THE EXPERIMENTAL LOG OF THE CRAZY LICH

BOOK 05

Angry Squirrel

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The Experimental Log of the Crazy Lich

(疯巫妖的实验日志)

by

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(愤怒的松鼠)

Synopsis

This is a story of a crazy Lich who possesses an internal gaming system, bringing catastrophe to the entire world “Looking at the daily quests... It is the damned choose one-of-two option again. Destroy a town with a population of 30,000 people of above, reward: 10,000 evil points. Steal lollipop from 3 children, reward: 1 evil point. If neither of the quests are completed, 2 points are deducted.”

“Tsk! You think that I would be so foolish? If I really destroyed a town, a crusade of epic class Paladins would definitely come hunting me down. Then, even if I did earn my points, there wouldn’t be any life left in me to spend them. I guess I better obediently stick to being my lollipop thief.”

I am long sick of being a notorious lich. Who says that a lich cannot be a good person? I will definitely find a way to triumph over this damned system and be an upright and dignified good man.

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Chapter 401: Trade

The reign of the blood-red moon was reaching its end, soon to be replaced by the holy moon Wendiya. For the residents of Orlodiadan, this was great news.

After all, no intelligent species would wish to face off against beasts berserk under the effect of the blood moon. After the wild beasts returned to their lairs, fatigued from their frenzies, they would face the furious revenge of the hunters.

This wouldn't only be due to the grudges accumulated from the beasts attacking the intelligent species. During the full moon, hunting for meat would become incredibly difficult. Hunters would need to swiftly obtain meat for their tribes after the blood moon receded.

Orlodiadan was the name the local residents called the Dragon World. Those who understood the language of the Titans would know that this meant "Land of Hibernation." Indeed, the former official language of this world was the long-lost Titan language.

Considering that this entire dimension was created to seal away the Titan Giants, it was very possible that the earliest residents of this world were connected to the Titan Giants in some way. This world had relatively primitive and pure tribal systems and totem worship.

However, after the flying lizards became more numerous here and ascended to the throne of the apex predator, Orlodiadan became known as the Dragon World in the areas under their control. The dragon language also became the language universally accepted.

But dragon language was far too difficult to speak. Only the dragons themselves and those with Dragon Bloodlines had tongues capable of pronouncing it. Other species couldn't speak it easily. Only tribal leaders would try their best at learning the dragon

language. It would be possible to communicate with those unreasonable flying lizards if they crossed paths.

After the first days of the holy moon this year, some perceptive tribe leaders noticed that many things were secretly changing. The big lizards that always flew up above had greatly decreased in number. Those that coincidentally met with the big lizards didn't have to worry about the lizards breathing dragonbreath down upon them just for fun. They were in far more of a hurry, as if they had other frustrations on their minds.

As for the ogre and giant tribes... that's right, not only were there ogre tribes here, but they were far more advanced and intelligent than the ogre tribes in Eich. These ogres faintly sensed something summoning themselves, and the most powerful ogres gained great increases in power, while their newborns started being born with elemental talents.

Although this seemed like a good thing, these Giant Bloodline relatives had lived in this uncivilized frontier for so long, and they felt afraid. Young ogres and dragons would frequently vanish, unsettling the tribe members. The way the youngsters had blank expressions as they walked off into the distance made the others afraid from the bottoms of their hearts. Even though everything appeared calm on the surface, unease was brewing underneath. A major storm was about to arrive.

As all of Orlodiadan simmered with anxiety, the distant, relatively unknown Ghostwind Plains was worrying about a different trouble—about a group of uninvited guests.

These uninvited guests took over a vast swathe of land. The walls surrounding their residential areas were made of iron, the purity and hardness of which was on par with iron weapons that only half of all tribal leaders had access to. And these people constantly went in and out in pure iron tanks.

"Who are they? What do they want? Why are they here? Are they

going to attack us?"

All the locals of the Ghostwind Plains sought the answers to these questions.

For the Eternal Thunder tribe that originally resided here, none of these questions were important. These invaders would have to pay with their lives for intruding upon the Eternal Thunder tribe's territory.

The Eternal Thunder tribe wasn't a tribe to ponder upon such trivial questions. They were the incarnations of vicious beasts. However, when their three biggest families—the Boomwolves, Tantail Lions, and Dragonteeth families—combined themselves in an attack with another ten smaller tribal families and couldn't even break through the second layer of defensive walls, everyone knew that a new master had arrived in the Ghostwind Plains.

"They have flying giant islands! They have their own metal big lizards, really big ones, that can spit fire! They even make thunderous noises and shoot meteors!"

The locals used their own words to describe the powerful outsiders. Meanwhile, the tribal families that had participated in the failed attack were filled with panic. They could do nothing but await their doom.

That's right—doom. In their way of thinking, they attacked but lost. The angered defenders would surely execute the weak attackers and enslave the elderly, weak, female and children.

But, they waited and waited and no attacking army came for them. Instead, the iron tanks escorted a group of merchants.

Although the local tribes had a basic bartering system, such a large-scale group of merchants was something they'd never seen before. Since these outsiders had displayed their military might, the bartering they wished for became instantly successful.

What the tribe members found most inconceivable was how

"stupid" these outsider merchants were. The merchants only asked for some dirty and smelly slaves from other tribes and some useless little rocks. In exchange, the tribe members could obtain valuable metal weapons and comfortable clothes to wear. Metal weapons were rare to the point that only tribal leaders could use them, while comfortable clothes could only be crafted by talented artisans in major tribes that could afford to raise Findeek beasts, a local beast capable of producing raw cloth material.

Currently, two human merchants in a horse-drawn carriage were discussing their harvest.

"...I obtained a full cart of adamantine and mithril in exchange for a battle axe and two rolls of cloth. I almost feel bad about it. But won't this make the two of us the champion merchants for this week?"

"Not even close. Group Four has a lucky brat who obtained two Baby White Dragons in exchange for a vegetable knife and cutting board. Boss Roland personally rewarded him. Our boss has given us new orders: to obtain more combat beasts, especially Baby Dragons and SemiDragons."

In both this world and my original world, it was so profitable to trade with foreign cultures. Both sides would have contrasting views of the price of items. Naturally, both sides would end up feeling like they "incredibly profited." That particular lucky merchant felt that he profited in obtaining two White Dragons for a vegetable knife and cutting board. Meanwhile, the Baby White Dragons' original owner felt that he had swindled this outsider merchant, being able to obtain a family treasure quality weapon in exchange for two gluttonous beasts that required several more decades to mature and might not even be tamable.

