

## Shadow 871

### Chapter 871: A Splendid Dream

"So ..why are you back so soon .." Lazarak asked, pouring Damon a drink and sliding the cup across the table.

Damon bit his lip, recalling how Lilith was probably... no, she was definitely mad at him. She wouldn't want to talk to him. No, that wasn't it. He was the one who didn't want to talk to her.

He glanced at Lazarak. Then back at the drink, Lazarak was probably the only person he could talk to right now.

The only one who wouldn't treat him like he's lost his mind.

Lazarak now appeared to look his age. A handsome young man. No, more than handsome. Beautiful. His dark hair was long and smooth, his black robes perfect and clean, his face calm with soft expressions.

Damon felt a flicker of jealousy but made no effort to hide it.

"I had a bit of a falling out with a friend.."

Lazarak nodded slowly, a thin smile forming at the corner of his lips.

"I assume you're in the wrong since you came running here."

Damon picked up the drink and downed it in one go, the glass clinking softly as he set it back down.

"I wouldn't say I was in the wrong... I mean, I was just trying to exercise my rights. She didn't have to get so pissy about it."

Lazarak nodded, taking a deep breath as he leaned back slightly.

"And what was this right you were trying to express? I assume it was something bad.."

Damon lowered his head, his fingers tightening briefly.

"She found out I was planning to end my small, small life and got mad at me for it."

"I see. So a completely valid reaction then," Lazarak answered casually.

He was already aware of Damon's wish and had even personally given him a weapon that could kill him without a doubt. Still, Lazarak believed it was not Damon's destiny to die by that spear.

"What did you expect, that she would cheer and celebrate your suicidal tendencies?"

Damon frowned and took a slow sip of the wine this time.

"Yeah, I know that, but it's just... Lilith has always been by my side. Even when I'm wrong. She's that one person I always expected to have my back. And now that she wants something different from me..."

His voice softened. "I just feel a bit lonely..."

Lazarak nodded again, his ancient eyes reflecting understanding.

"You can't expect her to accept it just because she understands. Life gives second chances. Death does not. In life, no matter how low you sink, there is always a chance for redemption. She's betting on that chance."

Damon rolled his eyes, turning his gaze away.

"Nice to know you're on her side too..."

Lazarak glanced at the drinks between them, his fingers tracing the rim of his cup.

"If I died... Damon, would you be sad?"

Damon raised his eyebrows, caught off guard.

"Yeah. You're my friend. It would be a tragedy."

Lazarak smiled softly, his eyes flickering with sadness before he looked away.

"Sorry.."

Damon frowned slightly.

"What are you apologizing for.."

Lazarak shook his head, then forced a smile as he looked back at Damon.

"Sorry I can't support your nonsense. If my death would make you sad, then what about your death? All your friends would be devastated. You have a sister who loves you. You mentioned a grandfather too. You have so much, and so much to live for."

He looked down at the palms of his hands, slowly opening and closing them.

"I, for one, am a god with nothing to his name. My own brother is my worst enemy. My creator despises me. My peers look down on me..."

Damon paused as Lazarak spoke, listening in silence.

"I'm your best friend. I adore you. I look up to you."

For everything Lazarak said, Damon instinctively searched for a counter. It wasn't like him to speak so plainly about his feelings, but for Lazarak, he did.

"Then live..." Lazarak muttered.

"Succeed where I fail. You said you made a promise to a mentor of yours, to create something beautiful. I know you can."

He smiled at Damon, the expression genuine.

"And when you do, build a giant statue of me. That way no one would forget a minor god like me, because I'd live in everyone's heart."

His words were not as bleak as Damon's. Instead, they were full of life and promise.

Lazarak saw beauty in that hope.

Damon bit his lip, hesitating as he debated whether to say it.

"Hey... do you know.."

Lazarak smiled softly and nodded.

"We are in a dream, aren't we? A dream so real it makes reality feel fake."

Damon's eyes widened slightly.

"Ho... how did you know?"

Lazarak shrugged his shoulders.

"The clues were there from the start. I never truly saw how you were imprisoned in Eidolon, only that you were. That was when everything began. Then there was the confusion. Then what Root Ore said. I didn't confirm my doubts until I saw the Lake of Tears."

He smiled at Damon, centuries of experience and divine awareness behind his gaze.

"Coming to this city and seeing people like you only confirmed it."

Lazarak let out a slow breath.

"I am a god after all."

His fist clenched as images and screams flashed through his mind. He had been here. He had heard it all. He had witnessed the deaths of millions. Many had cried out to God to save them from fire and steel, and the only god listening had been him.

He did not answer.

"But it still doesn't justify what I've done. What I'm complicit in. The atrocities..." His voice lowered. "I fear that before this dream ends, I will have forgotten my nature because I chose to compromise."

"Then this is a nightmare... for you, right?" Damon asked softly.

Lazarak nodded slowly.

"Yes, it is..."

He turned to Damon, offering him a gentle smile.

"But it was also a splendid dream."

Chapter 872: And Then—

Two weeks passed since then, and most of the cocoons in the chamber had been born. Damon now had a significant number of drones, or as he was calling them, shadows.

Depending on their rank and specialty, their appearances varied. Some were humanoid, others bestial, others little more than moving silhouettes clinging to the walls.

Other than combat types, additional variants could exist.

There was so much to try, yet so little time to do so.

Damon lowered his gaze to the paper in his hands. Abellona had sent him a message. By sundown, only a few hours from now, the attack would begin.

Her intelligence network, which was actually controlled by Lilith Astranova, had apparently sensed that the Black Tower was on the move. Damon doubted any real intelligence gathering had occurred. More likely, it was knowledge. Lilith had lived through this before.

Nevertheless, Sylvia Moonveil was still by Abellona's side.

Damon continued making preparations. Part of his reason for not returning was his disagreement with Lilith. The main reason, however, was Abellona's warning not to return until negotiations with the demon heirs were complete. After all, Damon had been the one to kill Amon, the very being they followed.

His presence would only create more hostility than necessary.

Honestly, that worked out just fine for him.

As for Lilith, he would simply have to be careful not to run into her.

His primary goal remained unchanged. The elixir of pseudo immortality.

Damon wrapped the spear Mutuwa in black fabric, securing it across his back. The weight of it settled between his shoulders, familiar and heavy.

This was his key to exit.

The spear was woven from a single strand of the goddess's hair and refined into a weapon by Lazarak.

This would be his death.

The irony was not lost on him. Deathless, the skill that kept him alive, had been a boon from the Unknown God after the Goddess of Doom had killed him. Now, Damon intended to use Doom's power to end the life the Unknown God had forcibly extended.

Above ground, the members of Damon's cult were ready.

The final battle was here. Just like that.

The city fell into a sudden silence. It was as if everyone could feel it. The storm was approaching.

Damon decided to leave and regroup with his party, leaving control of both the cult and the shadows to Lazarak and the two children.

Matia followed him. After all, they were her friends too.

As he walked through the city roads, his boots echoing against stone, he felt a hint of melancholy from his time here.

"I suppose it will end soon.."

He closed his eyes and took a deep breath. When he opened them again, the sky had changed.

Massive balls of flame fell from above, streaking downward in all directions.

Hell rained down upon the city.

From where he stood, Damon could not even feel the overwhelming heat. Instead, he felt something worse. Multiple auras of the fourth class advancement crashing down upon the city like judgment.

Rumble.

The earth shook violently as flames struck the ground. Buildings toppled indiscriminately. On the wide road where Damon stood, rubble rained down upon fleeing pedestrians.

A mother tried to pull her child out of the way. She was too slow.

A rock no larger than a watermelon crushed her skull, blood splattering across the stone. The little girl screamed, her voice tearing through the chaos as she cried out for her mother.

Damon froze.

