After a closer inspection, everyone could see Honuren inside this humanoid titan made of lightning. This was the skill he saved for an emergency, Lightning Titan Suit. With the mobile fortress in danger, it could be counted as an emergency.

"Eoranth! Let's do it!" Honuren yelled as he charged forward.

With the lightning titan suit, he was almost as big as Satan. The two now traded blows from close range. Honuren could still cast spells from inside his lightning titan suit. The lightning titan fought Satan with its fists while Honuren's spells assailed the devil non-stop.

Satan sensed something coming at him from the side. Something that emitted a powerful aura. More powerful than any opponent he had faced since the war started. He failed to block in time because Honuren kept him occupied, and this new opponent was very fast.

The impact sent him crashing to the ground. The momentum dragged him a considerable distance away, creating a long trail on the ground. He rose after the momentum stopped. He took a good look at his attacker.

It was not a new opponent. It was Eoranth. Yet, different. Eoranth was now covered in what looked like a spiky plate armor. His entire body was glowing silver.

"Hm... New skill?" Satan asked.

It was indeed a new skill. After countless dangerous battles against Satan, Eoranth had awakened his dormant power. A power that Broidrireg knew to slumber within Eoranth's bloodline. The skill Eoranth acquired was called Celestial Dragon Lifeorce.

Honuren and Eoranth originally planned to keep their skills secret until they ground Satan's HP to at least thirty percent. They hoped the surprise could throw Satan into disarray so they could use the chance to quickly deplete his remaining HP, but things didn't always go as planned. Satan's HP was still above eighty percent at the moment.

Eoranth charged forward. His charge created a silver shell that made him look like a silver meteor.

Satan didn't back down. He also lunged forward. The two titans crashed into one another. Their impact caused a slight distortion in the space around them. Before, Eoranth would have been sent flying back from the collision. This time, he stood his ground.

Honuren didn't stay idle. With the lightning titan suit, he joined Eoranth in a melee battle against Satan. He also cast the spell that conjured multiple giant silver sabers. He used mana manipulation to control these silver sabers to fly around his lightning titan suit. Each slash from these sabers caused soul damage.

For the first time, the defenders saw Satan getting forced to step back from a confrontation. Their morale ignited from this single scene. Their war cries shook the air.

All of a sudden, a huge black hole appeared where Eoranth was. The black hole's appearance was so sudden that Eoranth didn't get the chance to react. He was devoured by the black hole and vanished. He appeared a great distance away in the middle of the demon army. Several of the demons were eternal grades. There was also the eternal-grade Hell Demolisher, whom Eoranth fought on the first day. They swarmed at him.

With only Honuren left, he couldn't hold Satan at bay. Satan's flaming hammer struck his lightning body. He flung back from the impact.

"Grrhh...! Why did you interfere...!!!" Satan roared while stomping his feet repeatedly. Lava erupted around him.

His wrath was not directed at his enemies but at the one who had teleported Eoranth away. It was the eyeball demon who was by his side during the march. This eyeball demon used Void Displacement Eye to teleport Eoranth to where most of the strong demons were gathering.

Everyone was used to Satan's tantrum by now. He could appear calm and taunting at one second, then turn into someone who threw a fit in the next second. The eyeball demon was also aware of his lord's behavior. It didn't appear perturbed when Satan came stomping at him menacingly.

It calmly spoke to the approaching Satan, "My Lord, I saw that silver dragon preparing to do something. Whatever it was, I fear you won't like it."

"Really?" Satan turned to Eoranth, who was battling the other demons.

"Tch!" Honuren, who heard the conversation, lamented the missed opportunity. Eoranth could perform a powerful secret offensive skill when he was under the Celestial Dragon Lifeorce, but he needed time. He could also only use it once per battle. Now that Satan was aware, it was unlikely for them to score a successful hit.

Satan's fuming tantrum was seemingly gone from that simple explanation. The eyeball demon wasn't surprised by this. He was used to Satan's mood swings.

"Are you sure? I did sense his mana increasing, but nothing to be concerned about," Satan said.

"I'm not sure. I simply made a calculated judgment based on what I saw. From what I saw, I knew he was up to something. You can trust my eye because my eye..."

"Is the only thing you are proud of, bla bla bla. I know. You, pathetic eyeball."

"That was mean, My Lord."

"I'm Satan. What do you expect? Don't you dare interfere again! I mean it, Dajja. I won't let you off if you do it again."

"As you wish, My Lord," Dajja replied.

Honuren was standing between Satan and the mobile fortress. The mobile fortress was limping away with its broken legs.

Satan looked between Honuren, the mobile fortress, and Eoranth who was still hindered by the other demons.

"I enjoy fighting the two of you together. It gives me a small sense of thrill... Well, whatever." The air behind him exploded. He charged forward once he was done speaking. Flames covered his whole body. He shot at Honuren, leaving a trail of fire.

The lightning titan suit sent its fist forward. Lightning gathered around that fist, turning it into an extremely dense lightning fist. Honuren himself was casting a spell from inside the suit.

WHAM!

Satan's flaming hammer collided with the condensed lightning fist. The collision sent fire and lightning everywhere. Honuren cast his spell. Hundreds of soul darts stabbed into Satan, but they were unable to penetrate Satan's skin because they were blocked by a defensive layer filled with runic symbols.

Honuren focused his mana manipulation. He could also modify a skill's form like Satan and Jack. Several soul darts turned sharper and did drilling motions. These drilling soul darts successfully pierced through Satan's defense and caused him damage.

Satan didn't seem to care about the little damage he suffered. While Honuren was busy trying to get through his defense, Satan made another swing. The fire that formed his hammer changed shape and became an axe. The sharp end of the axe cleaved into the Lightning Titan Suit's head.

The flames raging around Satan's body were a buff skill. His power was stronger than before. The lightning that formed the head of Honuren's lightning titan suit was unraveled. The suit was now without a head.

Honuren didn't stop just because his suit lost its head. The titan's fist continued punching Satan while he cast spells.

Satan didn't back away from the punches. His flaming axe now transformed into a spear, which he thrust right into the lightning titan suit's chest.

Luckily, Honuren saw the stab. He was already wary when he saw Satan's flaming axe destroyed his suit's head. Similarly, his suit was unable to block Satan's flaming spear. He veered away just as the flaming spear pierced his lightning suit. Otherwise, he would also be pierced by the spear.

"Tip, call your guild guardians to help Honuren. He can't fight Satan alone!" Linda called.

Arlcard and Emris were back to protecting the mobile fortress that was moving away from Satan. Many powerful demons came to attack the fortress after seeing it nearly lost its shield. They couldn't aid Honuren.

Eoranth was still hindered by the demons. Dajja had also joined the fight there. Satan asked it not to interfere, but since Satan wasn't fighting Eoranth, this didn't count as interfering. Dajja had many troublesome eye skills that kept Eoranth on edge.

"They are all occupied!" Tip replied, "... But I think I can task our new guild hero. He just slayed the eternal-grade demon he was fighting. I'm calling him over now."

Chapter 1874. The New Guild Hero

When Jack returned to Thereath to use the Monarch System, Tip informed him that Warpath had secured the hero token. It was right on time because Uruk had fallen several battles earlier. Guild heroes and guild units didn't enjoy the protection of the Chapel of Resurrection. When they died, it was permanent.

The hero token Warpath's team procured was a legendary grade, so they had a 10% chance of summoning an eternal-grade guild hero. That was under normal conditions. With Jack's Godly luck stat, the probability increased further. That's why they waited for Jack to return before using the hero token.

During the time Jack was inside Chris' training dungeon, he continuously used his Runestone of Spellcasting. His Runecraft's skill had leveled up to Advanced Master. He could now increase his luck stat even higher using his willpower during the activation of the Runestone of Luck.