"...Let's hurry and go visit the next tribe. It's said that the Fain tribe are the descendants of Frost Giants. There are even giant lolis there! Doesn't our boss love this type of thing? If we give him one, perhaps our boss will personally reward me."

"Roland is a lolicon? Where did you hear this?"

"Of course he's a lolicon! Why else would he collect so many Baby Dragons? Do you really think we can wait that many decades for these Baby Dragons to grow up and become usable? Haven't you seen that Boss Roland used his magic to turn most of these Baby Dragons into little girls that call him Daddy every day? Didn't you know that even Lady Harloys was forced to transform into a little girl in front of him before? Lady Harloys personally told me this."

From a certain standpoint, Roland's reputation was becoming stranger and stranger by the day. This was the fault of his subordinates, particularly a certain silly cat.

"Ohhh! No wonder he has such a good relationship with Her Highness Reyne and Her Highness Glina. Her Highness Glina even loves to sit on his shoulder."

"Hmph! Let me tell you some secret news. This time, Her Highness Glina didn't come with us because she's now pregnant with His Highness Roland's child. Their child will become the future leader of the People of the Mist, which is a wonderful piece of news."

"Ah, I'm from East Mist, which means it's not as good news for me. Doesn't that mean that Her Highness Reyne is losing out? Which of our countries will become the main Mist Family's country... but isn't Her Highness Glina not even an adult yet? She looks just like a little girl. Can she even give birth?"

"I know! That's why I said His Highness Roland is a lolicon. Actually, all major personages have their hobbies—I understand, I understand how it is. Right, would you like to participate in a little bet? The current bet is that Her Highness Glina will first give birth to Roland's child with odds of 1 : 0.5, and the odds that Her Highness Reyne will first give birth to Roland's child is 1 : 2."

"You understand how it is, you say? Sure, whatever you say. There's no betting on neither of them giving birth to his child?"

"Yeah, you could bet on that as well. It has odds of 1 : 7. You'll surely get rich if you win with this bet. But how could it be possible? His Highness Roland is no idiot. If he has babies with both of them, both countries will belong to him. The Mist Family will formally incorporate both East Mist and Sleuweir. These two countries can then form a new country, which will benefit us People of the Mist the most. Even an uneducated man like me knows this."

"Yep, I'm going to bet all my gold coins on this 1 : 7 bet, that neither of them will give birth to Roland's children. If you can't pay my rewards, I'm going to take my winnings from your salary until you die!"

"This voice? Ah! Your Highness Roland!?!?"

Alright then. When I heard that there was a huge amount of rare magic minerals, I personally came here to check things out. Yet the first thing I heard was all this random gossip. No wonder others were looking at me with stranger and stranger looks recently.

I let go of the young brat whose mouth I was covering. Actually, I had been eavesdropping for quite a while. I originally wanted to understand the morale of my basic soldiers, but as always, these young brats gave me a "nice surprise."

"Damned Harloys!! Damned rumors!"

I could understand that lower-level troops would always have strange impressions of their higher-ups. Gossiping about a hated boss or the boss's scandalous rumors was one of the best methods to establish a good relationship with coworkers. But the prerequisite was that you couldn't let the boss hear you...

I walked away with a dark expression, but I didn't intend to punish these two gossipers.

Although I didn't care enough to punish them, the price for them making me annoyed was that I would let them panic about

potential punishment for a few days. It felt nice, being the boss who could abuse his authority like that.

Seeing their cart filled with magical metals, I could only sigh in exclamation about other things. Meanwhile, the silly cat suddenly appeared, not caring about my foul mood.

"...Didn't you say that you intended to use force to obtain experimental subjects?"

"Do you think that using force will be quicker than this? Right, Harloys, come over here. I just obtained a precious teardrop gem. You'll definitely love it."

"...Do you really believe that I'm an idiot, dear Princess Peach? I'm actually the host of that gamble. I'll come over if you promise not to use your sword... no, don't use your hammer, either! Save me! This is cat abuse! If you come any closer, I'll transform into my loli form and start screaming! Your reputation will be completely ruined once your subordinates see this!"

"Crossdresser, main character of porn books with heavy tastes, main model of popular Princess Peach artwork, lolicon, Beifeng's friend... what reputation do I even have left with all of that being said about me! Go ahead and scream! Nobody will be coming to save you even if you scream your throat hoarse!"

"Hoarse, hoarse!"

"Hah, what a terrible joke that is..."

"Your Highness, what's the matter..."

"Your Highness, please slowly enjoy yourself. We shall be excusing ourselves right away."

Alright then, I suppose that I now needed to think of a method to bribe these two young merchants. At the very least, I couldn't allow my reputation to sink to Beifeng's level!

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"I'm truly delighted that all of you remembered to return. But can you tell me why you're so late? Even if you met with difficulties, why wasn't there even a single message?"

My "treasure-hunting team" had just returned and was standing in front of my experimental laboratory. Judging from their haggard expressions and dirt on their clothes, it seemed that they hadn't rested well in their travels.

Right when I asked why they were so late, raging fires appeared in all their eyes as they glared in unison at the seemingly innocent Dracon who stood there with a blank expression on his face.

Should I say that it was to be expected? I helplessly rubbed my forehead. Recently, I had been overworking myself late into the night. I'd already heard so many strange pieces of news, being angered so much that my heart received too much stimulation. Should I put this off until later? Why not receive this news, which would surely make me suffer, some other time?

Everyone was glaring at him, his companions about to jump over and kill him. No, someone was already unsheathing their sword. Even Beifeng was beginning to break out in a cold sweat.

Finally, he uttered one comment.

"...Everyone was too passionate."

Alright, there was no more need for clarification. Obviously, it would be something ridiculous.

However, once Diana and the others told me what happened, I learned that apart from the troubles caused by Beifeng, they really did meet with actual trouble. And some of this trouble happened to interest me.

Chapter 402: Making Others Suffer Deeply

Let's not mention Beifeng's affairs. They could only be matters that would blind you. After everyone else left, I had Beifeng stay behind as he was the only person who knew the true purpose of the mission.

The fewer the people who knew secrets, the better. Schemes would no longer be useful if they were exposed.