He had not expected this.

Slowly, he lifted his head.

In the sky stood a figure wreathed in flames, chains coiling around his body as he looked down upon the world. He raised his arm, preparing to launch another attack.

Flames spread rapidly. In the scorching desert city, houses and fabric ignited instantly. Screams echoed from every direction.

"They are destroying their own city.." Damon muttered, disbelief tightening his chest.

The man of flames was not alone.

Nearby floated another figure, holding a parasol. With casual gestures, he bent the wind itself. The flames twisted and merged, forming firestorms.

They were using the same trick Damon had once used against them. Fire and wind combined.

A giant tornado of fire rose and danced through the city.

Damon's eyes followed its path.

It was heading straight toward where they had stationed a large portion of their supplies and people.

"They are trying to cut off our supplies. This is not arrogance. It is a preemptive strike."

"Dammit."

Damon gritted his teeth and broke into a sprint, boots pounding against stone as he moved. He briefly considered unleashing Matia from his shadow and ordering her to fly toward the two apostles.

He dismissed the thought.

She was one rank below them. In the sky, she would be visible to archers. This was planned.

Damon reached into his shadow storage and pulled out his sword, the blade sliding into his grip.

He leapt onto the rooftops as crowds fled below, panic spreading faster than the flames.

Raising his hand to his ear, he activated his brand and contacted Abellona.

"Hey, princess... what the hell is going on? I thought we had more time."

Her voice came through strained, layered with distant explosions.

"Your guess is as good as mine. It seems the enemy prepared before we did. This is earlier than expected, but everything is ready anyway."

Damon vaulted over a rolling mass of fire and slid through a burning window, glass shattering around him.

"Now what."

Her voice echoed through the brand.

"Rendezvous at my location. The supply line will most likely be destroyed, but that is not our only line of supply."

Damon clenched his jaw.

"Then let's hope this doesn't turn into a long battle. If it does, we'll be sitting ducks."

He was about to say more when his shadow perception flared.

Troops of the Chained Knights were moving. All of them were converging on the Black Tower.

Magical seals and wards rose around it in layered defensive formations, as if the tower itself was preparing for something immense.

The world suddenly felt heavier.

The sense of rejection pressing against Damon intensified.

He could feel it.

Things were about to get worse.

Elsewhere, Lilith stood still, gazing up at the sky. Her expression was calm, Sylvia beside her.

"The butterfly effect has begun," she said softly. "Who would have thought the Archivist from Eidolon would survive his journey across the desert and arrive here on time. In the previous regression, he was killed by you when he ran into you."

She glanced at Sylvia.

"That did not happen this time because I left with you. Now Seraph Null knows."

.....

Damon stopped mid step.

Something rose from the Black Tower. Something vast.

His eyes widened in horror.

Then came the voice.

Deep and ancient. It shook the air itself.

"Lazarak. I know you are here, traitor god. Come out and face me, coward, or I will burn this city to the ground."

Wings unfolded.

Wings so massive they dwarfed mountains. Each feather was larger than a great oak.

"Seraph Null," Damon muttered, cold dread settling into his bones.

Chapter 873: Limits Of A God

Seraph Null was not what Damon had imagined. He had expected an entity shaped like a man, something familiar, something comprehensible.

What he saw was utterly inhumane.

This particular lesser god was a sphere of interlocking chains, endless and layered, rotating slowly upon itself. From its core spread nine massive wings. These wings were also chained, each feather larger than a mighty oak, stretching so far into the heavens that the clouds themselves parted when they brushed against them.

The very sky recoiled.

With Seraph Null's presence alone, Damon felt as if the world had tightened around him. The air grew heavy, his lungs struggling to draw breath, his bones screaming under an invisible pressure.

His voice echoed across the entire city.

Yet Lazarak did not respond.

He was met with silence.

All across the city, people froze where they stood, eyes lifted toward the sky. Even the flames seemed to hesitate.

Then the Chained people fell to their knees.

They knelt in awe of their god even as the world burned around them. Even as he threatened to destroy the very city they worshipped within. Their bodies trembled, yet their devotion did not falter.

Their voices rose together, calm, reverent, fanatical.

"Hail Seraph Null, the Bound God."

"God of Chains, Warden of the Sky, Lord of the Final Gate."

"Jailer of gods, Sealer of calamity, Master of the Locked World."

The chant spread, flowing through the streets like a hymn. Their faith gathered, thickened, and rose into the heavens, forming a divine halo around the chained entity.

"Hail Seraph Null, He Who Forbids."

"God of Containment, Sovereign of the Closed Path, Bearer of the First Lock."

"Warden of Heaven, Gaoler of Eidolon, the One Who Denies All Escapes."

"Hail the Prisoner Who Imprisons All."

"Lord of the Eternal Cage, whose bonds is law."

"God of Confinement, whose judgment is immobility."

"Hail Seraph Null, Keeper of the World's Sentence."

"Hail the Prison God."

Hail Seraph Null

Yes.

Damon stood before the Prison God, Seraph Null.

As a god should be, he was incomprehensible to mortals.

It was a flaw of humanity, of mortals in general, to shape gods in their own reflection. Every culture carved their deities in familiar forms, sculpting divine faces that resembled their own.

But gods were never meant to be understood.

The original old gods, who ruled before the rise of the more human new gods, looked nothing like mortals. They were amoral entities, beings that transcended concepts like good and evil entirely.

Seraph Null was a new god, yet he was made in the image of the old ones. Perhaps it was more accurate to say that lesser gods were old gods tempered with sentimentality the originals never possessed.

And from where Damon stood, he could feel it.

The wrath of a god.

How insignificant a mortal was before such an existence. Even when that wrath was not directed at him, it crushed the spirit. The feeling alone confirmed what Damon already knew.

A lesser god stood at the seventh class advancement at the very least.

The weakest kind of god.

"Lazarak, show yourself," Seraph Null called again, his voice resonating like iron dragged across the world. "I know you are here."

He could not sense Lazarak, yet he was certain. Lazarak was in this city, hiding like a worm.

Damon gritted his teeth.

From where he stood on the burning rooftop, he felt it clearly. If he moved even an inch, Seraph Null would turn his gaze upon him.

Still, he could not remain still.

He was the one who had spoken of rebellion. The one who taught these people to defy their god. The one who had given them something resembling liberation.

They were afraid. He could see it in every shadow, every trembling form below.

Standing amid the flames, Damon realized something bitter.

He was afraid too.

A monster of the seventh class was not something to challenge lightly. Such beings could destroy continents with ease, reshape the world on a whim.

Still, Damon moved.

The instant he did, the chains that formed Seraph Null's body shifted. The sound of metal echoed through the sky.

The distance between them was several kilometers, yet Seraph Null's sheer size made it feel negligible.

The clouds tore apart as the god turned his attention toward the rooftop Damon stood upon.

Then came a hissing voice, carried by the wind.

"Outsider... I see you."

Damon's body froze.

The raw power in those calm words crushed down upon him. His ears burst, blood trailing down his neck as the god's aura pressed against his existence.

"You smell of him... of the dark..."

Damon clenched his jaw. He knew everyone was watching. This moment would decide whether they fought or died.

He reached over his shoulder and drew the spear. The physical manifestation of death itself.

A chain extended from Seraph Null's wing, moving slowly toward Damon.

Damon closed his eyes and drew a steady breath. This was not the first time he had faced such overwhelming power, and it would not be the last.

When he opened his eyes, dark streaks of shadow spiraled around him.

He remembered Evangeline's words to the Chained Knights.

"I bow before no false gods."

He raised his hand and reached into his shadow storage, pulling forth the Staff of Carnage.

He pointed it at Seraph Null.

A black sphere of expulsion erupted outward.

Destruction followed instantly.