With the incredible boost of luck stat, Jack successfully summoned an eternal-grade hero for the guild. While they rejoiced at getting the highest-grade hero, one thing about this summoned hero surprised them. This one thing was the hero's race. Normally, a summoned guild hero came from one of the seven main races. They had confirmed this with the other guilds who had also used hero tokens. No one ever got heroes with races other than from the seven main races. The exception was the infernal hero token Jack procured, which gave them a demon-race hero.

While they were surprised by the hero's race, someone in the current battle was also surprised for the same reason. His surprise was even greater than the players when he learned of the guild hero's race.

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Honuren's lightning titan suit was in shamble. It was still in effect, but its effectiveness was very much reduced after receiving Satan's repeated assaults. Under the Flame Rage buff, Satan's every attack had a high chance of wounding.

Honuren cast a spell that created multiple chain explosions that dealt soul damage. The spell stopped Satan's movements and gave an opening for his lightning titan suit to deliver a hard punch that forced Satan back. He then used the reprieve to channel mana manipulation to repair his lightning titan suit.

When Satan was about to lunge back, a flash of light drew his attention. His flaming spear, which had transformed into a flaming buckler, blocked a speeding light that was about to crash into him. The speeding light bounced and revealed itself to be a winged man.

"What...?!" Satan uttered when he had a good look at the attacker.

The man wore medium armor that covered most of his body. On his back was a pair of shining feathery wings. The man's face was similar to the ethereal race. He had no mouth, and his eyes were without pupils. However, while ethereal had dark skin, this man's skin was bright. The brightness was because the skin was emitting light. It was as if the man himself was made of light.

Satan paused when he saw this glowing man. It took him a breath before he said, "A true angel...? I thought your kind was already extinct... Wait, you are not a real native."

After using his Inspect, Satan knew the angel before him was a guild hero.

This guild hero was Everlasting Heavenly Legend's newest eternal-grade hero. His name was Thanael. He was classified as an angel. Not the same as the angel summoned from Priest's spell. When Jack asked Peniel after summoning Thanael, Peniel explained that Thanael was a true angel. A hidden major race outside of the seven main races.

Later, after Jack returned to Chris' secret garden, Jack told Wilted about Thanael. She was as surprised as the others who saw Thanael for the first time. She said there should not be an angel race in the game program. Angels should only exist as summoned creatures. When they asked Chris about this, the guy only smiled but otherwise said nothing about the subject.

Thanael was level 95. He was originally level 94, following Jack's level when Jack used the hero token. He increased one level after Jack used mana cores on the Hero Altar. At such a high level, the hero's level could only be increased one time using this method. Peniel even said if the summoned hero was level 95 or above, the hero could no longer be leveled up using mana cores.

As an eternal-grade guild hero, Thanael possessed three passive effects on the guild units. The first effect was a 20% increase in damage, defense, and the stats of all guild units. The second was all guild units received a 15% damage reduction when receiving attacks from undead, darkness, or demon units. The third effect had all the guild units' weapons to be constantly blessed with Paladin's level 10 sacred flame. If a guild unit possessed the sacred flame skill, the skill's effect was added.

During combat, these three passive effects were doubled for all guild units within a 50-meter radius of Thanael.

Satan was surprised to learn about Thanael's race, but his surprised expression lasted only an instant.

"Harhar, I thought that despicable race had come back to life, but you are just a vestige of their existence. Let me snuff your light out!"

The flaming buckler in Satan's hands transformed back into a hammer. He no longer targeted Honuren. With Thanael's appearance, his focus had shifted. That was because a true angel was a demon's natural enemy. Thanael had a passive ability to purify the mana in his vicinity. Hence, demons that fought Thanael would become uncomfortable and weakened after a long fight. This was because the corrupted mana was no longer available in the surroundings. In this way, a true angel would always be superior when fighting a demon of the same level and grade.

This ability didn't bother the devil so much, though.

Thanael zoomed to the side using Air Skate when Satan's flaming hammer came. He then counterattacked using his weapon, a white lance. The thrust of his lance generated a white beam of light that hit Satan's shoulder. The beam failed to penetrate Satan's protective layer, but it caused the runic symbols at the hit area to waver. Thanael's attacks also had a purifying ability.

Satan kept swinging his flaming hammers, but Thanael had a swift flight maneuver. Thanael continued dodging Satan's attacks until he suddenly sensed a giant flaming hand right behind him. This flaming hand was about to grab him.

Thanael was unable to dodge the flaming hand. If he did, he would be smashed by Satan's hammer, which was swinging at him from the front. Luckily, a golden lightning net appeared and halted the flaming hand. At the same time, Honuren's already repaired lightning titan suit came slamming at Satan. This let Thanael fly away to safety. He let Honuren fight Satan while he cast a spell.

"You are asking for another beating?" Satan mocked Honuren.

He shoved one hand to grab Honuren's lightning titan suit. His hand was assailed by strong electricity, but he didn't appear perturbed. The flaming hammer in his other hand transformed again. This time, it became a flaming claw. Satan used this claw to repeatedly maul the titan lightning suit, tearing its lightning energy apart bit by bit with every strike. The already repaired suit had holes everywhere again.

Satan's attention was drawn to Thanael, who was casting. The spell formation of the spell he was casting had reached the sixth rune. He had a bad feeling about the angel. He decided not to underestimate the situation. He violently slammed the titan lightning suit he was still grabbing into the ground. All the while ignoring the spells Honuren threw at him from inside the suit. His runic defensive suit greatly mitigated the damage.

He was about to rush at Thanael, but a strong explosion distracted him. He turned and saw remnants of massive turbulent energy not far away. From that direction, he saw Eoranth was like a meteor charging at him. Honuren, who was still down on the ground, sighed. Eoranth ended up using his secret offensive skill to break away from the demons surrounding him.

Satan erected a fire wall. The fire wall had runic symbols covering its surface. It broke apart and its flames extinguished when Eoranth crashed into it, but it stopped the dragon's charge.

Eoranth was still under the Celestial Dragon Lifeforce, while Satan still had his Flame Rage. The two traded blows again. Although Eoranth's boost was greater than Satan's flame rage, Satan was still superior. Eoranth was beaten back again, but Honuren came at Satan from the rear. With the two attacking from opposite sides, they managed to keep Satan busy until Thanael completed his spell.

Thanel's completed spell formation had nine runes in it! When the spell was cast, the sky above roiled and became stormy. The clouds abruptly parted ways, showing a well of light from heaven. The light from this well intensified until it burst into a thick pillar of light that shot downward. Runic symbols were seen along the surface of this pillar as it shot down.

This massive pillar of light headed directly to where Satan, Eoranth, and Honuren were fighting.

Chapter 1875. Soul and Chaos Peak Flames

Thanael sent a mental warning at Eoranth and Honuren when he cast his spell. The two were ready when the huge pillar of light came down from heaven. The two jumped away before the pillar arrived.

Satan didn't receive the same warning, but his dexterity and reflex were way above the two. He could dodge even when he was late in reacting. However, Thanael's spell wasn't that simple. As the pillar of light came down, a heavy pressure was generated. The pressure was not only a physical effect but also a mental one. It caused everyone in the target area difficulty in moving. It also slowed any attempt at casting spells.

Magically, this pressure didn't affect allies, only the enemies. Hence, Eoranth and Honuren had no trouble fleeing the target zone while Satan was hampered.

The runic symbols of Satan's defensive suit flared brightly as his flaming weapon changed into a buckler. He also cast a flame shield and placed it on top of him.

The massive pillar of light landed. Everything in the vicinity turned into a world of light. Everyone had to close their eyes or look away due to the brightness.

When the brightness subsided, they saw Satan. He was still standing, and his HP bar was still two-thirds full. Yet, his appearance wasn't as daunting as before. Hissing vapors rose from his skin, which had many visible burnt marks. His face no longer displayed his usual scorning expression.