"The Great Stone Sculptor failed to become the next Earth Elemental God? Excellent job."

I nodded when I heard Beifeng tell me this. Making Ainslo fail to become the next Earth Elemental God was the true objective of this "treasure-hunting" team I sent to the Earth Elemental Plane.

In normal situations, it would take several tens of thousands of years for the Earth Elemental Throne to gather enough earth element on its own to repair itself. If I wanted to fix it faster, I would need to give it lots of money, resources and materials—such as the God Equipment of Earth.

"...Why does this feel like a damned Chinese MMORPG with how much money it wants me to spend? Thankfully, I'm not one of the unlucky players. I'm the power in the shadows."

I hadn't intended on caring about the Earth Elemental Throne, as it would require far too many resources to fix, and it could fix itself on its own. However, plenty of others were interested in repairing it as it was related to the solidity of the seals on the Titan Giants.

"Since others are foolish enough to foot the bill, I suppose I could participate."

All I needed to do was act as the intermediary, taking the Mage Country and Dragon World's emissaries to the Earth Elemental Plane to check out the situation. Then, as everyone stared at the destroyed Earth Elemental Throne in astonishment, not knowing

how it was destroyed, I would list a long, long list of resources I required to fix it, and then wait for these two major clients to prepare them.

As for whether or not I would take a kickback for myself... if I told you that I was perfectly clean and that I took nothing on the side, would you believe me?

Of course, in order to show that I would be there with everyone through thick and thin, I made some contributions as well. For instance, I gave out most of the Elemental Throne shards that I received previously from Beifeng, which were leftovers from Frigidwinter Earth.

However, the true reason fixing the Earth Elemental went so quickly was because with Ainslo leading the other Earth Elemental Lords, they managed to reach an accord—at least on the surface. They stopped their internal conflicts and pooled their resources together, hoping for the birth of a new Earth Elemental God.

I had no idea what conditions and promises Ainslo gave the other Lords in order to have them all support her in becoming the next Earth Elemental God. The end result was that the Lords opened up their treasure vaults and donated an uncountable amount of top-quality earth element items. The large number of top-quality earth element items helped rebuild the Earth Elemental Throne.

"Ten days ago, a gigantic earth element pillar of light started to form, and now, the earth element in all the planes is decreasing at a furious pace. The Earth Elemental Throne is about to form."

With so many factions unhesitatingly investing so many resources, the Earth Elemental Throne was successfully restored. However, this hastily reassembled version was much weaker than the previous Throne, which had eons of time to accumulate. Any Earth Elemental God that ascended using this Throne would be the weakest of the four Elemental Gods for a long, long time to come... But when considering how strong Emordilorcan was even when he

was seriously injured to the point of death, the "weakest" Elemental God, when in their home Elemental Plane, would still be on par with a powerful God.

"Since we have to have a new Earth Elemental God, it would be best for me if a stupid and weak one ascends rather than Ainslo."

Beifeng was the only one who knew this secret mission of mine. I didn't personally go to the Earth Elemental Plane in order to avoid suspicion falling upon me. If something happened, everyone else would surely make me take the blame... although I indeed deserved to take the blame. For some reason, I would repeatedly feel as if my reputation was becoming more demonic every day. Everyone kept saying "it's that demon Roland's fault."

As for why I refused to allow the Great Stone Sculptor to ascend to Godhood? She was supposed to be my ally, you ask? Although I signed various contracts with her, I learned more every day about her astonishing ambition and factional strength. As she was the Stone Mother, she was once the leader of the anti-Emordilorcan Earth Elemental Lord alliance. Many of her children were powerful Lords in their own right. Other Lords left the Earth Elemental Plane in order to escape the dangers of internal conflict, but not her. No matter how the internal conflicts turned out, she would still be the final victor.

This was also why she was, by far, the most active and aggressive Earth Elemental Lord who attacked Emordilorcan. After all, if he perished, Ainslo, who had been the second most powerful existence in the Earth Elemental Plane for tens of thousands of years, would naturally become the new Earth Elemental God.

The real reason she came to the mortal plane was to gather information on the other planes. In fact, she was even here to obtain more information on me, as I defeated Emordilorcan. This was not something she needed to know if she was simply content with staying put in the Earth Elemental Plane.

Without a doubt, her goal wasn't simple. It wasn't confined to just the Earth Elemental Plane. As for her relationship with Beifeng... ever since he discovered her ambition and true nature, this relationship became nothing more than acting on his side.

Later, I discovered that she also secretly maintained contact with the lower planes. Any so-called contracts I had with her couldn't possibly be depended upon to restrain her. If the Great Stone Sculptor really ascended to Godhood, this ambitious Stone Mother would likely become a new trouble for me.

"I don't care who it is that ascends to Godhood, as long as it's not her. Even a rock or a worm will be better for us."

The wondrous Beifeng was the only candidate who could carry out this secret mission. Judging from the current situation, not only did he accomplish this task, Ainslo didn't even notice what he did. In fact, she still treated Beifeng as her trustworthy ally.

"How did you do it? After the Earth Elemental Throne reformed itself, it should have automatically selected the most appropriate Earth Elemental Lord to become the new Earth Elemental God. How did you twist this natural law?"

The Earth Elemental Throne was a nonliving object, after all. It was the incarnation of the dimensional will. It would only select the most powerful Earth Elemental Lord to become the new Earth Elemental God. Of course, the prerequisite would be that the Lord in question was willing to become a God.

However, how would a nonliving object like the Throne possibly calculate things? My guess was that it would most likely simply find the Lord with the highest density and quality of earth element.

Beifeng Herault smiled in such a seemingly honest manner. It was difficult to guess that he had just made his lover suffer... well, one of his lovers. By the way, if one thought about how many lovers he had, Beifeng should be the mortal enemy of all men,

someone to be hunted down. Yet not a single person envied his main character type of harem status.

"...All I did was make it so that another existence was judged as the most appropriate next Earth Elemental God. For instance, by giving the God Equipment of Earth to a certain Earth Elemental Lord."

I was rather surprised about this. I had only recently learned about the God Equipment of Earth. How on earth did Beifeng obtain it? It was already quite something that his companions didn't beat him up—would they really listen to his orders and help him obtain such an item?

"...The God Equipment of Earth? Wasn't that in the Wind Elemental Plane? Oh, I get it now. Camdian!"