A massive shockwave tore through the city. Buildings crumbled. The air warped violently as space itself distorted under the staff's effect.

When it ended, a crater several kilometers wide had been carved into the heart of the city. An entire neighborhood was erased in a single strike. Even though many had fled from the initial flames, many lives were still lost.

When the dust settled, the devastation was absolute.

But so was Seraph Null.

The chain he had extended remained exactly where it had been before the expulsion.

If anything, Damon was the one sent flying, his body hurled across the city by the recoil of his own attack. He crashed through stone and rubble, still gripping both spear and staff.

Seraph Null turned toward him once more.

"Futile," the god intoned. "You do not know the power of a god, nor the limits of man. I shall engrain it into you through death."

Chains surged forward.

Then they stopped.

A pair of hands grasped them.

"I know the power of a god," a young man said calmly. "I also know the strength of man. Allow me to teach you."

Seraph Null went still. His wings ceased their movement, his voice dropping into something colder.

"Lazarak, the traitor god. What can a peace loving failure teach me."

Lazarak's body dissolved into darkness, shadows crawling over his form as he hissed.

"The limits of a god."

Chapter 874: Battle Of Gods

Damon understood.

He stood no chance, and he was fine with that. Even he could not cross several ranks and challenge a god.

As one climbed higher in class advancement, the gap between ranks did not merely widen, it became absolute. Power stopped scaling linearly and began to spike violently. That gap made victory impossible.

A third class would never defeat a seventh class.

That truth was written into the universe itself.

But Damon did not need to.

Lazarak could.

And from the look of it, Lazarak had arrived already furious.

This was the god who despised the world's endless, senseless cycles of conflict. The one who had rebelled alone and nearly succeeded. He had done so without killing a single person or god.

Now he stood before another god once more.

When Lazarak pulled on Seraph Null's chains, the air screamed.

Astral wind detonated outward as the massive god was yanked from the sky and slammed into the earth. The impact fractured the ground like glass. Entire buildings collapsed, reduced to rubble in an instant.

The Chained watched in stunned silence as their god was manhandled from the very beginning.

"Hehh... huah... bahha..."

Even so, Seraph Null laughed.

"How pitiful you are, Lazarak. All this talk of showing me my limits, yet you watched thousands die. That is why you are a failure."

Lazarak knew the god was trying to unbalance him before the battle truly began.

He stood unmoving in the vast crater Damon's earlier attack had carved into the city.

"If you're referring to the people in this district," Lazarak said calmly, "then I must disappoint you. I teleported them away before appearing here. Look around you, Prison God."

Seraph Null's wings shifted as he surveyed the city.

Something was wrong.

There were no women. No children. No elderly. No wounded. No civilians unable to fight.

Only those who lived by the sword remained.

"You evacuated everyone..."

Seraph Null muttered, his voice shaking the heavens.

Lazarak smiled faintly.

"I know my friend well enough to predict he would cause a massive expulsion. He does have a flair for the dramatic."

The chains composing Seraph Null's body ground together, radiating fury.

Lazarak turned his head slightly.

"Damon. I'll deal with him. You handle the rest."

Damon opened his mouth to protest, but Lazarak's smile stopped him. Darkness fluttered around Lazarak's form like living robes.

"Let me show you," Lazarak said softly, "my power. The power of a god."

He spread his arms and slowly raised them.

Something rose on the horizon.

No. Not something.

Darkness.

It surged upward in every direction, swallowing the sky as it climbed. When it reached the sun, the world was drowned in shadow. The day collapsed into an eclipse.

The sun had been nearing sunset, yet night fell instantly.

Seraph Null roared and surged skyward, climbing higher and higher. His wings churned the air, generating dust storms that spread for miles.

"I am the god of this realm, Lazarak," he thundered. "What I say is law. By my decree, it is day."

The words were not mere arrogance.

Reality obeyed.

The eclipsed sun vanished, only to rise again from the horizon, blazing at its zenith. Its light burned away the encroaching darkness.

Lazarak frowned slightly. A thin line of blood trickled from his nose, yet he remained standing.

Faith strengthened Lazarak, even if he was far from his full power.

Chains rattled violently.

"My followers," Seraph Null declared, "these infidels empower a traitor god who defies our creator, the Goddess of Doom. Kill them. Strip him of his false power. Slaughter them all."

The spell of awe shattered.

Damon raised his hand and incinerated the nearest Chained Knight where it stood.

"Advance on the Black Tower," he commanded. "Destroy his seat of power."

His voice carried through the battlefield. He lifted his charm and spoke again, his words echoing through every corner of the city.

"Advance to the Black Tower."

The sky flashed violently as darkness collided with a massive angelic form bound in chains. Clouds were torn apart. Winds screamed.

"Slaughter your way to the Black Tower," Damon roared. "Show this creature of the lower realm the power of the children of Aetherus."

Battle cries erupted.

Magic detonated. Steel clashed. The city drowned in war.

Anyone who was not one of them was the enemy. That was the only truth that mattered.

Abellona drove her spear through a Chained Knight's skull, crimson eyes blazing. Blood sprayed freely as fighters leapt between rooftops in superhuman clashes.

The upper sky belonged to the gods.

The lower sky and streets belonged to mortals.

Leona activated her Sovereign Mantle, lightning erupting from her body as she teleported in blinding flashes. Her sword carved arcs of destruction, leaving charred corpses in her wake.

Beside her, Wendy tore through enemies with her bone sword, crushing and ripping apart Chained Knights until broken bodies littered their path.

Damon gritted his teeth.

"The Black Tower. I have to reach the Black Tower."

The streets were chaotic. Blood flooded the ground. Buildings collapsed like dominos. The air filled with rot, smoke, and burning flesh.

He rolled aside as a corpse impaled by erupting metal spikes slammed into the ground, its eyes frozen open in death.

Damon slipped into the shadows, teleporting between alleys and rooftops, cutting down anything that blocked his path.

In one alley, skeletal ranks formed a siege line as the demon necromancer Kashi fought alongside a young elf from the Silver Glades. Old grudges were forgotten as they fought for survival.

Damon sprinted toward a wide road.

When he reached it, all he saw were corpses.

At the road's center, standing atop a mound of fresh dead, was a man holding a parasol.

"Ah," the man said pleasantly. "I've been looking for you. We have scores to settle."

The Wind Apostle.

Before Damon could respond, golden light descended beside him.

Evangeline stood there, clad in her Duskglass armor, Sovereign Mantle fully unleashed.

"Funny," she said coldly. "I was about to say the same thing."

Damon frowned at her.

She shook her head.

"Go. He's mine."

"He's fourth class," Damon muttered.

She stepped forward, sword lowering into a ready stance.

"Good," she said. "That makes him worth killing."

Damon clenched his jaw.

Her odds were terrible, but—

"I'll see you at the Black Tower."

Her gaze never left her opponent.

Chapter 875: Taking Charge

Damon didn't turn back.

Evangeline would fight her own battles, her ideals driving her forward just as relentlessly as his own. Maybe he should have joined her and helped kill the Wind Apostle, but that enemy was hers. And Evangeline wanted him dead more than anyone.

Damon ran toward the Black Tower while the battle raged behind him. Bright flashes of golden light tore through the sky as Evangeline's clash with the apostle intensified, shockwaves rippling outward with every collision.

"Goodbye, Eva..." he muttered as he sprinted.

This was most likely the last time he would see her.

Damon had wanted to say something, anything. A final goodbye before death claimed one of them. But in the end, no words came.

He slid into the shadows, reappearing as he vaulted over a massive collapsed building. High above, darkness twisted and surged as it tried to engulf a chained angel. The combatants were distant, yet enormous spatial rifts tore open between them, warping the sky itself.

Watching it felt like witnessing a calamity.