The most important result they noticed was Satan no longer had his runic defensive suit around his body. The raging flames of his Flame Rage were also gone.

The spell Thanael unleashed on Satan was called Purifying Heavenly Decree. This spell dealt astronomical light-element damage. While Emris' eight-rune mega spell only managed to take out around five percent of Satan's HP, the Purifying Heavenly Decree succeeded in reducing Satan's HP by almost ten percent.

Damage was not the only highlight of this spell. Those hit by this spell had a chance to get their buffs dispelled. Furthermore, the damage and dispel chance were doubled when the hit targets were of the undead, darkness, or demon types. This was why Satan was stripped of his buffs.

Seeing the outcome, both Eoranth and Honuren didn't waste the chance. They charged back at Satan. With the two still having their strongest buffs while Satan lost his, the situation reversed. Thanael also joined by using ranged spells to support the two.

Since the start of the war, there was never a time when Satan was on the back foot. This was the first time when Satan was at a disadvantage. The other demons who saw the scene were gaping in disbelief, while the defenders cheered at the top of their lungs as their morale rose.

"Grrr.... GRAAHHHH...!!! You, people, have done it...!! I'm angry now! I'm truly angry!! You will all regret this day as the day you draw my wrath...!!!"

Following Satan's roar, tremendous pressure erupted from him, halting his three assaulters. As they paused, they saw a transformation on Satan's body. The skin on the right half of his body turned dark purple, while his left half turned silver.

Everyone was surprised. This was what happened when Satan was about to use either the Soul and Chaos Chain Reaction or the Soul and Chaos Extinguishing Cannon. However, that skill's cooldown should still be one day away. They were always keeping track of that skill because of how devastating it was. Once the skill was off cooldown, Linda and Tip would send messages to everyone to go into alert.

Their decision to retreat even became dependent on how successfully they dealt with this skill. Depending on how much damage it caused, Linda would either issue a retreat or call for everyone to continue defending for another three days.

Satan had just used his ultimate skill two days ago. Hence, their shocked expressions when they saw the particular transformation of Satan's body. Linda and Tip hurriedly sent out the alert. Those within the Soul and Chaos Chain Reaction's ridiculous large AOE broke away from their battles and did all they could to flee the area.

Eoranth was prepared to cast his extreme teleportation while Honuren readied his defensive spell. Thanael turned into a flash of light and flew away at extreme speed.

However, Satan didn't slap his two hands together, which was the signature movement of the Soul and Chaos Chain Reaction. Instead, fire blazed from his body. The right half blazed with dark purple flames, while the left blazed with silver flames.

While Eoranth was still bewildered by the scene, Satan suddenly zoomed to his front. Eoranth didn't have the time to react when Satan's left fist came punching. That punch left a trail of silver fire. When it connected with Eoranth's face, it caused an explosion of silver fire. Eoranth was sent flying by the punch.

Honuren was still absorbing what was happening when Satan was suddenly before him. Satan's hand pierced into his lightning titan suit and caught him in his fist. Luckily, he had prepared a defensive spell. A dense shell of lightning covered his body. It prevented Satan's hand from touching him directly. All the while, Satan was bombarded by punches from his lightning titan suit.

Satan didn't care about the punches he suffered. The silver and dark purple flames boosted his defense. He didn't suffer much damage from the punches. He shoved his free hand into the lightning titan suit's head. The silver fire on that hand started burning the lightning as if it were paper.

Satan clenched his hand. The lightning shell protecting Honuren deformed as the pressure intensified. Honuren knew the lightning shell wouldn't hold for long. He used a skill and cast a spell while the lightning shell stopped Satan's hand. The skill was Soul Armor, a contingency in case the lightning shell broke too early. The spell was Teleportation.

When Honuren teleported away, the lightning titan suit didn't follow. This was because Satan's flames had deteriorated the suit too much. When Honuren was gone, the lightning suit collapsed.

Satan pressed on his attack by discharging infernal fire breath at where Honuren teleported to. The fire breath he discharged was not the usual red flames, but a mixture of silver and dark purple flames.

Eoranth came before Honuren and used his divine soul breath. The two breath attacks collided. The winner was quickly decided. Satan's twin-color breath engulfed Eoranth's silver breath. Honuren cast a lightning wall before the breath hit, but it was destroyed by a single strike.

Eoranth and Honuren were thrown by the blast. Luckily, Eoranth still had the Celestial Dragon Lifeforce protecting him, while Honuren had Soul Armor. They lost HP, but their lives were not in danger.

"I will kill you all...!!!" Satan exclaimed. He spread his arms. Energy balls started to shoot out from his opened palms.

These energy balls had a mixture of silver and dark purple. Each ball was like a miniature Soul and Chaos Bomb. The worst thing was there didn't seem to be a cooldown for these bombs. They continued to be discharged from Satan's hands every second. Satan flailed his arms around. These bombs were shot in every direction.

Each bomb detonated upon contact and dealt immense soul and chaos damage to a large area. Satan didn't seem to care about his aims during his rage. His bombs hit even his underlings. Many demons and defenders died from the bombardments. Even the walls and siege weapons couldn't last a few hits. In a short moment, everything was a shamble.

"F*ck! Retreat! Retreat!" Linda broadcasted her command. This attack was not the Soul and Chaos Chain Reaction, but it was not less devastating. Furthermore, Satan didn't seem to end this state anytime soon. The energy balls continued to fly around the battlefield, obliterating anyone unlucky enough to get hit.

This was Satan's ultimate buff skill, Soul and Chaos Peak Flames. This skill not only increased Satan's power exponentially, but it also gave Satan standard ranged attacks in the form of the soul and chaos bombs.

Everyone started retreating. Those near Satan's location activated their defensive skills to survive the bombs' onslaught. Tip used the rune tree's active effects to help them survive. Even then, many perished.

One positive thing about Satan's rampant bombings was the demons scattered to avoid getting hit by their lord. Due to this, no demons bothered to hinder the defenders. The defenders could focus on retreating. Thanael and the Council of Elpo's members cast AOE defensive spells to help the defenders survive.

Satan advanced while continuing to shoot the soul and chaos bombs. He alone was enough to trouble the retreating defenders even when the other demons stayed back. A strong pressure from above stopped his advance. He looked up and saw four beings up there.

The four beings were Everlasting Heavenly Legends' guild guardians. Without the demons harassing the defenders' retreat, they had the freedom to move around. They were currently using the final attack of the Oriental Guardian Beasts' enchantment. A large circle with four colored sections appeared. Four heavenly beasts flew out of the circle. These heavenly beasts unleashed their attacks on Satan.

Chapter 1876. The Maxius Line

The assaults from the four heavenly beasts covered a huge area. The attack not only hit Satan but also the demons who had fled behind him. The attacks dealt large damage to the demons but didn't hurt Satan much. Satan continued to advance under the

bombardment, but his advancing speed greatly decreased under the attacks. The defenders used this opportunity and increased their retreating pace.

"Bastard...!!!" Satan cursed. He shot his Soul and Chaos bombs toward the four heavenly beasts.

The circle where the heavenly beasts emerged came forward and protected the four beasts. The soul and chaos bombs detonated on the circle but failed to destroy it.

Once the four heavenly beasts finished their attacks, the yellow dragon emerged from the center of the circle. Like before, it unleashed a blinding light that dealt soul damage. After damaging everything in a large area, this light focused into a single beam. The target of the focus was none other than Satan.

"Grrhh...!" Even Satan had to stop advancing when this light focused on him. He put his two arms forward in a defensive posture.

After the light ended, Satan was still standing in the same position. The damage he suffered was only slightly more than Emris' mega spell. It couldn't endanger him. The Soul and Chaos Peak Flames were still burning on his body. He looked up at the ones who were responsible for the combination attack.

The four guild guardians vanished after carrying out the attack. Tip had unsummoned the entire guild army.