Beifeng nodded with a proud look on his face. He felt that he did a beautiful job this time. All he did was talk, and he accomplished something so major.

Some things didn't need to be said out loud. As Camdian was the Wind Elemental God, he would forever be natural enemies with the earth element. He wouldn't want to see a new mortal enemy even more dangerous than Emordilocan appearing. Since the secondary goal of this excursion was to obtain the God Equipment of Wind from the Earth Elemental Plane, it was only natural that he helped to retrieve the God Equipment of Earth from the Wind Elemental Plane in exchange. He would be more than happy to make Ainslo lose her opportunity.

"Basically, when the Earth Elemental Throne was reestablished, it automatically chose the Earth Elemental Lord who possessed the God Equipment of Earth, making Ainslo miss her opportunity. Right, who did you choose?"

"One of the Earth Elemental Lords with the highest amount of earth element. Not only that, he's also one of the least dangerous Lords to us."

I was surprised to hear Beifeng's words.

"Who could that be?"

"Little Sandy."

"Who's that? I don't know any Earth Elemental Lords by that name."

"Didn't you say that a worm or a rock would be fine? Your wish is my command. You've met Little Sandy before in the past. He's the one who ate the Earth Elemental Throne."

"That Sand Worm King!! You dared to do such a thing!"

Indeed, nothing could be better for me than for that Sand Worm to ascend to Godhood. Sand Worms were pure natives of the Earth Elemental Plane that typically wouldn't consider leaving their plane. They were also very low in Intelligence, making them no threat at all.

"How did you do it?"

"Little Sandy previously devoured a large amount of Earth Elemental Throne shards. I then had him swallow the God Equipment of Earth. Plus, a Sand Worm King like him has an astonishing amount of earth element to begin with. That was all part of why he was selected. If only you were there to see it. All the other Earth Elemental Lords had such looks of despair when Little Sandy suddenly popped out of the ground and the Throne selected him to be the next God."

"Nobody suspected that you meddled?"

"Of course not. I'm always careful when doing any deed. Everyone knows that Sand Worm Kings have astonishing amounts of earth element. I then told everyone about how he devoured the Earth Elemental Throne, so they all believed that he just got coincidentally lucky."

"Excellent job. If your lover Ainslo became the Earth Elemental

God, you would have benefited significantly. I'll find a chance to make up for your losses."

"No need. Little Sandy is my lover as well."

Alright then, as I stared as his brilliant, thick-skulled smile, I considered about how he had definitely achieved great things for me and did my very best to restrain my urge to shoot him into the sky with a goblin cannon.

"...Well done. Take a few days off for a vacation. I still have other missions for you afterwards. By the way, why did you all return so late with everyone blaming you if your secret mission wasn't exposed?"

"Well—uh—Little Sandy came to me for a celebration. He wanted to start a nest of his own children. I also needed to console the pitiful Ainslo, so we all had fun together, which wasted a lot of time..."

The Sand Worm King wanted his own children? They all had fun together? Alright then, it was a mistake for me to ask. It was torture for me to even imagine the scene. It would seem that the Earth Elemental Plane, one of the foundational pillars of the all planes, would perhaps become Beifeng's nest, with countless of his descendants taking over that entire world. Just imagining this made me terrified. I mentally decided to never visit the Earth Elemental Plane again.

And so I angrily shouted at him.

"...I've changed my mind! I'm going to give you a great task right now. Go to the Eternal Thunder tribe here and act as my ambassador. Yep, they all have your favorite: beastmen heads. You can play with them however you want. Just get as far away from me as possible!"

Chapter 403: Tiger God

Nobody expected for Roland's army to appear to settle down here after arriving in the Dragon World.

They built houses, planted crops and constructed tall walls more than ten meters high. Iron buildings went up everywhere, and they had even built mage towers and biology experimental laboratories. It was obvious they were here to stay.

As for their agreement with the dragons?

"We agreed to slow down the rate at which the Titan Giants' seal broke, didn't we? I've already established a new Earth Elemental God, which is helping balance the Elemental Tide in the Dragon World. Doesn't that mean I've done my job? I didn't even ask you for any payment yet. As for the next step, completely sealing the Titan Giants... do you think that they'll obediently allow us to strengthen the seal on them? At the very least, we need to have the ability to defend ourselves. Let's not even mention the Titan Giants' true bodies. Even their few incarnations running around outside can easily kill us all."

That was the excuse I intended to give the dragons' messenger. As for whether or not the dragons believed me? Who cared? This world never belonged to them in the first place. Could they really do anything about me?

Alright then, with this logic, I did sound a bit like a bastard. But sometimes bastard logic would be the most effective. When negotiating with dragons, only the most powerful would have the upper hand.

"You're thinking too much into things. The dragons won't care if you build some houses here. They could care less about the activities of short-lived species like humans. Even if there's a dragon who's bored enough to care, with how a typical dragon views time, that dragon would probably remember this matter

after a three-hundred-year nap. And..."

However, when Evelyn arrived, she told me that things were quite different from what I thought.

"...Is it really that ridiculous? And?"

"And Fourth Sister is doing her best to cover things for you. The dragons think you're working hard to balance the four elements, so why would they come looking for you? Oh, right, since you've already accomplished part of the task, you can speak up now and ask for payment."

This was a true ally. Even if I didn't say anything, she was thinking about and working for my benefits.

But one week later, a dragon still ended up descending from the sky. When I looked closer, I saw a familiar figure on the dragon's back.

"Hey there, isn't this my good old friend and classmate Kaid? What made you come over here to find me? Could it be that—"

"Haha! You still remember your task? It's exactly 'could it be that!'"

He played with his beard, enjoying playing at being an elder. His clean and puffy snow-white beard made me really want to pull on it.

"—could it be that you came all the way to another plane to return the money you owe me? You're truly such a nice person!"

"I'm not here to return your money! No, wait, I don't owe you money to begin with! Can you stop reusing this old joke! Are you not tired of it yet? Because you bring up this topic every time, all my disciples keep guessing how much money I owe you! Besides, you were clearly the one who owed me money!"

"Tsk—you actually remembered."

"Ahhh! You really did do it on purpose! Thankfully, I spent a

huge amount of money, hiring an illusion magic grandmaster to cast Memory Recovery on myself!"