From above, damaged feathers from Seraph Null's wings rained down like flaming meteors, smashing into the city and exploding into waves of destruction.

Damon barely leapt aside as one slammed into the street near him. The shockwave hurled him through the wall of a building.

"Cough—cough..."

He groaned, forcing himself upright as debris rained down. He rolled aside just as more rubble collapsed, then shoved a shattered wooden shelf off his chest.

A hand suddenly reached out and grabbed him.

Damon reacted instantly, shadows flaring, then stopped when he sensed a familiar aura.

Leona.

Her face was smeared with soot and blood. A deep gash tore across her side, still bleeding freely. Behind her stood Wendy, a fresh wound carved across her back.

Damon frowned as they hauled him to his feet.

"What happened to you two?"

Leona clenched her teeth, one hand pressed to her wound.

"It's too chaotic," she said through a sharp breath. "We're being overwhelmed. This is their city, they're organized."

Damon pulled out potions and handed them over without hesitation.

Leona downed hers immediately. Flesh knit together before his eyes, the bleeding slowing, then stopping.

"Everyone's heading for the Black Tower," Wendy added calmly. "But the Chained are forming a final defensive line there."

Damon wasn't surprised. Wendy understood more than most gave her credit for. Months of integration had stripped away her monster instincts and replaced them with hard-earned awareness of people, of war.

"I assume that's not how you got injured," Damon said coldly.

He looked directly at Leona.

"Who did this?"

Leona's jaw tightened.

"The Water Apostle. We had the advantage at first. Then the Fire Apostle ambushed us. Outranked. Outmatched. We had to retreat."

Damon inhaled slowly, forcing his anger down before it could surface.

"I see," he said quietly. "So that's their plan. Use the apostles to eliminate our strongest fighters while they fortify the Black Tower."

Around them, buildings collapsed as battles raged. Lightning split the air. Ice and flame collided. Artifacts screamed as they clashed, magic tearing the world apart.

All in the name of war.

Damon expanded his shadow perception, mapping the battlefield in his mind. Then he turned back to Leona and Wendy.

"If you had backup of comparable strength or higher, could you kill the two apostles?"

Leona cracked her knuckles, electricity snapping around her fist.

"The fourth class isn't as impressive as it sounds. With you joining us, we'd kill them."

Damon shook his head.

"No. I won't be joining."

He paused.

"But we all know ice beats fire, and ice beats water."

Wendy blinked, confused.

Leona smiled.

"She'll do."

A silhouette peeled itself free from Damon's shadow.

A woman stepped forward, clad in black armor that looked as though it had been forged from shattered ice. Cracks of frozen blue light traced its surface.

Her Ascendant Armor.

Shattered Ice.

Her blue eyes met Leona's gaze.

She nodded once. That was all the greeting she offered.

Leona's face lit up as she leapt forward.

"Matia! I missed you so much, I'm glad you're back!"

Matia hesitated.

Then, slowly, she lifted a hand and gently stroked Leona's beastkin ears.

"I... missed you too," she said quietly.

She actually spoke.

Wendy raised an eyebrow.

"Wait. She can talk?"

Damon rolled his eyes.

"Yes. Now go deal with the apostles. But be careful of two things. First, the Wardens. They're fourth class, but they aren't apostles."

Leona crossed her arms.

"What's the difference?"

Damon's expression hardened.

"That's the second problem. Apostles and Wardens might share the same class, but apostles possess nascent domains. They're close to fifth class, close to forming actual domains."

Leona frowned.

"How do we counter a domain?"

"You don't," Damon replied flatly. "Once they deploy one, you die. That's why you must kill them before they use it. At their stage, the cost is enormous, that hesitation is your only opening."

Leona nodded as her helm slid into place, lightning dancing along her blade.

"And if the worst happens?" she asked. "If they still use it?"

Damon turned to Matia. A faint chill radiated from her presence.

"That's why she's going with you. Her skill mimics a domain not fully, but enough to interfere."

Leona smiled beneath her helm, confidence unmistakable.

"You think the three of us can kill two fourth-class apostles?"

Damon hesitated just for a moment, then nodded.

Leona was no weakling. Wendy was a monster the impure could not easily kill. And Matia... Matia had endured decades in the dark, surviving rot and corruption itself.

She would not falter before such obstacles.

Leona grinned.

"I'll bring you their heads as souvenirs."

She vanished in a flash of lightning.

"May the goddess be with you, my friends..."

Damon raised his hand to his ear, activating his brand.

"Abellona. Can you hear me?"

Her irritated voice snapped back immediately.

"That's Princess to you. And I'm a little busy here."

"Good," Damon shot back. "That means you're not doing anything important."

"—Excuse you?"

"We need to rethink our strategy," he continued. "I have a plan. Send any available archers and mages to my location."

The war was far from over.

Chapter 876: First Line

Damon realized one thing. If he focused on reaching the Black Tower while the enemy still held the advantage, they would lose and everything would be futile.

He had a theory about how to end the nightmare. Actually, he had two. But he was counting on the first one. The second was a possibility he did not even want to consider.

However, for now, they had to beat the enemy.

Damon recalled playing a game of chess with his grandfather in Lumos. In every game they played, the old Grand Duke always won. Damon could put up a good fight, but on the chessboard he always lost.

During one of his losses, Damon argued that on the field of battle it was impossible to control every situation and every variable like in a game of chess. There were no rules to obey.

More importantly, you could not have a bird's-eye view of the battlefield. Neither could you command all your pieces.

His grandfather had agreed with him on that fact, then argued back.

"But this is chess."

And since it was not the battlefield, why was Damon applying battlefield logic to the game?

However, this was the battlefield.

And Damon had two of those things.

Sure, his army was weaker and lacked information and numbers, but what if they didn't?

Damon spread his shadow perception from where he stood. He saw many kilometers around him as shadows crawled through streets, over rooftops, and into ruined buildings.

However, that still brought the problem of not being able to communicate with them.

Except each of them carried Lazarak's brand, and he could communicate with anyone who bore it.

Then Damon chose to take control.

He spoke to everyone through the brand, not with his charm, but with the brand itself.

"I am Damon Grey, and I am speaking to you all through the brands on your bodies. I will temporarily assume command and direct our advance on the Black Tower."

Naturally, to give himself legitimacy, he decided to work together with Abellona and the leader of the Demon Heirs as his support.

"My command will be supported by the Third Princess Abellona and Bakemon Baal."

Their army was made up of many factions, but the primary ones were demons and goddess races, and right now they were fighting side by side for survival.

"We need to clear a path to the Black Tower, and to do so we must destroy their defensive line."

Damon moved toward a building and jumped into the rubble, pulling out a bleeding member of the goddess races who was being healed by a Demon Heir after they were blasted by one of the falling feathers of Seraph Null.

"Those of you in the western district with long-range offensive spells, I want you on the buildings and waiting for my orders. There is a hidden cache of potions that was part of our original supply line. Take as many as you can."

Damon issued the order while analyzing the vast movement flowing through his shadows.

"Healers and tanks, follow them. Take the healing-grade potions and form a medical bay for the injured."

Then he gave another order.

"All archers and remaining mages who are not in the western district, those in the eastern district, meet me at the oasis. The rest of you advance toward the Black Tower."

Then Damon contacted Bakemon Baal, the leader of the Demon Heirs.

"I need you demons to join up with the fairies and fae, as well as any species with wings, to form an aerial assault. When I give the signal, can you gather everyone together?"

Bakemon's calm voice answered.

"Hmm. I can. I am the son of the Lord of Order, though I am unsure what to call this. The day proud demons fight shoulder to shoulder with goddess races."

Damon scoffed, unsurprised.

"Haven't you heard? The world is coming to an end, and this is only the beginning. Times are changing, Bakemon. Change, or be left in the dust."