Satan redirected his gaze to the defenders, who had now retreated past the traps prepared to halt the demon army.

The demon army was still waiting behind Satan. They didn't dare to advance and give chase. Satan looked back at them, which gave them a chill. They took one step back involuntarily. Only Dajja dared to approach Satan.

"Should we give chase?" Dajja asked.

Satan grunted. "Hmph. Let them run. They will eventually run out of place to flee... By the way, do you notice the corrupted mana slowing down?"

"Hm... Now that my lord mentioned it, it does seem so. How strange...," Dajja said.

Satan was now gazing to the West, where the main underworld portal was located.

"The next wave of reinforcement should be here by now. Why don't I see any demons coming from that direction?"

"Perhaps they encounter some obstacles. Should I send someone to check?" Dajja asked.

"Hmph. Never mind. Not like we need them. Let's continue our march," Satan commanded.

"As you wish, my lord. However, I need to point out that if the decrease in the corrupted mana's spread is not an isolated incident, we might need to slow our advance. Our troops will weaken if we advance faster than the spread of the corrupted mana."

"... I'm sure it only happens here. It's probably the handiwork of that true angel," Satan surmised.

"Perhaps," Dajja said.

The demon army moved again, following the trails of the upperworld defenders who had now gone out of sight.

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Linda used the Army Haste Magic Scroll to increase the army's march. She monitored the map screen on the war table in case the enemies pursued them. Right now, the coast was clear. Still, she ordered everyone to continue at top speed.

The mobile fortress was limping as it crawled using its five still-functional legs. Even limping, its movement speed didn't slow the army's march. Its normal speed was close to the movement speed of a rare steed. With its current impairment, its speed dropped to that of an uncommon steed, which was what most soldiers in this army were using.

"It seems the devils still have some unknown powers," Tip said.

"Wilted did say they give the devils random skills," Saint Jonathan said.

"That power Satan had just exhibited didn't seem like a random skill," Linda argued. "It is tailored for him. I'm starting to wonder if Wilted truly has any idea about her creation.

"Anyway, this is bad. This battle might resume into Themisphere's territory," Tip said.

"Don't forget there is only one month left before Master becomes a God," Linda said.

"I wonder why the other Gods haven't taken any action," Tip said.

"I'm sure my Goddess has her reason. She won't abandon us!" Whitebeard, who was on Tip's shoulder, exclaimed.

"If you rely on the divines to solve your problems, you will more often get disappointed," Linda said.

"That is a pessimistic viewpoint. I think there is nothing wrong about having hopes in the greater power because that is where we might find miracles capable of helping us through our bleak situation."

"That's right! You tell her, Tip!" Whitebeard exclaimed.

"Hmph, the only miracle that can happen is if we make it so using our own hands," Linda snickered.

"Rather than bickering about miracles, I suggest you two save your energy to think about how to deal with Satan's new ability. The next defensive line will be the last before we have to abandon Hydrurond," Saint Jonathan said. "As for me, I have to go."

"You are leaving?" Tip asked.

"Oh? Have you trusted me enough to leave me unsupervised?" Linda asked with a mocking tone.

Jonathan chuckled. "Despite what you think of me, we were husband and wife once. I know you. I've seen what you did in these last two months. You are not faking it. You are fighting with us for real."

Linda didn't say anything. She looked away instead.

"That being said, my opinion might also be biased because we were once a couple. So, I have asked this fine mouse to watch you while I am gone," Jonathan said while pointing at Whitebeard.

"I have my eyes on you, lady. Don't try anything," Whitebeard pointed his V-sign fingers at his eyes before pointing them at Linda.

"Did you teach him that gesture?" Linda asked Tip.

"Hehe," Tip simply chuckled in response.

"Where are you going?" Linda asked Jonathan.

"Sangrod," Jonathan answered. "The Northern Palgrost front had fallen, and so was Horatio."

"The Sangrod emperor dies?" Tip asked in surprise.

Jonathan nodded.

"This is bad... With the emperor gone, it will be difficult to organize that country's army," Linda said. "Some stupid nobles might even use this chance to try to take over the throne, causing more chaos to that country."

"Really? With the world currently like this? They will just be doing the demons a service," Tip said.

"I did use the word, stupid, didn't I? Our old world was full of those fools. I don't think this world is any different."

"That's why I have to return," Jonathan said.

"Are you going to take the throne yourself?" Tip asked.

"I'm not sure that is a good idea," Linda said. "Players have advantages when it comes to the monarch system, but you will face strong opposition from the vampire nobles. Depending on how you deal with it, you might cause a setback to our effort instead of aiding us."

"I know. That's why I'm not going to gamble," Jonathan said. "Although I would very much like to seize the throne, I don't think that is wise. No. We need someone who can be accepted by the vampire nobles to replace Horatio. At least until the current crisis is averted."

"Is there such a person?" Tip asked.

Jonathan turned to the side. His gaze was on an individual who was standing at the corner. This individual was gazing to the West with a vigilant watch. He had been here defending the mobile fortress since the war started.

"Him?" Tip asked with wide eyes.

"Ah... I see. He is a suitable candidate. You are quite perceptive to have noticed his lineage," Linda said.

"Well, I was rather surprised to learn his surname when I used Inspect on him during the first days of the war," Jonathan chuckled. "When I heard of Horatio's demise. He came to my mind at once."

The person they were talking about was Arlcard. He was a Maxius. Though not a direct descendant of Marcus, he possessed the same bloodline. Currently, he was the sole vampire to bear the Maxius surname. It was an ironic turn to this royal family. Both Marcus and Horatio got rid of their siblings to ensure their rise to power. In the end, all their scheming ended up achieving was causing a situation where the only one to assume their family's mantle was someone they considered an outsider.

"Have you talked to him?" Tip asked.

"I'm about to," Jonathan answered.

"Come, let me accompany you," Tip said. Arlcard was a cold person. He rarely talked to anyone. Tip was the only one who put in the effort to strike up a conversation with him.

This was actually Jack's request to Tip. Jack knew Arlcard was a solitary person. Still, he didn't want the vampire to feel lonely. Hence, Jack asked Tip to talk to Arlcard from time to time. It was slow progress at first, but Tip was an easy-going person. Whitebeard also helped in the conversation. Thus, Arlcard started to open up to them.

Jonathan and Tip explained the situation to him, which caused a crease on Arlcard's forehead. He couldn't deny a part of him desired Sangrod's throne, but he always believed that was a desire influenced by Cain instead of his own.

"... Jack asked me to protect this fortress," Arlcard said.

"I'm sure he will agree if we ask him," Tip said. "I can send him a message."

"No need," Arlcard uttered. He didn't need permission from anyone to do anything. He turned to Jonathan and said, "Let's go to Vacharest."

1877 Chapter 1877. Asserting Dominance

Jonathan and Arlcard traveled to the nearest Hydrurond town not yet occupied by the underworld forces. The town was mostly deserted. Several stubborn civilians who refused to leave were seen gathering their things to prepare for leaving. They had heard how close the demon army was. They finally decided this catastrophe wouldn't go away by itself. They would be slaughtered if they stayed.

Jonathan and Arlcard went to the town's zone portal. The state of war did not block teleportation to the outside of the warzone. They used this zone portal to teleport directly to Vacharest. Arlcard didn't pay anything to use the zone portal. As an outworlder's companion, he enjoyed the same benefits as outworlders.

When they exited Vacharest's zone portal, the scene before them was completely different from the Hydrurond town they left behind. This capital was bustling with crowds. Crowds that were even more than what this capital used to have.

Many dwarfs were seen on the streets. These dwarfs were refugees from Palgrost. Due to the train system between Sangrod and Palgrost, the evacuation proceeded much smoother compared to other countries. Almost all Palgrost civilians had now moved into Sangrod's cities. Their number was so many that they needed to build camps on the streets as temporary living quarters.