"Paha! You actually did such a thing? It must have been fun to have someone else messing around in your head. I've heard that Memory Recovery is a nine-circle advanced spell that will place a tremendous burden on your body, with possible side effects, such as causing multiple personalities. Are you still the same snot-nosed brat from before? Hmm? I think I might have misremembered. You were a bedwetting brat?"

"Snot-nosed? Bedwetting? I—I—I'm going to kill you!"

From a certain standpoint, it was amusing to anger the white-bearded old man, especially since he was clearly younger than me but always loved to play at being the elder. If I didn't prank him, wouldn't I seem to be lacking liveliness, like an old artifact?

"Hmph, I'm still quite young. Go ahead and tell me, young Kaid. What are you here to talk to me about? Don't even think about asking to borrow money from me. It will only hurt relationships between friends to talk about money."

Huff Huff

Kaid's veins were bulging as he went on a rampage. He randomly swung his staff at me in a way with which he probably couldn't even kill a fly. After he finished his rampage, he could only lower his head and pant for breath, treating his mage staff as a walking staff.

"Besides, I'm clearly of the warrior job class... and pure mage like you wants to try me in physical melee combat? If you die just like this, due to a shortage of breath, I'd feel quite bad about it. Yep, I'd feel bad for about a minute."

Kaid brought out a dark green potion and gulped it down. He then rubbed his heart for quite a while before he glared at me and spoke again.

"...You bastard, you want me to die of anger that badly?! Forget it, you've always been like this. No wonder everyone always tells me not to take anything you say seriously. Let's get to the real issue now. You should know what I'm here for."

I picked my nose with my index finger and then lightly flicked the booger away...

"I don't know."

"...Do you still have some sort of grudge against me? Will you ever mature? You were the one who first told everyone that I'm a pervert who likes little girls. Why else would I tell everyone about how you proposed marriage to Amelia in public? I was telling the truth, wasn't I?"

"Hmph—you think I don't know how you described things? You clearly said that Amelia is unconscious due to receiving too much shock, and that she keeps muttering my name in her unconsciousness. Then, you said that I didn't care about her at all, that I came to the Cloud Tower only to enjoy myself. The end result was that my female students who called me 'Teacher' on the first day started looking at me like I was a pervert on the very next day. My little newfound luck with women disappeared!"

"...You really are holding a grudge against me for this. Are you a little boy? You're so old already and still enjoy pretending to be young? You're complaining to an old virgin like me about how you don't have any luck with women!? You... you... you're utterly shameless!"

Judging from the visibly palpitating veins on Kaid's forehead, if I teased him anymore, he would die of blood clotting. And so I finally started taking things a bit more seriously.

Of course I knew what he was here for. I knew it the instant I saw him arrive. The Truth Symposium probably had objections to me slacking off for such a long time. And I could also guess why they had such objections. Either Bardi reported to them about me, or

the dragons did, or the Truth Overseers with objections to me did.

Yet since my old friend was the one sent here to remind me to do my work, that meant things weren't so bad. Sending a friend to meet me was another type of political consideration.

"I get it, I'll work faster about the issue of the dragons..."

"That's not what I'm here for. I'm here because of a change in the situation related to your other job."

"My other job?"

"...You really did forget it. Your other job, the Mage Country Ambassador to the Bardi Empire. Right now, Bardi is having major problems. They lost their battles in both the east and the south. Halent lost his campaign against the remnant of the Holy Army vanguard, and the princes also lost Nightrain City to the undead. The Truth Symposium ordered me to immediately relay you this message to you, and they're requesting you to act as soon as possible after you meet with the dragons. It would be best if the dragons can come out and salvage the situation! Bardi can't be allowed to collapse just like this."

"Jinxer..."

[You're a mega jinxer. Your System is considering whether or not to give you a new customized title: "Ship destroying demon."]

"What does this have to do with ships!?"

[This title has a description attached to it: "I'm not Pele, I've supported so many ships! I believe that you can win!]

Harloys' snide comment and my System's gloating simultaneously sounded in my ears. But I didn't have the time to care about their comments as this was truly a huge problem.

I slowly paced around on a high iron platform in the experimental laboratory, a place from where I could observe all the newest developments in the laboratory. Kaid was prattled on

behind me, but I was more bothered by my own thoughts than him at the moment.

According to the secret agreement I had with Orloss, Bardi absolutely couldn't lose and shouldn't have lost to begin with. If Bardi's situation became unstable, my secret agreement with him would become worthless. My plan would also become impossible to develop.

I now had to come to Bardi's rescue. The undead were still fine, as they would lack the determination to press forth with all-out attacks as long as an Undead Emperor hadn't yet descended. The Wood Spirits would also be slowing them down from behind. Plus, the Bardi citizens had high morale and plenty of elite troops. Counterattacking and pushing the undead back might be difficult, but retreating and holding the line of defense at another location should still be possible.

As for the eastern front, with my understanding of the Holy Church, this unexpected win they obtained would sink the Holy Church into a religious fervor. Continuing their attack on the heretical Bardi Empire would be a definite. And neither Orloss nor myself even considered the possibility that Halent would lose to the remaining Holy Army vanguard.

"...Even if Halent suddenly became an idiot, his army had ten Ancient Dragons and two leaders from the Dragon World. How could he lose?"

But the fact was that he lost. Since I didn't have any specific information on that combat report, it was impossible for me to know the reason. Yet I would have to do something to save things. There was a problem, though...

"I really can't leave right now!"

"What's even more important here?"

"Look below you..."

The iron platform we were on was above a volcanic area. Under the platform was a massive skeleton. Each bone was already far larger than an ordinary giant. All we could see was a tiny portion of this skeleton. Many of my subordinates were wearing protective clothing, busy at work on this skeleton.

"What is that!!?"

"An ancient Tiger God. This is the greatest harvest we received here. This is the ancestor of the Eternal Thunder tribe that they worship. Just a single rib bone is more than thirty meters long. In its entirety, it must have been an incredible super monster. Also, from the information I obtained through certain channels, this Tiger God's true identity was probably a Titan Giant's pet from long ago. In fact, it's highly likely that it was the pet of Yins, the fourth-ranked Titan Giant. I met Yins back at Oak Town."

"...Are you digging up its skeleton? While an ancient divine beast's skeleton is indeed valuable research material, couldn't you just leave this task to your subordinates and deal with the more serious affairs that need your attention at Dragon City?"