Somewhere on the battlefield, the chained Apostle's head hung from a length of chain. Bakemon stood nearby, bleeding from his entire body, yet still smiling after killing an Apostle.

"Yes, the world is changing."

He looked ahead, his gaze falling on the goddess-race youths who had died fighting alongside him.

"The world has gone mad, and the sane cannot live in it. We must all go mad with it."

....

Damon reached the oasis.

This place had once been beautiful, with water flowing through elegant canals and trees growing in the blistering desert city. Now it was red with blood and filled with floating corpses.

When he arrived, the mages and archers had already gathered.

Damon pointed at a tall building.

"Get to the roof."

He jumped up in a single leap, and they followed, spreading across the rooftops.

"Get ready. All of you will be aiming in that direction."

He pointed toward the buildings blocking the defensive line leading to the Black Tower.

Damon didn't wait for doubt. He activated his brand and contacted another squad of mages.

"All mages, use your magic to level the buildings in the eastern area leading toward the Black Tower. Attack on my order."

From where he stood, his shadow perception saw them begin charging their spells, mana gathering and distorting the air.

Damon grabbed the mage closest to him.

"The moment those buildings go down, you'll have a clear view of the enemy line. Fire before they can form barriers and shields."

"Ready," he shouted over the noise as everyone scrambled into position.

Then he gave the order to the western unit.

Balls of destruction filled the sky, raining down on the buildings and leveling them. Before the smoke could settle, Damon raised his hand.

The chained knights turned toward the collapsing structures, preparing to defend against another volley.

But from behind them, colored death filled the sky.

Magic from hundreds of fighters launched at once, streaking toward the exposed line. The buildings that had concealed them were gone.

A chained knight dropped his shield, his eyes reflecting pure horror.

"By the gods," he muttered as death rained down in a deafening expulsion.

At the front, Abellona raised her spear.

"Advance," she screamed as hundreds roared and surged forward behind her.

They had broken the first defensive line.

#### Chapter 877: High Prophet

The first defensive line was broken, and the apostles were occupied fighting their opponents.

He sat in a chamber within the tower, surrounded by countless hanging chains, a projection hovering before him.

The chained knights were retreating to reinforce the second defensive line. However, retreating while facing an advancing enemy was catastrophic. For every man who reached the second defensive line, twenty were slain with their backs turned.

Retreating was one of the most difficult aspects of war, and it was ill-advised to do so without proper planning.

"They are more powerful than I thought," his voice was cold and husky.

This was a fact he did not want to accept. That the lowly branded people he had ruled over for centuries had grown this strong, this organized, and their numbers were increasing with every moment.

They had Seraph Null, and so he had grown comfortable. But even Seraph Null did not realize that the minor god Lazarak was with them.

In this epoch, wars were won with two things. A superior army and tactics, and a powerful god on your side.

They had a god, so in that regard it was even. However, they were not an army. At most, they were an armed mob with battle experience. They had not fought as an organized force for long.

They had no time to train in battlefield tactics. Their formations were scattered, and they were far more effective at guerrilla warfare than a sustained battlefield advance.

Otherwise, they would have already broken through to the second line of defense.

He took a sip from the drink beside him.

The ones holding this group together were their leaders. They were the ones providing tactics.

The fae woman with red eyes had clearly seen her share of warfare. The horned man with bat-like wings who had killed the chained Apostle was also capable. He possessed an attribute focused on control.

There were others too.

But the one who truly disrupted everything was that black-haired wretch who kept diving from shadow to shadow.

He seemed to possess a complete view of the battlefield, controlling everything.

Tapping his throne lightly, he spoke.

"This battle will not end easily. My god will fight theirs for an extended period of time. In the meantime, they will try to establish a defensive line to secure the territory they have already claimed."

He analyzed the flow of the battle.

"They will advance in a few hours, while they still have strength and resources."

He smiled, his twisted grin spreading an eerie chill through the chamber.

This was the king of the chained people, known as the High Prophet.

The right hand of god.

.....

Damon watched as they advanced through corpses, ally and enemy alike. This was not an open-field battle. As they pushed toward the second defensive line, the enemy gained cover to hide behind.

More importantly, the second defensive line was reinforced with wards and barriers. It was a true defensive position, hiding them behind thick shields and barricades.

"So they'll turtle now. We need to destroy that barrier."

Damon turned and glanced at the mages and archers behind him.

"Time to move. Let's go."

A female mage holding a wooden staff with a glowing gem paused, tilting her head.

"Hmm, leave? Shouldn't we press our advantage and blast the second defensive line with a volley?" she asked, her face smeared with blood and soot.

"No," Damon shook his head slowly, frowning.

"The buildings in this city are more fragile than modern ones. This area has no cover. It was good for a surprise attack, but it will be difficult to defend."

He did not need to explain further. Hearing his words, they nodded and waited.

"What do we do next?" someone asked.

Damon jumped down from the rubble.

"Let's regroup with the main force and establish a defensive line of our own."

He activated his brand and called the others back.

By the time he reached what had once been the enemy's defensive line, Abellona had already chosen to halt the advance.

Damon found her efficiency in establishing war tents impressive. He would never have been able to get so many people to follow him without cutting off a few heads. Yet she managed it effortlessly.

It was not even because of her status as a princess. She was simply an experienced war general.

He found her inside a former enemy command tent.

She was examining a man whose armor bore several deep dents.

Damon's entrance earned only a curt nod.

"Their current barrier is strong. Most likely a siege barrier, the same type we use in modern cities," she muttered.

"Advancing will be a nightmare. We could sacrifice the natives who joined us, but I despise the idea of abandoning part of my army simply because they are different."

Her fist clenched.

Damon crossed his arms.

"However, you considered it. After all, they might just be illusions, and we are real."

He chuckled softly.

"You're a real softie. In your position, I would not hesitate to use them as collateral damage."

She smiled faintly.

"But you haven't. After all, you are as much in command as I am. So what changed since that night?"

Damon looked away slightly and sighed.

"The only thing that changed is that you ruined my chance to write a very touching goodbye."

She sighed but said nothing.

"I assume you have a way to break through the second defensive line," she said.

Damon glanced at the map spread across the table.

"I do. But even if we break it, so what? They still have barricades and shields reinforced with magic."

Abellona crossed her arms.

"So you have a plan, then."

Damon nodded slowly, his gaze cold.

"You need to ask Lilith Astranova and Sylvia Moonveil to cooperate with Renata Malcrist to break the barrier."

He raised his hand slightly.

"Sylvia can identify weaknesses. Lilith has the power to nullify part of it, and Renata can reduce its overall strength."

She raised an eyebrow.

"Hmm."

Damon added, "We can't bring down the whole thing, but we can open a section."

"That's not what's confusing me," Abellona said. "Aren't you close to Lilith Astranova? Why are you asking me to tell her?"

Damon bit his lip and scratched his head.

"Erm... I think Lilith might be a little mad at me."

"Hmm, I wonder why," Abellona glared at him, arms crossed over her chest.

He bit his lip, trying to ignore the sounds of battle outside the tent as the skirmishes began to die down.

He sighed.

"Because she found out I was planning to... you know."

"Kill yourself," Abellona said coolly.

She scoffed.

"You'd better figure it out. I'm not getting involved."

Damon shook his head.

"Fine. I'll talk to Lilith. But for now, I should tell you where I need you next. Leave the ground assault to Xander and Emilia Highgon."

He glanced at her neck, slightly bruised and red.

"Xander is a tank. Maybe the best we have. As long as he's in front, we can minimize casualties. He won't die easily."

She crossed her arms.

"Let me guess. You want me to lead an aerial assault the moment the second defensive line goes down."

He nodded.

She rubbed her temples and sighed.