On their way to the palace, Jonathan and Arlcard saw that everyone displayed a sour face. With a sudden burst of population, this capital's original inhabitants were agitated. They felt their comfort was disturbed. Seeing all these refugees also hammered in the fact that they might suffer the same fate when the demons came stomping into this country.

With this population boost, the capital should have hit the population limit and upgraded to a megalopolis. If it did, the capital would enlarge, giving the refugees enough space to use. Unfortunately, it didn't happen. Palgrost refugees were not considered Vacharest's official population. Vacharest remained a metropolis.

Jonathan saw at least three quarrels on their way to the capital, with one developing into a fistfight. The quarrels were always between the two different races. The guards did all they could to stop these quarrels, but they were short of manpower. The guards remaining in the capital were all recruits. The real soldiers were out there fighting the underworld forces.

There was nothing Jonathan and Arlcard could do. They ignored those quarrels and continued to the palace. Arlcard was silent along the way, but his eyes absorbed all the expressions from the civilians.

The palace guards let them through. Jonathan was a trusted aide to Horatio and had frequented the palace often. When they entered the courtyard, they again saw a crowd. This crowd was from a different breed, though. They were all vampire nobles, and they were bickering.

Their quarrel seemed to almost tip over to fisticuffs. The leaders were shouting at each other at the top of their lungs. Each noble brought their private guards. These guards were at the ready. Their hands were on their weapons. Everyone was at a boiling point.

Jonathan looked around the courtyard until he found the person he was looking for. He approached that person, who was standing at the palace's entrance with a squad of soldiers.

"What's going on here?" Jonathan asked.

The person he asked turned to him. This person was Caleb Lucien. Caleb was one of the court advisors. Before Horatio left for war, he appointed Caleb to be the one in charge of the palace.

"The news of His Majesty's demise has reached the noble families," Caleb informed Jonathan.

"I guess these sharks are here once they smell blood, eh?"

Caleb chuckled. "If only I can order what soldiers I have here to chase these people out, I would. Unfortunately, only a portion listens to my commands. With no one in charge of the thrones, most soldiers don't know what to do. They certainly won't dare oppose these nobles."

Jonathan looked at the squad standing behind Caleb. "These are all who listen to you?" He asked.

Caleb nodded.

"If those crowds decide to storm into the palace, you won't be able to stop them," Jonathan said.

"I know. The only thing stopping them from doing that is each other. They are now quarreling about who has the most right to the throne. From the look of it, they are ready to use force to take it. No one is willing to draw the first blood because it will benefit the one who stays on the sidelines, but it's just a matter of time before they start fighting. Help me defend this gate, will you? Some will try to charge through in the commotion."

"I have a better suggestion for you," Jonathan replied to Caleb's request. "Bring my friend to the throne, and we will settle the disorder here."

"What friend?" Caleb asked.

"What do you mean what friend? I come with only one guy. He is... Where the hell is he?" Jonathan looked around until he saw Arlcard walking toward the quarreling nobles.

Arlcard walked right next to them, but they didn't register his presence. They were too busy shouting at each other's faces to notice one stranger came to their side.

"QUUIIEETTTT...!!!" Arlcard's voice boomed across the courtyard.

His voice was powered by mana manipulation. All the yells and shouts from the nobles were drowned by his voice.

"Every capable soldier is fighting on the battlefield to protect this world and this country you live in. Even the emperor died in the battle. Yet, here you are. Quarreling among yourselves for your pitiful ambition. Have you no shame?!"

The nobles were all stunned into silence by Arlcard's shout. They were all looking at him. The first one who came out of their trances scolded him in return.

"Who the hell are you?! How dare you speak to us like that? Do you know who we are?"

"A bunch of cowards! That's who you are!" Arlcard exclaimed.

"I will not suffer this insult!" The vampire noble drew his sword. He also signaled for his men to attack. "Kill this bastard!"

"If you are prepared to die for laying a hand on your future emperor, then go ahead!" Arlcard yelled.

While they were still registering what Arlcard was saying, Arlcard's body exploded with a dark aura. He had used Dark Lord Incarnation. This took everyone aback. He floated up. The wings of his dark form spread all over the courtyard. It was as if a dark cloud had covered the entire place. With that display, Arlcard's voice continued to reverberate.

"I am the last of the Maxius. The sovereign's bloodline runs in my veins. The throne of Sangrod is rightfully mine!"

"Maxius...?"

Arlcard's display of power stunned the nobles back into silence, but the mention of the Maxius family caused the nobles to use Inspect on Arlcard. Learning Arlcard's name put them into a state of disbelief. Some even used their Inspect two to three times to make sure they didn't read wrong.

Caleb was also shocked by the revelation. "A hidden Maxius...? Why have I never heard of him? Where did you find him?" Caleb asked Jonathan.

Though the fact was before them, some were still unwilling to accept defeat.

"Arlcard Maxius? There is no one with that name among Marcus' heirs. You must be a fraud! You must be using a disguise tool to mask your true name!"

"I'm not Marcus' heir, but I'm a Maxius. I was turned into a vampire by Aubelard Maxius," Arlcard stated.

"Aubelard? The traitor?! Then you are not fit to be our sovereign! We can't let a traitor's offspring sit on the throne!"

The others joined in on the clamoring. A minute ago, these nobles were ready to tear each other apart. Now, they banded together when they faced the same foe.

They continued to shout and yell, expressing their objection. When Arlcard said nothing in response, they thought their united voices had intimidated Arlcard into silence. That was until they noticed Arlcard's expression.

Arlcard was smiling. Under the Dark Lord Incarnation's effect, the dark aura covering him made his grin look extremely sinister.

"You are all ready to fight each other to claim the throne," Arlcard said as he drew his rapier. "Let's do it this way. Anyone who wishes to claim the throne may fight me. You can all come at me together. I don't mind."

Arlcard was a level 91 eternal vampire. No one here was his opponent. He was even stronger than the country's strongest combatants, the relic marshalls.

The nobles of this courtyard were the ones who refused to join the war. They sent their private army but were otherwise unwilling to risk themselves. How would they be willing to fight Arlcard, who was much more powerful than them? Even so, their greed compelled them not to give up. So, they did what they were always good at, commanding others to risk their lives for them.

"Kill him!" One of the nobles commanded his guards.

"Take him down!" Another did the same.

Others also gave orders to their private soldiers.

The soldiers looked at each other. It was clear from their expressions they didn't want to fight Arlcard, but they also didn't dare disobey their masters. They gripped the hilts of their weapons and gritted their teeth. But before they unsheathed their weapons, multiple giant black swords fell from the sky. These black swords formed a fence that separated the nobles from their private guards. Arlcard landed among these nobles.

"You, pathetic weaklings. You are not only cowards for refusing to face the underworld forces. You don't even dare to fight me with your own hands. Sangrod's throne will be tarnished if any of you sit on it. I will give you all a chance! Bow to me on the count of three. Anyone who refuses to do so will not receive my mercy!"

1878 Chapter 1878. Sangrod's New Emperor

The pressure Arlcard exuded while under the Dark Lord Incarnation wasn't something that could be endured by these nobles. These nobles had rather high grades. They were special elites and rare elites, but their levels were low. They were all below level 50. They didn't train much and mostly relied on their soldiers to do the heavy lifting. Hence, when faced with a power they couldn't comprehend, they were overwhelmed.

Two-thirds of the nobles fell and sat on the ground. The other one-third were motionless with fear.

"One!" Arlcard's voice boomed.

These nobles were inherently cowards. Cut off from their soldiers and forced to face the danger themselves, they broke at the first count.

"I submit! Please don't kill me!" One of them exclaimed while falling to his knees.

"I... I also yield to your rule," Another spoke.

The others followed suit. They submitted one by one. The soldiers behind them also stood down.