"...Have you ever heard of an undead mage being able to pause an undead summoning experiment in the middle? I've already begun the undead summoning, so it'll be a waste of top-quality resources if I stop right now!"

"You're reviving such a creature? You're crazy!"

"Ha! Did you just learn that?"

Chapter 404: Summoning

In the ancient myths of Orlodiodan, the world was created by a group of giants who covered the skies and shook the earth. The Eternal Thunder tribe of the Ghostwind Plains, meanwhile, worshiped a colossal mythical beast.

It was said that this beast was so massive it was capable of striding across the entire Ghostwind Plains in just fifteen seconds. Its claws and fangs were so sharp that even mountains were unable to block its attacks. Whenever it roared in anger, the plains would quake.

"Let's not discuss myths anymore. The Eternal Thunder tribe's culture is primitive. They even have cave paintings and hieroglyphics. Most of their records are passed down via word of mouth. Around here, their Tiger God's authority outstrips even the Creator Goddess."

"...Of course, what their myths claim is absolutely impossible. But from our final measurements of the divine beast's bones, its original body must have been more than ten times the size of an Immemorial Dragon. Basically, its length was over one hundred meters... some of the records must be real. It would have been capable of casually swallowing a whole dragon. Such a terrifying monster."

This plain had been turned into an archaeological district. Numerous digging teams were hard at work, searching for the remaining bones. Once they were found, I would be able to reconstruct this behemoth of a monster.

What I did in all this was use the most basic soul-summoning spell, which would sense the connection between the bones. I then guided my subordinates to dig up the remaining hidden bones.

"This feels like a big jigsaw puzzle game..."

Timlad's exclamation was quite appropriate for his age, yet he was becoming more and more of an important person in my faction. Countless inconceivable technologies were developed by him. Even I didn't know just how far his scientific research had progressed. However, it was definite that he had far surpassed himself from the same time in the game's history.

"Ha, if this is a jigsaw puzzle, this sharp bone must be a rib bone. Even the rib bone is so much taller than me. How frightening."

"...Honored mage, this isn't a rib bone. It's the little finger's fingernail."

"What?"

The one making a ruckus was the old child, Kaid. The dragon who brought him had left him behind without caring about how he would return, so Kaid stayed here and refused to leave.

"So... when it stands up, it's basically a moving mountain? Nothing could possibly block a single attack from it. If even the battle pet is so tremendous, just how large is its master, the Titan Giant?"

"...I know. If it's at all possible, I don't want to fight the Titan Giants head on."

Even though the elements were becoming more balanced and the seal was decaying at a much slower rate, the Titan Giants' return was inevitable. Their incarnations were already capable of cavorting around in the mortal plane, so naturally they would wreak havoc in Dragon World. Anyone who tried to prevent them from breaking free would become their mortal enemy.

As for transforming this giant beast into an undead? On one hand, it would help us to better understand the Titan Giants' true strength. On the other hand, it was an irresistible top-level material that no undead mage would be able to resist.

"As long as I can reanimate it, even if it's only a skeleton soldier

that doesn't know anything apart from basic attacks, it'll still be an almost undefeatable existence. Yins... just how ridiculous is he?"

Normally speaking, a creature's power was proportional to its body size. And its body size would naturally be related to the conditions of the creature's environment and world. Nature was cruel and would forever eliminate those unable to adapt.

This sounded rather confusing? Let me just jump straight to the conclusion, then. Under the same conditions of oxygen, gravity, temperature and so on, most creatures wouldn't have significant differences in how they worked. Lions, tigers and elephants were in a way quite similar in their own right.

Living creatures had necessary conditions for their existence. In the world of Eich, an environment rich in magic would be required for gigantic creatures to exist. If the environment drastically changed, such creatures would no longer be able to survive. Basically, even if I raised a giant war beast, its heart and internal organs wouldn't be able to adjust to the current low magic environment. It would likely have a very short lifespan as its heart would give out without the support of sufficient magic.

There were some that seemed like exceptions, such as the giants and the dragons. But they followed the rules as well, as they originated from the immemorial, great immemorial, or even older generations. And they were capable of existing mostly because they weren't pure beasts—they were magical beasts capable of using the power of the elements.

There were plenty more examples in the planes connected to Eich. Deep sea Megaink Octopi, the Giant Sand Worms in the Earth Elemental Plane, the half-elemental creature Skyworld Whale and so on. However, the fact they were able to grow so large was largely related to their physical structures and environments they lived in.

These ancient existences were typically accoladed as having Gold

or Diamond Bloodlines. They were naturally born with the ability to use magic. Their very bloodlines contained magical mysteries, allowing them to instinctively use their natural talent. This was something other species couldn't match no matter how hard they worked.

However, such benefits were a double-edged sword. Powerful magical existences were accustomed to living in a high Elemental Tide environment. Now that it was a low magic generation, they found it incredibly discomforting. Just like how humans would get drowsy when they had low blood sugar, dragons would become drowsy with an insufficient concentration of magic in their blood. Only the most ancient existences knew that back in the immemorial generation, dragons didn't have this habit of sleeping for several decades or centuries.

As the magic in dragons' blood decreased, it also became more and more difficult for them to reproduce. The more powerful a creature was, the more difficult it became for it to reproduce.

As for angels... angels here weren't exactly the same as angels in legends from my previous world. Instead, these angels were the first-generation creatures of Order. Since they were the purest creatures of Order, they had even higher requirements of the environment they lived in. The end result was that the entire angel species disappeared from the mortal plane. Of course, it was highly likely that the angels would return once the Elemental Tide sufficiently increased.

However, this divine beast ex-Tiger God before me broke the fundamental rule of environmental requirements.

First of all, this creature was an individual, not a species. Not only that, judging from its physical structure, it was no different from the current day Eternal Thunder tribe at all except for scale. Its feet had hooks on it to help it climb trees, and its right arm had wear and tear normal for a long-term sword user. Considering that even in the immemorial generation there would likely be no

ridiculously tall trees that it would need to climb, a frightening conclusion was now in front of me.

"Perhaps this mountainous 'Tiger God' was just an ordinary Eternal Thunder tribe member in the past. Yins forcefully twisted its basic physical structure to make it so tremendously huge... Have we learned why this creature died?"

"None of its bones have obvious injuries. Nor has the quality of its bones seemed to decrease. When considering the Eternal Thunder tribe's legends... the most likely possibility is that it starved to death."