"Never thought I'd fight side by side with demons. The world really knows how to throw curveballs. Fine."

Damon nodded and turned to leave.

Now he had to find Lilith Astranova.

He spread his shadow perception, and after a few minutes, found her inside a tent helping an injured person while Sylvia healed him.

He teleported outside the tent and waited until they finished. During that time, he watched the distant clash of gods in the sky, where Seraph Null battled Lazarak.

Both gods avoided the battlefield below. Either of them could wipe everyone out if they intervened directly.

Though the occasional feather falling from Seraph Null still caused devastating damage.

The tent flap opened, and Lilith stepped out carrying a bucket of water stained with bloody rags.

Even with blood thick in the air, the scent of gardenia still clung to her.

When she saw Damon standing nearby, she paused for a moment, then walked past him with an impassive expression.

Damon sighed and followed her.

She did not speak until he did.

"Can you stop ignoring me?"

She shook her head.

"I'm not ignoring you. You just didn't say anything. I figured whatever brought you here wasn't important."

Damon sighed, feeling awkward. She was not wrong.

"So... you're mad at me, right?"

She stopped, her gaze cold.

"Why would I be mad? It's your life. I have no say in how you end it."

Damon pinched the bridge of his nose.

"Ahh... I just wanted to ask you..."

"I'll do it," she replied before he finished.

"I didn't even tell you what I wanted."

She paused and lowered her head.

"You didn't need to."

She turned to face him.

"I'll help break the barrier. That's what you want, right?"

Chapter 878: His Return

Both sides were ready for the final battle, it was the last stretch.

Personally speaking, Damon was more eager for the elixir of pseudo immortality, but he wasn't the only one. A lot of people had their eyes on it even when they knew nothing about it.

He could already hear people talking about it. Young nobles wanted to take it back to their families as a trophy. They would trade it with more powerful families for a chance to rise up in rank.

Adventurers wanted a noble title and could easily gain one. Some zealots wanted to give it to the temple in hopes of earning their favor and of course their rewards.

While some believed if they took it, they would live forever, becoming undying.

There were many speculations. The goal of entering a world dungeon was to earn fame, rare resources, and of course rise in power.

This nightmare offered all of it, the elixir, the fame of having overcome such an unprecedented trial, and finally the last reward, a boon set by the unknown god himself.

Rising in rank to the fourth class advancement.

This was power, actual power. Those in the fourth class were usually powerhouses and in wars contributed a lot as officers. It had gotten to the point where a foreign fourth rank would be monitored as a safety precaution.

This was real power and all they had to do was survive to the end.

Easier said than done.

A volley of magical attacks shot towards them from the enemy's defensive line.

Xander raised his shield along with the thick formation of tanks in front, each of them reinforced with magic from the mages behind them.

They carried tower shields and formed a thick barricade, with healers restoring them whenever they took damage.

When their shields went down, the mages and archers would fire their own volley.

This had been ongoing for the last three hours.

Which was pointless, since both sides weren't really doing any damage. It was in fact a battle of attrition, and Damon's side would fall first.

Xander glanced at him from behind a tower shield.

"How long do we have to hold on for?"

Damon raised his head, looking into the distance where Renata had concealed both herself and Lilith in the chaos and smoke. No one noticed them.

"Any minute now..." he muttered.

Then a violet light filled the world as Renata wore down the enemy barrier. As soon as she did, Lilith raised her hand and a burst of magic filled the air.

[Void Scythe]

A scythe appeared in her hand, made from the void, and without hesitation she threw it, the manifestation of the void crashing into the barrier.

A massive sound like glass breaking erupted, and the front section of the barrier fell apart like shattered crystal.

The chained knights were stunned.

Damon nodded at Xander, who raised his spear.

"Advance..."

His roar roused everyone, and with a thick formation of shields in front they charged into the fray as bolts of arrows and blasts of magic struck their defenses.

The chained knights realized their barrier was gone. It was no longer a siege but an open battle, so they switched tactics.

The warden who was leading them raised his hand.

"Restore the barrier. Advance squad forward."

He gave the order, but before he could react, Damon teleported behind him and stabbed him in the chest. However, he was still fourth class and managed to twist aside, his chest bleeding as he punched toward Damon.

Damon smiled and teleported away before the warden could react.

A white arrow pierced his head as Sylvia snapped her bow in two, turning it into twin blades.

He died indignant, a fourth class killed in such a disgraceful way, ambushed by two third class opponents because he let his guard down.

While they may have taken down the barrier, they still didn't have the advantage at all. The chained people were still better equipped and better trained for war.

And so they began losing their advantage.

Then from the rooftops, shadows of flying figures appeared.

From above, the aerial squad unleashed a volley into the middle of the enemy lines.

This was Abellona, leading those of them who had wings for an aerial assault. The chained knights had given up their arrows for melee combat and now had to deal with enemies from above.

One of their commanders saw this and screamed out.

"Mages assemble. Mages assemble."

Mages scrambled to gather in the fast and chaotic battle. The air was tight, once you fell you would be trampled. Blood soaked the ground, swords and magic clashed as fast and thunderous as lightning in a stormy sky.

Death from the sky, aerial tactical warfare. This kind of warfare is mostly used by demons and winged races like the fae, though the demons do it best.

The reason for that is because most demon kin have wings, so flying is simply natural to them, while the goddess races only had some races with wings, not all of them could fly.

However, this was just the start, and Damon was intent on pushing his advantage.

This would have been a good time to use the Staff of Carnage, but he had already used it against Seraph Null.

Still, he raised his hand and unleashed a torrent of black flames.

Screams echoed as bodies turned to ash.

The system's familiar chime echoed out.

[You have slain Tatin of the Chained]

[You have slain ...]

[You have slain...]

...

Damon was about to advance toward the black tower when a group of hooded figures came out chanting praise in Seraph Null's name.

Then they did the unbelievable.

They took out daggers and plunged them into their own hearts.

"In the great god's mercy, we call his angels."

They collapsed into pools of their own blood, and when they did it was as if the battlefield went silent. The blood began to slowly flow in a circle.

When Damon sensed it, his face paled.

That was summoning magic.

From the circle, figures began to appear, strange winged entities that reminded him of the mirror seraph.

When they fully stepped out, each of them carried lances, and without hesitation they charged into battle. Some rose into the sky to face Abellona and the aerial assault group, the rest plunged into the already dire ground battle.

When they joined, they brought death with wide area attacks that created arcs of destruction around them. Corpses fell from the sky where they fought, and the ground forces were getting overwhelmed.

Damon gritted his teeth, then activated his brand.

He was hoping he wouldn't have to use them, but so be it.

Then at the very edge of the battlefield, when things looked dire, Damon took a deep breath.

Then—

"Frost dominate."

A cold and sinister voice echoed out, and with those words massive pillars of ice shot forward, impaling anyone in their path.

When everyone heard that voice, a chill ran down their spine. He had risen from the grave once again.

"Haahahhah..." the cold, sinister voice echoed.

"Die."

Someone froze in shock.

"It... it's Amon..."

The chained knights did not know why they were reacting this way, but those of the goddess races knew to fear him.

Amon the Unknown Ruler, the one suspected to be the return of Ashcroft.

The demon king in the air watched with awe as he rode atop a lesser demon, then waved his hand.

With that, wyvern creatures appeared out of nowhere. Then silver knights marched out in the hundreds along with black armored knights.

Amon had returned, and he came back as powerful as ever.

The Unknown Ruler was back.

Damon watched his shadow clone Amon standing in glory. It was a good thing he had risked creating another shadow clone combined with his Faceless skill.

Damon had a plan B in case things didn't go as planned.

Now the battle was theirs to win.

As for his army of shadow drones, he had never planned to have them associated with him anyway. If anyone found out how they worked, it would be troublesome, especially if the temple gained more reasons to find him suspicious.