Arlcard ended his Dark Lord Incarnation. He turned around without speaking to these nobles. He walked toward the palace's entrance, where Jonathan and Caleb were watching with speechless expressions.

"Show me the way to the throne room," Arlcard said to them.

"This... This way," Caleb said. His soldiers, who were guarding the entrance, made way for Arlcard to enter.

Entering the throne room, Arlcard went directly to the throne. When he touched the throne, a notification sounded in his mind.

"Maxius' bloodline detected. Do you wish to ascend to Sangrod's throne?" The voice asked.

Arlcard did not need to destroy the throne. His blood made him a legitimate heir. If another heir existed, the system would give a waiting period of one week for the responsible party to decide which heir would ascend the throne. Otherwise, Arlcard could just destroy the throne, but forcefully taking the throne like that would annul him from the ruling powers the previous sovereign might have saved.

As for Arlcard, he wasn't given the waiting period because the world system detected him to be the only remaining Maxius. There was no need to decide when there was only one heir. He could take the throne immediately if he wished.

He answered yes.

At that moment, a notification sounded in the mind of every Sangrod's citizen, including the outworlders. Arlcard was the emperor of the Sangrod Empire.

"Congratulations, Your Majesty," Caleb said. "Usually, there should be a ceremony..."

"We don't have time for that," Arlcard cut him. "Send a transmission to the retreating Sangrod army. Tell them to go to the prepared defensive line at our country's border. I will go there to lead the army myself."

"Right away, Your Majesty, but if you don't mind my advice. I suggest you spend another day meeting the nobles. Not just the ones who cause the ruckus outside, many

other nobles have taken a temporary stay in this capital. A short meeting with them will be beneficial to let them acknowledge your rule."

"Hmph. Fine. Go ahead and arrange it, but I will only spare them one day. I will leave afterward," Arlcard said.

Caleb bowed and went out to send the transmission to the army.

Arlcard sat on the throne. The monarch system was activated. He was slightly unclear about what to do.

"If you like, I can help you with the monarch system," Jonathan said. He knew about the system. He learned about it from John and Linda. He had also been helping Horatio with the monarch system. That was one of the reasons he became close to Horatio and was appointed as one of the late emperor's advisors. His status as Sangrod's court advisor was still valid. His portrait was on the officer's page.

Arlcard nodded to Jonathan's offer. Jonathan approached the throne. He could see the interface window because he was an advisor.

"Hm... How odd...", Jonathan muttered.

"What is it?" Arlcard asked.

"I see that the interface is slightly different from when Horatio operated this monarch system."

"It's just a difference in display. It's not important," Arlcard said.

"I don't think it's that simple. Can you please check your sovereign power?" Jonathan asked.

When Arlcard was unsure what Jonathan was referring to, Jonathan told him where to click.

"I see... I have heard John and Linda mentioning this, but I didn't see this when Horatio was a sovereign," Jonathan said after reading the list of Arlcard's sovereign powers.

"What do you mean?" Arlcard asked.

"It seems you have the same benefit of an outworlder sovereign," Jonathan explained. "You have all the sovereign powers they have, including Call to Arms and Mass Drill. Horatio's sovereign powers were a much weaker version. With these powers, you can recruit lots of new soldiers. I bet you will also have the same benefit when you do manual recruiting on each settlement."

"Good... We need troops," Arlcard said.

"Hm... It's probably because you are an outworlder's companion. That's why you are granted this benefit. I mean, you already receive our fast leveling perk among other benefits. It makes sense that you also receive the same benefit when you become a sovereign."

Arlcard wasn't interested in the why. Jonathan was explaining things to himself for all he cared. He was simply interested in how he used this monarch system to help them face the underworld forces.

"How do I use these sovereign powers?" Arlcard asked.

"Just click on the one you want to use, but you need ruling powers to use them. Luckily, you inherited Horatio's ruling powers. He saved up quite a number. He couldn't use them on too many things, after all."

Arlcard's sovereign level was only level 1, but he had 191 ruling powers. If he had destroyed the throne to become a sovereign, these ruling powers would have been lost. He would have to start from scratch.

Following Jonathan's instruction, Arlcard did a manual recruit on each settlement. He then used Call to Arms and Mass Drill. He didn't have a problem with the high expenditure. Sangrod had plenty of reserve gold coins. Both Marcus and Horatio were good at managing the economy. Sangrod could be considered a prosperous country like Palgrost. If not for the limitation of a native sovereign, Sangrod wouldn't have lost to Themisphere in terms of amassing the army.

After using the sovereign powers, Sangrod received a large number of troops all of a sudden. They were all low levels, though. But with the State of Emergency enchantment, some of these recruits should hit the minimum required level to join the battlefield within one week, especially those sent to train at the war academies or barracks.

Caleb had returned to the throne room by then. Arlcard instructed him to manage the recruits. He was to prioritize the higher-grade recruits first for the slots of barracks and academies.

They continued working using the monarch system. They constructed more barracks in each settlement so more recruits could level up faster. Arlcard used his ruling powers to build these barracks instantly. He also used his ruling powers to hasten research that might help the war.

By the time he finished using the monarch system, he only had 7 ruling powers left. He didn't bother saving these ruling powers. The way he saw it, he didn't need them anymore if they lost the war. He might as well make full use of them now.

Arlcard also appointed new officers to fill up the officer portraits. He didn't know anyone in the empire, so he simply followed Caleb's suggestion for the court officers.

Arlcard was pretty sure Caleb chose his own people for the posts. Arlcard pretended not to know. He couldn't afford to play politics for now. Even if Caleb strengthened his political position with this move, at least that helped keep the country stable during the war. This was better than having multiple conflicting organizations vying for power and causing havoc. Arlcard couldn't afford the distraction. If they survived the demon calamity, then only would he deal with this matter.

As for the military officers, Arlcard made his own choices. He didn't know any officers. He simply picked among the soldiers in the army that retreated from Palgrost not long ago. He chose the ones with the highest levels and grades. He didn't care if they were good or bad. If they were willing to fight the demons, they were okay in his book. By choosing them as officers, he gave them buffs, which helped them fight better.

Before he closed the monarch system, Jonathan said, "Open the diplomacy page. There is a marking there. That means you have something new to see there."

When Arlcard entered the diplomacy section, Jonathan uttered, "Tribute?"

In the diplomacy interface, there was a tribute stated under their relationship with Themisphere. The tribute said that Sangrod would send a monthly tribute to Themisphere composed of 5% of their income on gold coins and mana.

"Why do we have to pay tribute to Themisphere?" Caleb protested.

"Can we deactivate it?" Jonathan asked.

Arlcard tried to, but the system rejected it. The tribute was permanent.

"Maybe because you are the companion to the Themisphere King...", Jonathan conjectured.

"This is preposterous! We have to ask the Themisphere King to cancel this tribute!" Caleb announced.

"I doubt even if the Themisphere King wants to, he might not be able to," Jonathan said.

"This seems to be preset by the system. That is, of course, unless you want to quit being the Themisphere King's companion."

"This is a small matter. We can talk about this after the demons are beaten back," Arlcard stated.

Since Arlcard had said so, Caleb didn't push the issue further. They continued to discuss state matters until an attendant entered the room carrying four sets of lavish clothes and armor.

"What is this?" Arlcard asked.

"It's your regal outfit, Your Majesty," Caleb answered.

1879 Chapter 1879. The Twenty-three Reunited

After Horatio perished, his regal outfit returned to the wardrobe inside the royal chamber in Vacharest palace. These regal outfits were now presented to Arlcard.

Arlcard looked at the aristocratic coat he wore. He was rather fond of this coat, but this coat was only a super rare grade. Furthermore, his coat was only level 70. He needed to spend coins to commission a master blacksmith if he wanted to improve this coat. The regal outfit didn't need leveling up. It followed his level.