I furrowed my eyebrows upon hearing this. This sounded rather strange, but upon closer analysis, it was plausible.

A gigantic body would require a massive amount of energy to sustain itself. Once this battle pet lost its master and its subordinates, its hunting and survival instincts would be insufficient to keep up with its energy needs. All the prey it worked so hard to catch wouldn't even be enough to fill a crack in its teeth. Naturally, it would starve to death.

"...Making a normal warrior become a mountainous magical monster. This is the true power of a Titan Giant?"

Back in Oak Town, I had witnessed Yins the Fourth Titan's ability to tame beasts. A normal albino lion instantly became a SemiGod divine beast. And if Yins was freed from his seal, his true power would be even more ridiculous.

Of course, I didn't believe that it would be so easy to create such warriors. Otherwise, the legends wouldn't be about "The strongest warrior under the creator Titans." If it was that easy, the legend would be about "warriors," plural, with an 's.'

"Is there enough mana stored in the magic batteries?"

"...Plenty. The Elemental Tide's density here is high. The energy batteries are operating at full efficiency. Plus, the mages are

injecting their own mana into the batteries, so the mana recovery rate is higher than the rate of usage."

A good horse would need a good saddle. An undead mage's undead summoning had its limits. With my current level of mana, reviving such a level of monster would suck me dry into a zombie.

But I previously had mage towers constructed here. If I used a mage tower to amplify my magic, I could use the mage tower's stored mana to pay the mana cost in my stead. Of course, a typical undead mage would instead use a Soul-Summoning Tower, but normal mage towers' magic amplification properties and mana replenishment worked for me as well.

Summoning a bone dragon required one to be at a Legend lich's level. In theory, my Gold rank mana reserves wouldn't be capable of summoning even a single normal skeleton. Even with a mage tower supporting me, it wouldn't be anywhere close to enough. But I was someone who once reached the peak, so I knew how to take shortcuts.

"I can't afford the full payment? I'll pay in installments then."

I wasn't giving Kaid an excuse when I said I couldn't leave. Currently, I, the mage tower and this tremendous beast's skeleton were invisibly connected. At every moment, my attention was in high tension. My magic and my mind were magnified by the mage tower as I utilized its mana and continuously summoned this skeleton as an undead.

Normally, an undead mage summoning an undead creature would require a mental connection and a one-time payment of mana. It would either succeed or fail. However, I changed this process to a continuous state, so that the one-time payment became installment payments where I paid mana every second.

Every single second, I was being bothered by a constant headache from the mental burden. It made me want to go to sleep, but I knew that the moment I went to sleep, not only would this

summoning fail, but I would also take the backlash of this spell's failure. This particular undead summoning was on the scale of a forbidden spell. If I took the full magical backlash of its failure, I would instantly die.

"As expected, the mental burden of casting such a spell makes me want to go to sleep..."

"This has nothing to do with the mental burden of casting this spell. Your soul has been repeatedly strengthened by reincarnating so many times. By now, you're at the level where you can ignore the side effects of reincarnation. You're almost fully immune to all mental magics. This tiny amount of magical burden couldn't possibly affect you. Any ordinary undead mage would be on the verge of their soul collapsing after casting a forbidden spell for so long, yet you're still so lively. That's the best evidence that you're still far from reaching your limits."

As the silly cat had the title of 'All-knowing,' her conclusions were typically no different from the truth. However, I still felt that things were strange.

"Then why do I feel so uncomfortable all over, with my head splitting apart? Why do I only want to sleep—"

"You idiot, that's because you haven't slept at all. This is a normal physiological reaction! Any normal person who doesn't sleep for four consecutive days and nights will be no different from being on the verge of death. The fact that you only have a headache and want to sleep means that your physical body far surpasses an ordinary human's."

"...Oh, I see."

Alright, I suppose it was true that going for too long without sleep would affect one's intelligence. Even though I tried to intentionally act dumb with my response, I was indeed accidentally quite foolish.

"How many more days will this take?"

"...With the current progress of the digging and your spellcasting, it should take another three days. Keep going at it. Haven't you noticed that your magic power is increasing? Good luck."

Using one's magic to the utmost limit would place a burden on both the soul and physical body. But keeping this state constantly without dying would be helpful in improving one's magic powers. However, since this was far too dangerous, no ordinary person would risk their life and attempt such a thing.

"So you're saying I'm constantly in a state of using my magic to its limit?"

"Yes, and you're simultaneously in a constant state of casting magic."

Without a doubt, this was both a trial and an opportunity. I had a mage tower supplying me with tremendous resources, my past experiences about the soul and being at the peak of power, and a large number of mages all injecting their mana for me into the mana reserves. Without any of the above, this experiment would have long since failed. Since I had now reached this point, abandoning it seemed like far too much of a pity.

"...As long as you complete this spell, at least your magic power will increase to the next power level."

"So my magic power will be at the level of Legends? Alright, I'll keep going. Still, I'm a little bored. How about singing a little song for me, Harloys?"

"Meow... Meow meow meow meow... The kitty song! Did you like it?"

Harloys had closed her eyes and was waving her paw cutely, intentionally meowing in an adorable and soft manner. While she acted cute on the surface despite being more than ten thousand years old inside, I was busy recording this scene with a memory

crystal.

"Hehe! I'm going to show this to all our old friends. Everyone shall learn about how the Banshee Queen forgot her past after turning into a cat. What will you pay me for this memory crystal? Hey, why are you biting me!?"

"Roland, you bastard!"

Chapter 405: Hectic Times

"'News in Eich, First Edition'? What!? This magazine wasn't made by the fairies?"

"It's a new magazine published together by San Antonio, the Mage Country and several other major countries. It's having astonishing sales success in all the countries. Whoever controls the information has power. Nobody is an idiot about this."

This morning, a Blue Dragon flew into my campground and tossed down a gift bag including an invitation letter and this magazine.

Although this magazine didn't have color printing, its paper was of good quality and its vocabulary well chosen. The content also had black-and-white pictures to go along with the articles.

"Let me see what news was so important that the fastest dragon species was chosen to deliver it to me."

But the moment I flipped to the first page, I immediately closed the magazine.

"Ultraman vs. tiny monsters? Isn't the style wrong?"

The headline news seemed ridiculous. Just at this moment, however, the silly cat jumped out of a corner.