Besides, he had let his shadow clone play the villain. That was why he had made it.

Still, Damon frowned. Now they had the advantage again, but he still had to get to the black tower.

While he was thinking, his shadow clone scanned the battlefield from his high vantage point, and he noticed something odd.

He didn't see Lilith or Sylvia.

"What are they planning now..."

It was hard to spot them, but Amon hadn't come alone. He had in fact come with Lyn and Sithara, who were helping him as his adjutants.

They were the ones who built this shadow army with Lazarak, so they had more understanding of their specifications.

Lyn glanced at him.

"What, is something wrong?"

Damon shook his head slowly.

"No, it's no big deal. You two stay close, I'll protect you."

Sithara didn't seem to mind. She was too interested in the fighting power of the wyvern-like combat drones.

Damon, down on the battlefield, didn't have time to worry.

He glanced at the sky, contacting Abellona.

"I'm heading inside the tower."

He didn't receive a reply.

But he was sure she heard him.

## Chapter 879: Within This Room

Damon stepped into the tower. As soon as he made it past the arch, he felt as if space itself was inverted.

When he looked back, the entrance was gone.

He scoffed with a hint of disdain.

"Basic space manipulation. How original."

Damon had already gone past the level where such small things would surprise him.

He looked around. The place was dark, with several glowing doors that must have led to different locations.

Damon stopped, hoping to figure out which one Sylvia and Lilith had taken, but after some thought he just gave up and chose a random one.

When he opened his eyes, he was in a room filled with hanging chains.

He walked forward, spotting a figure seated on a throne.

"What are the odds that the door you choose is the one that leads to me. This is an act of providence."

The man seated on the throne spoke.

He was a large man with a chain around his neck and a few more wrapped around his waist, attached to two swords that were obviously connected to the chains.

This seemed to be a magical artifact of sorts. It gave Damon a chilling sensation when he saw it, along with the deep and powerful aura of a fourth class advancement.

"Providence, hmm. Maybe it is. I just didn't expect you would have such misfortune," Damon replied calmly.

The man raised his brows, then burst into laughter.

"You are a very arrogant man, aren't you. It is rare to see such confidence from a lich weaker than me."

The man lowered his head, looking down at Damon.

"You will die more arrogantly than most men."

Damon scoffed, shaking his head.

"Dying humble is sad. Humility is not a virtue, it is simply proof that you've been walked on your whole life. And more importantly..."

Damon paused, glancing up at him.

"Who the hell are you."

There was a long, silent pause from the man. Then he burst into laughter.

"Hahah... hahaha teeeeeee haha..."

He wiped a tear from the side of his eye.

"That explains why you're so arrogant. No wonder you didn't know who I was. Very well then, it would be unfair for you to die ignorant."

He raised his hand, a cold gleam in his eyes.

"I am the ruler of this city, the right hand of the prison god, master of chains, lord of the brands, king of the chained halls. I am the High Prophet."

Damon sighed, feeling a headache forming.

"Okay. I'm Damon."

There was no change in expression. Damon had been hoping to see fear, but all he saw was a calm and almost tired look on the man's face.

"You do realize you will die today."

Damon shrugged.

"Maybe. But not by your hands."

He stepped forward as the High Prophet stood up from his throne. The chains on his body began to glow red.

Damon took a deep breath and looked at his current stats.

[HP: 24,995 / 17,955]

[Mana: 55,567 / 15,754]

[Strength: 31,124]

[Agility: 23,157]

[Speed: 33,985]

[Endurance: 34,210]

[Class: Usurper]

[Shadow: 1,900]

[Shadow Hunger Levels: 10%]

[Shadow Level: 19]

[Condition: Shadow Is Fed]

[Attributes: Umbral, Domination Fragment]

[Skills:]

[5x] [Remorseless] [Shadow Perception] [Water Celebration] [Sacrifice] [Shadow Control] [Parkour] [Shadow Armor] [Beholder's Gaze] [Dead Eye] [Spirit Affinity] [Ashborn] [Omen of Dread] [Dealer's Hand] [Bloodletting] [Shadow Movement] [Shadow] [Faceless] [Danger Sense] [Shadow Storage] [Wave Walk] [Shadow Clone] [Blitz] [Flash Step] [Air Walk] [Appraisal] [Iron Bones] [Astral Projection] [Accel] [Terror Engine] [Vengeance] [Soul Tongue] [Eyes of Veracity] [Shadow Stride] [Soul Conduit] [Heart of Shadow] [Demon Dominate] [Shadow Seizer]

[Mastery:]

[Etiquette Lv3] [Swordsmanship Lv7] [Survival Lv10] [Persuasion Lv2] [Deception Lv3] [Bartering Lv2] [Theft Lv3] [Archery Lv5] [Trap Lv5] [Alchemy Lv1] [Dagger Arts Lv5] [Cooking Lv2] [Basic Magic Lv5] [Mana Control Lv7] [Magic Gatling Lv5] [Pain Resistance Lv6] [Mental Contamination Resistance Lv5] [Disintegration Resistance Lv3] [Sniper Lv5] [Rune Magic Lv3] [Insanity Lv4] [Fate Manipulation Resistance Lv2] [Ravenous Lv Max] [Poison Resistance Lv6] [Elemental Resistance Lv3] [Petrification Resistance Lv5] [Magic Resistance Lv5] [Curse Resistance Lv2] [Pressure Resistance Lv2] [Corruption Resistance Lv5] [Aura Farming Lv4] [Charisma Lv9] [Tyranny Lv3] [Ragebaiting Lv5] [Shadow Manipulation Lv1]

[Items:]

[Pale Crown Armor] [Broken Bonds] [Deep Quiver] [Silver Blades] [Staff of Carnage] [Sword of Nicolas] [Furnace of Frost] [Helm of Balero] [Womb of Healing] [Charms] [Potions] [Miscellaneous Items]

[Quest:]

[Path to Conflict] [Nightmare of Lazarak]

His mana was still too low. He tried to recover as much as he could, but without ambient mana it was a little too hard. He had already completely refined his third class body.

As for his opponent, he had a feeling this was the most powerful person in the fourth class in this world.

He had rich battle experience. He would be a dire opponent to face.

"You would face me. I commend your bravery," the High Prophet intoned as he took a battle stance.

Damon nodded slowly.

"Very well then."

He took out a coin.

"Let's fight honorably. We start when the coin hits the ground."

The High Prophet nodded.

As Damon tossed the coin high into the air, his eyes subconsciously followed it. In that split second, Damon unleashed a blast of Ashborn flames, a deafening explosion erupting.

He followed the same motion by unleashing a pillar of ice with Ice Dominate.

[5x] activated, his speed surged as he maximized the damage he could deal in such little time.

He slashed down with Dealer's Hand, wrapping the blade in flames.

"Midnight."

He cut down with the second form of the Brightwater technique.

Blood spilled as Bloodletting activated, inducing a bleeding effect on his opponent.

But that wasn't it. His sword stopped. Despite how fast his attacks were, he had been thwarted from landing anything fatal.

The High Prophet had resisted and blocked, allowing only minimal damage.

His face twisted with rage.

"You are dishonorable. Do you not have a warrior's backbone or pride?"

Damon tilted his head.

"Pride? What's pride. I pride myself on having no pride."

The High Prophet grew irritated. Never in his life had he seen such a shameless, dishonorable warrior.

"Fine. Be it that way. You will die a coward's death."

The chains around his body moved as he drew his twin blades. Each was connected by glowing chains, bright red like blood, or perhaps like a setting summer sun.

The moment his enemy moved, Damon blocked with his broken blade. Sparks flew everywhere, the dark chamber lighting up as the hanging chains rattled violently.