All in all, the regal outfit was better. He rose from the throne and went to check the outfits. Unlike players, a native could wear any type of armor. The drawback they suffered for wearing heavier armor was a speed penalty.

Arlcard stopped when he stood before the regal outfit of the cloth armor type. His aristocratic armor was also considered cloth armor. Although he preferred close combat, he chose speed over higher defense stats. He picked the cloth armor regal outfit.

Arlcard ended up staying another three days to discuss the country's issues and socialize with the nobles. Unlike Jack, Arlcard was silent but aggressive. If he didn't like a certain way of doing things, he would insist on changing it. Nothing the advisors said could change his mind.

For example, the slavery in Sangrod. Horatio had begun to trim down slavery in many cities, but he still allowed a limited number of nobles to continue the possession of slaves. He applied higher taxes to them. He didn't outright abolish slavery because he didn't want the nobles to rebel.

Arlcard did just that. Caleb tried to persuade Arlcard to take a softer stance against slavery. The other advisors also gave a lot of reasons to explain to Arlcard why he shouldn't be so hasty about this decision. Many of these reasons made perfect sense, but Arlcard would have none of it. He told his advisors to announce that slavery was abolished. All slaves were to be freed. Anyone who still owned a slave would be considered as committing a crime and would be punished.

Arlcard took the chance when socializing with the nobles to announce this decision. He gathered everyone into the banquet hall and made the announcement. A commotion

ensued as expected. Arlcard let them make noises for a few minutes before he did the same thing as the day before.

He intimidated them into submission.

He asked the soldiers to lock the exits. He then used the Dark Lord Incarnation. He demanded the nobles swear a vow that they would release the slaves they possessed and would no longer take any slaves from that day on. If they refused, he would cut them down right there in the banquet hall.

Jonathan was rather astonished to learn this usually quiet vampire was so forceful. He now wondered if Sangrod would be okay with Arlcard as the sovereign.

But during a turbulent time, many flocked to a strong leader. Even though Arlcard's action caused many nobles to fume, many saw the strength in his character. Combined with his high level and grade, they saw someone who might protect them from the underworld forces. If they had to pay for their survival by relinquishing their slavery practice, so be it.

Hence, even though their anger was apparent, many nobles submitted to the decision. When those who were more stubborn found that their voices were a minority, they had no choice but to submit as well.

As a result, no one was killed out of defiance. Caleb was genuinely surprised by this result.

After those three days, Arlcard left with Jonathan. He brought with him the soldiers originally tasked to keep order in the capital and other settlements. Their duty was taken over by the recruits Arlcard drafted several days earlier. With these troops, Arlcard headed to the border where the defensive line had been prepared.

*

Two more weeks passed. The defenders continued to battle the demons. However, they found that in the past two weeks, the pressure was slightly less than before. The demons' march was slower, and their number wasn't as staggering as before. Thus, the pace by which the defenders had to retreat also decreased.

Little did they know they had Master to thank for this. Sizhad, with the top players from the State of Galhana, had been secretly running around the border zones between Aurebor, Hydrurond, Palgrost, and Liguritutum. They used the Mana Purifiers from Master. This caused the corrupted mana to thin. Weaker demons had a problem crossing these purified zones. This caused the reinforcement of the underworld forces on the front line to be late.

It would be easier if Sizhad used the mana purifiers inside Liguritutum. But if he did, the demons would quickly turn their eyes to World Maker and its allies. That was because Liguritutum was almost a dead zone by now. Only the demons and World Maker's members were still roaming the country.

Sooner or later, the demons would still throw their suspecting eyes at them, but Master promised they didn't have to wait much longer.

Due to this interference, the other defensive fronts were still within the original countries. Only the Sangrod front had to retreat to Sangrod. Even so, it didn't mean the defenders could win. They had lost a substantial number of troops from the repeated battles. This only helped them lose at a slower pace.

All five defensive fronts were at their last lines. If they retreated, they had to retreat to the next country as the Sangrod army did.

Thelgrun, who led Palgrost Southern Front, was unwilling. He would have to retreat to Sangrod the next time he called the retreat command, but he knew he had little choice in that matter. It was either retreat or sacrifice everyone in the glory of a final battle.

Aurebor's and Verremor's armies fighting in Aurebor would have to retreat to Verremor the next time they retreated. While the Themisphere, Hyrudond, and the league factions defending Hydrurond would have to retreat to Themisphere.

Once they retreated to those countries. That's it. That was where they made their last stand. There was no other country to retreat to unless they planned to flee to the sea. Even if they did, they somehow knew the underworld forces would chase them into the sea. No, everyone decided it was in those three countries that they would do their final gamble.

During this time, the twenty-three who went to Chris' secret garden finally reunited. Giant Steve and Handsome Joe returned almost two weeks ago. Giant Steve's class had become Eternal Guardian. Handsome Joe became Eldritch Knight. The last to return was Will Corner, who returned just today. His class was now Angelic Conductor.

"You, useless sea dog! I know you are doing this intentionally just to spite me!" John was giving Will an earful.

"Come on, boss. The trial is so difficult. It is already a miracle I finally managed to pass," Will protested.

"What use are you to us like this? You are still level 82. How can you help us fight the devils?" John scolded.

"Uh... How about I don't fight the devils? That can be a solution, can't it?" Will said.

John pointed his magic staff at Will's face.

"Whoa! Chill out, dude! No violence!" Paytowin exclaimed. He and those near John hurriedly grabbed John and pulled him away from Will. Will scurried over to hide behind Jack.

"... You know. I actually want to beat you myself," Jack said to Will.

Jeanny clapped her hands to draw everyone's attention. "Okay, everyone. Stop getting angry with the situation. We'll just have to deal with the cards we are dealt. Everyone gets ready. We are leaving in five!"

"You have all truly made up your mind, eh?" Chris asked. "Let me say it again. I think it's not wise. Some of you are still below level 95. It will be ideal if all of you only leave after reaching the maximum level of 99."

Jack was currently level 97 for both his Void Sword Saint and Time Sage. He was very close to level 98. If he stayed another day, he believed he could level up, but everyone agreed to leave now. His Beast Monarch stayed at level 94. It no longer received any exp points after Jack set all the exp points for his two pinnacle special classes.

The others might not kill the monsters inside Chris' training dungeon as fast as Jack, but they didn't have to feed three classes. With only one class to level up, their leveling speed was still slightly faster than Jack's. Most of their levels were lower than Jack's when they started using Chris' training dungeon, but a few caught up to him, even when they started using Chris' training dungeon later than Jack.

Two people even reached a higher level than Jack. Those two were Spring Crown and Grace. Spring Crown used the training cave for almost as long as Jack, while Grace's level was already high before she entered the training cave. Their levels were 98.

The ones who reached level 97, the same as Jack, were John, Jeanny, Paytowin, Leavemealone, Four Winds, and Red Death. Jet was level 96. Wilted had two classes, but she set so all the exp points went to her Grim Reaper class, so her leveling speed wasn't slower than the others. She and Anotherday were level 95. Fierce Flame, David, and Badass were level 94. Arthur Bagrat, Purple Mist, and Blackhole were level 93. Nameless was level 92. Freddie was level 91. Joe was level 88, and Giant Steve was level 87.

Chapter 1880. Distributing Bloodline Vials

The stat increase of Void Sword Saint was, as expected, better than the Brave Swordmaster. Each level-up provided Jack with the following increase.

*

HP +250

Stamina +200

Strength +15

Dexterity +22

Intelligence +5

Endurance +10

Reflex +18

Wisdom +5

3 free attribute points

3 free skill points

*

Out of all the level-ups, Jack amassed 84 free attribute points, 30 free skill points for both Void Sword Saint and Time Sage, and 24 free skill points for Beast Monarch.

Jack spent all the free attribute points on his endurance stat. As for his skill points, he sent them to max-level all the new skills from his special classes.

He spent 19 Void Sword Saint's free skills points to level up Void-tearing Slash. At level 20, the instant chaos damage inflicted when the space was torn was 3000%. The damage every second to those trapped in the torn space increased to 200%.

He also spent 19 Time Sage's free skill points to max out Time Stop. Each level-up increased the spell's duration by 0.2 seconds. At level 20, Time Stop lasted 5 seconds.

He then max-leveled Monarch Form by spending 19 Beast Monarch's free skill points. At max level, his beast form gained an additional 200% HP, totaling an additional 400% HP when he transformed. Furthermore, he gained a few new skills when he was in Supreme Dragon Form.

Jack used the remaining free skill points to level up his other skills.

He spent the remaining 11 Void Sword Saint's free skill points to level up Teleport Slash to level 12. Each level increases the skill's maximum distance by 1.5 meters. At level 12, this skill could teleport him 36.5 meters away.

The 11 Time Sage's free skill points were used to level up Hundred Mirages to level 20. At max level, this spell lasted 10 minutes and produced thirty copies.

The remaining 5 Beast Monarch's free skill points were spent to increase Wind Dash to level 6. He didn't stop there, though. Aside from these free skill points, his Container of Souls also contained many souls.

One other thing that made Chris' training dungeon different than other training dungeons was the monsters granted souls to Jack when they were killed. None of the monsters inside the training dungeon was at the caliber of a powerful native or boss, even when their levels and grades were high, so they didn't give many souls. Even so, he slew a substantial number of monsters during these two and a half months, so the accumulated number was still considerable.

The number of souls inside his container of souls was 9,200,000.

He spent 1,400,000 souls to level up Wind Dash further to its maximum level. The reason was so he could have better maneuverability during an air battle. Max-level Wind Dash gave him three dashes. The wind barrier generated at the end of the dash increased to 30 seconds.

Jack used the rest of the souls to upgrade the stars of his special classes' skills.

He spent 600,000 souls to upgrade superior acceleration to ten stars. The spell now increased his speed by 2000%. He then used 2,400,000 souls to max the Time Realm to ten stars. With max stars, the spell slowed all hostiles within its AOE by 70%. This meant enemies only had 30% of their normal speed inside Time Realm.

He then spent 6,000,000 souls to upgrade both the Void-tearing Slash and Time Stop to max ten stars. Each star of Void-tearing Slash increased the size and pulling power of the ripped space. The skill's duration also increased by one second. At ten stars, the skill lasted 20 seconds. Each star upgrade of Time Stop reduced the spell's cooldown by twelve minutes. At ten stars, the spell's cooldown was four hours.

With these upgrades, all the skills of his pinnacle special classes had max-levels and max-stars. Out of everyone, Jack was the only one who had this achievement.

Many of his skills and spells received star upgrades after using them continuously inside the training grounds. Three skills received their first star upgrades. The first was Field of Sword. Each star of this skill increased the number of conjured sword lights within the skill's AOE. The second was Iron Mammoth Stampede. Each star increased the number of summoned iron mammoths by one. Twenty-one iron mammoths appeared now when Jack used the skill. The third was Telekinesis. Each star increased the spell's power. Combined with Jack's intelligence stat, his Telekinesis could easily lift and incapacitate a special elite-grade monster of the same level.

*

"Is there truly no way to talk you people out of this?" Chris asked.

Jack and the others had expressed their intention to leave. They thought it was time for them to join the battle.

"We can't afford to wait that long. People out there need us," Four Winds said.

"Yeah. It will take us more than two weeks to get to level 99, not to mention the dude who has just returned," Paytowin pointed at Will. "In two more weeks, Master will become a God already."

"We prefer to take him down before he becomes one," Jet said. "Rather than relying on whatever council of twenty-four that sounds dubious."

"What do you mean dubious?" Chris asked. "That is a great plot. You people taking out the divinity with your hidden power. How cool is that?"

"I will kick your head for a plot!" Jet exclaimed. Paytowin held him back.

Chris turned to Wilted. Wilted noticed his stare. She said, "I'm with them."

Chris sighed. "Very well then... Just so you know, don't think you have seen all the devils have to offer just from the projection. They haven't gone all out yet. Well, Satan and Belphegor might have shown a little of their true powers, even if it's just for a short instant."

The memory of Satan using the Soul and Chaos Peak Flame and Belphegor turning into the bodybuilder-type came to them. Chris was right. Even though those two devils only used those abilities for a short time, they completely trashed the army. It was clear that the devils could win the war if they truly wished to. They were simply enjoying themselves by doing a slow conquest.

"If you all insist on facing the devils now, let me give you something to increase your survivability," Chris said. He took out a bunch of vials and laid them on a table.

"Bloodline vials?" Everyone could identify these items without using Inspect by now.

Chris nodded. "I noticed some of you still have low-grade bloodlines. Heck, some even don't have a bloodline. I'm confused as to why you call yourselves the best players. So, I go and fetch some bloodlines for you. All these bloodlines are unique grades."

"I don't recall we ever called ourselves the best players..." Paytowin muttered.

Aside from Jack, John, Grace, Paytowin, Red Death, Four Winds, Wilted Tree, and Spring Crown, the others only had super rare or lower-grade bloodlines. David and Arthur didn't even have any bloodline.

Fifteen people who needed the unique-grade bloodlines came forward and inspected the vials. Twenty vials were on the table. All vials were the same grade, but they contained different bloodlines. The fifteen studied each one to see which one suited them the most.

"You have the creator's knowledge, don't you? Why stop at unique grades? Why don't you get us legendary-grade bloodlines?" David asked.

"Dude, legendary bloodlines take crazy effort to obtain even if I know how to get one," Chris answered. "I've already busted my ass these two months to get these bloodlines. How about some gratitude?"

"Thank you," Jet uttered without taking his eyes off the vials.

"Thank you." "Thank you." The others echoed. However, their tones were flat, and they didn't look at Chris. Chris didn't feel any better hearing that kind of gratitude. He even thought he would feel better if they hadn't thanked him instead.

Chris forgot about them and came to the group that was watching by the side.

"Thank you." "Thank you." Jack, John, Paytowin, and Spring Crown echoed using the same flat tone.

"F*ck you all," Chris uttered. He took out something long covered in shabby red clothes.

"The hell is that? Are you showing us your junk?" Jack asked.

Chris gave Jack a weird stare for a response. He asked, "Remember that I gave you the key to Lucifer's vault?"

Wilted's eyes turned wide. "Are you saying this is..."

"Yep. A fallen apostle's weapon. Your friends returned from the underworld not long ago. I pick up the weapons from them so I can give them to you when you decide to leave."

"How did you know when they returned?" Jack asked.

"I contacted them using messages," Chris answered.

"Messages? Aren't you a native?"

"Haven't I mentioned that I have all the features of an outworlder? I also have outworlder's inventory system to store all my stuff, duh."

Jack could only nod for a response.

"When did you enter them into your friend list?" John asked. "Neither Bowler, The Man, Serpent Boss, or Speedrun ever met you."

"I don't need someone in my friend list to send a message. As long as I know their names, I can send anyone a message."

John also simply nodded in response.

"Why is it covered in dirty rags?" Paytowin asked.

"That is not dirty rags. That is a sealing cloth," It's Wilted who answered.

"Sealing cloth?" Everyone asked.

"This one is yours," Chris pointed at Spring Crown.

"Me?" Spring Crown pointed at himself.

"Only him? What about ours?" Paytowin protested.

"One at a time. We need a wide space. Everyone except for Spring Crown, please move away!" Chris ordered.

Wilted moved away. The others were confused by the request, but they followed after Wilted, leaving only Chris and Spring Crown.

"Hey, what is that all about? Why do they need space?" Jack asked Wilted.

The fallen apostle's weapon is no normal weapon," Wilted answered. "Simply getting one doesn't mean you can equip it. You need to exorcise it."