Damon was not an even match for him in raw physical strength and was sent flying. However, using his parkour skills, he landed on the edge of a pillar and kicked off, cracking it and destroying its foundation with a sonic boom.

He flipped in the air and unleashed several slashes of sword energy.

His opponent ducked, his own sword flying as the chains glowed deep crimson.

Damon barely dodged as it changed direction, grazing him despite his speed.

His armor dented. Blood sprayed from his wound.

He gritted his teeth, stepping on the air with Air Walk as he unleashed both flames and a pillar of ice.

Normally, he would not have risked using any Domination abilities. But there was no one here but him and his enemy.

There was no need to hold back.

He would fight with everything he had against this powerful foe.

And he would kill him.

Then he would advance further into the tower and find the elixir of pseudo immortality.

Everything he had worked for was right in front of him. So close.

There was only one obstacle left.

This man.

"And he would soon be a dead one."

"Is this your skill, Damon," the man remarked, "or a magic spell."

The High Prophet scoffed.

As he chased Damon through the air, shattering pillars, the interior of the tower began to collapse from the force of their battle, chains rattling wildly.

"You think I'd tell you that. Trying to get information from your opponent is basic tactics."

Damon melted into shadow just before the sword nicked his face, a thin trail of blood appearing as he reappeared at the opposite end of the room.

"Fine then. Be that way. However, I want to know where the elixir is. It would be a bother if I kill you and gain nothing from it."

The echoing voice made the High Prophet pause slightly. Then he chuckled.

"Ahhh. How arrogant. Or maybe delusional. So what, you're saying you're holding back?"

Damon nodded slowly.

"Neither of us has gone all out. You're still holding back too, aren't you."

The High Prophet paused, then nodded.

"Fine. Now I'm interested."

He pointed in a direction.

"If you go that way, you'll reach the chamber with the elixir and avoid all the dangerous traps we've set. But you'll have to get past me."

Damon nodded.

Shadows rose, covering his entire body as his shadow armor spiked outward.

"Good. Now you die."

An entity of pure shadow stood where the young man had been.

But then it dissolved, his Ravenous transformation failed.

Damon's eyes widened as the man smiled.

"I forbid that ability within this room"

Chapter 880: Rules Of The Room

Unfair advantage, well there was no concept of fair or unfair on a battlefield. All that mattered was who lived and who died. That was a fact.

Damon felt his shadow hunger grow to ninety percent, but he didn't go ravenous.

It was as if there was a law that stated he could not go ravenous.

And sure enough, he couldn't. His eyes widened silently as he ducked out of the way of one of the High Prophet's chained blades.

The High Prophet smiled, seeing Damon's expression falter as he slid behind a pillar.

Damon gritted his teeth, a cold expression on his face. He released his Dealer's Hand and let the broken sword float in front of him. Reaching into his shadow storage, he pulled out the sword Broken Bonds. This sword had the ability of Disintegration and was one of his spoils in Lysithara.

"Not going to say that was a cheap ability," the High Prophet asked in a chilling voice.

Damon shook his head.

"No. Why would I. Using every means necessary to win is fine, even if it is borrowed power."

He glanced at the rattling chains, knowing a frontal battle would not be ideal anymore.

His words must have touched a nerve because the High Prophet's face scrunched up in mild irritation.

"This power you're using is part of Seraph Null's domain, but you're not accessing it directly, are you. So how do you do it."

Damon dived into the shadows and took out his bow and arrow, pulling back as he sniped at the High Prophet.

The arrow fell past him as he dashed toward Damon, slicing the pillar and walls together.

However, Damon teleported out of the way and into the shadows again.

"Come out and face me you coward. Why are you running," he screamed, enraged by Damon's evasive tactics.

Damon walked through the shadows, cautious as a mouse.

"I'm not running. I'm right here."

"Fine. Hide in the shadows all you want."

He pointed his blades at Damon's direction.

"I hereby forbid all shadows in this room."

When he said that, all the shadows recoiled and disappeared, leaving the room bright and fully illuminated, with Damon standing between two pillars, his bow drawn.

He looked at the High Prophet who was staring at him, then at his bow.

"It's not what it looks like."

Before Damon could finish his statement, he swung his swords. The blades shot toward Damon, who dived out of the way but was still caught by the chain, his arms getting wrapped around it as he was flung into a pillar.

He gritted his teeth and tried to turn into a shadow, but apparently that was also prohibited as part of his words. No shadows in the room.

Damon didn't have a shadow, and neither did he. All shadows were not allowed, which put Damon in a bind.

Most of his abilities were shadow based. He only had a few exceptions.

His head slammed into a wall as he felt the fresh breeze of the outside, rain soaked with blood and war entering the tower.

'Hmm. Wait. Don't I have another attribute.'

Yes, he couldn't use shadows, but he had something similar.

'What about darkness domination.'

Where there was darkness, there were shadows.

Damon slid out of the way of the chained blades. These weapons were annoying. They were close range weapons, but at long distance he could throw them, and thanks to the chains they would act as long distance weapons.

"Darkness dominate."

Damon called out as blackness speared from his arms and covered the whole room. He then raised his hand and charged forward.

"I hereby forbid darkness in this room."

As soon as he said that, Damon switched to his next attribute.

"Frost dominate."

Frost sprayed all over the room, and as soon as it did, Damon pressed his arms together.

[Magical Arsenal]

Swords made of magical energy suddenly filled the air. As soon as they appeared, Damon raised his hand and poured all his mana into them. With swift ringing sounds, they shot down at the High Prophet.

As soon as the first sword came down, he swiped his blade to stop it, but it exploded, forcing him to dodge. He ran across the walls of the tower to evade as Damon's Magical Arsenal bombarded the halls, breaking parts of the tower in a terror filled battle.

He was already not at full power, and his mana was lower than usual. However, Damon wasn't planning to win by force.

Before he could realize what was happening, the High Prophet spoke.

"I hereby bestow upon myself the ability to teleport within this room."

Damon's eyes widened as the man teleported right behind him. When he did, Damon suddenly saw all the shadows return, which distracted his ravenous ability, but before they could take effect, he was slashed from chest to stomach, his armor torn through.

He was sent through several walls, stopping at the foot of a pillar where he had been hiding before. His blood left a deep trail.

"You fought well, but you can hardly beat me. I have never lost, even with your tricks," the High Prophet said as he walked toward the blood covered Damon.

Damon chuckled, blood in his mouth, his teeth red.

"I see it now. You can prohibit or allow something within this room, but never nothing at once."

He raised his head slowly, looking at the High Prophet.

"This is a skill that allows you to use your god's authority in this room. Am I right?"

The High Prophet smiled, looking at the dead man.

"And so what. You're done for, and I didn't even need to use my domain."

Blood bubbled down from Damon's chest. His hands were weak, his body lethargic, his eyes heavy from blood loss.

"Yes. I was hoping you wouldn't use a domain. After all, I would lose. Even if your domain is a nascent one, the idea of a domain is still powerful and dependent on the person. Unlike skills, no two people can have the same experiences in life, and therefore no matter how similar, domains can't be the same. A friend told me that, by the way."

The High Prophet raised his blade.

"You're very talkative for someone who's about to die."

Damon smiled.

"Right. Have you heard of dethrone."

As soon as he said that, he activated his third class skill, Dethrone, which temporarily disabled a single one of the enemy's skills. In that split second, something rose from the shadow of the pillar, holding the sword Broken Bonds, and plunged it into the High Prophet's chest.

He raised his head as the sword that disintegrated damaged his very soul.

Damon smiled.

"Thank you, Ghost."

He stood up, covered in blood.

"Meet Ghost, my shadow. Oh, and by the way, I never planned on fighting fair."

The High Prophet coughed up blood as he died indignant.

"You wretch."