"...Let me see. What Ultraman are you talking about? The headline clearly says 'The vanished Cloud Giants forgotten by mankind have returned. In the battle between Bardi and the Holy Church army, the Cloud Giants viciously taught the dragons a good lesson. Halent's army retreated after numerous losses.' Eh, Cloud Giants? There are actually still Cloud Giants in the mortal plane?"

Indeed, these glowing giants really did resemble Ultraman. The dragons being beaten into submission on the ground did seem like tiny minions destined to die in a humiliating fashion.

Cloud Giants were one of the strongest species of giants. Known as the favored children of the Titan Giants, they were the tallest of all giants and had the most extravagant and beautiful appearances. It was said that their entire species consisted of handsome men and beautiful women that wore equally beautiful clothing. They were born with the natural talent of being able to control the clouds and weather, and they were also naturally skilled at Divine Arts. However, they were most famous for their excellent talent in art and music. Many majestic palaces remained in this world that were their creations. Even now, bards sung their songs, which were considered as classics.

Also, Cloud Giants had the highest Intelligence of all giants. Their race was capable of producing mages and priests. Not only that, they were one of the few giant species that worked cooperatively with each other in teams and groups. Individually, they weren't as skilled in physical combat as Magma Giants, but Cloud Giant squadrons would be the most frightening type of giant squadron there was.

Cloud Giants hadn't appeared in the mortal plane for an incredibly long time. Legends had it that they avoided the Intelligence-lowering curse on the entire giant species by escaping from the mortal plane. It would seem that since their ancestors, the Titan Giants, summoned them back, these legendary lovers of peace and art decided to go to war for the sake of their brethren.

"If the Cloud Giants attacked, then it's easy enough to understand why Halent lost. Since the Titan Giants are able to control things from afar and understand what's going on in the outside world despite being sealed, I think I need to raise my assessment and vigilance against the Titan Giants..."

The most attention-grabbing part for me was the tiny addendum at the end.

"PS: Rumors have it that angels appeared in this battle. But according to our investigation, they were only a group of Winged

Tribe mercenaries that participated in battle. The underhanded Holy Church attempted to masquerade these Winged Tribe members as angels in order to shake the Bardi warriors' morale."

"Angels appeared?"

I asked this directly, and Kaid nodded.

"Yeah, that's what I heard, but doesn't the report say that they're actually the Winged Tribe?"

Considering the political backers of this magazine—the most powerful countries—it naturally would be biased towards royal authority rather than church authority. It certainly wouldn't print pro-church articles. Because this article said that the angels were Winged Tribe members, I felt it to be far more likely they were real angels.

The difference between Winged Tribe members and angels was like the difference between a chicken and a phoenix. Winged Tribe members were similar to flying humans, while angels were of an immemorial bloodline on par with dragons. Their difference in strength on the battlefield would be far too obvious.

Considering how normal humans in Eich considered angels as venerated personifications of extreme good, as well as God Envoys, if angels truly appeared to fight for the Holy Church, it would be a serious blow against the newly rising Church of Pure Holy Light. If angels appeared in the enemy's side, the normal Bardi warriors would definitely have their morale severely shaken, not to mention how angels were strong warriors to begin with.

In that case, if the Holy Church's vanguard army received support from both angels and Cloud Giants, it was only natural that Halent ended up losing.

"The enemies are the pure angels and the art and peace-loving Cloud Giants? While our side is filled with undead, evil dragons, Dark Elves, evil Underground creatures and greedy goblins? Why

do I feel like we're the antagonists?"

"Have you realized it only now? With Cloud Giants and angels in the enemy's side, our soldiers' morale will probably be affected."

"...It doesn't matter. A species doesn't represent justice, nor is a species an excuse to slaughter. Why should we be frustrated about these foolish outdated ways of thinking?"

I wasn't worried about our side's morale. I was more worried because the great majority of angels were direct subordinates to various Order True Gods. Since these angels were participating in a mortals' battle, this most likely meant that some True God had decided to intervene. And with my understanding of the fervent believers in the Holy Church...

"When they believe that they have their Gods' favor, they'll think that their every action represents divine will. Even the most evil of actions will be whitewashed to become holy. Corruption and viciousness will become a God's mercy. Rather than trusting in a fervent believer's sense of logic and reason, you might as well believe that a bloodthirsty villain can actually reform."

"Talk like a normal human."

"There will be a major slaughter and cleansing. Then, they'll be filled with confidence as they prepare to bring the fight all the way to the Bardi capital. They'll be receiving an endless amount of reinforcements and will force all the other countries to join their Holy Army. They'll escalate this small-scale war directly into an Armageddon-level war. I fully believe that they're capable of doing this."

"...You're suddenly being so direct; I'm not even used to this. But the more I think about it, the more I agree. This is definitely the Holy Church that I know. If they think that victory will absolutely be theirs, they'll use the name of Holy Light to summon all the Holy Light believing countries to participate in this war. This conflict will escalate into a world war."

Harloys didn't say some other things out loud, but both of us knew what the other was thinking. Bardi was a mega-empire with an astonishing amount of accumulated wealth and resources. Since it was now showing weakness on both fronts, the ravenous wolves saw an opportunity to "act in the name of justice." How could these predators possibly miss this chance?

I pondered many things as I put down this magazine. At this time in the game's history, the world had entered the "Vultures of War" expansion pack. The elves and the beastmen began a war, and the major countries joined in and fought each other for their own ambitions. I originally thought that I avoided this worst outcome but never expected that "history" was so hard to control. It somehow mysteriously returned to the starting point.

"...No, the situation has still changed. Bardi in history was already destroyed at this point. No matter how things develop, things can't be as bad as the game's history. Besides, it's still only at local battles right now. It might not escalate to world war. As long as I can act in time..."

I opened up the magazine again, intending to see what else had happened.

Plop!

But after taking just one look, I dropped the magazine on the ground. After flipping past the front-page news of Bardi's lost battle, I saw an even more frustrating piece of news.

"San Antonio has declared war against the Fusi Empire and Seven Dukedom. Knights from both sides fought on the Brightbear Plains in the Seven Dukedom, with San Antonio emerging victorious."

I had a grim expression as I picked the magazine up yet again and continued flipping through the pages. What I saw next only frustrated me even more.

"The Suolo Alliance is requesting that the Kasolan Kingdom give

back the stolen national treasure Sea God's Seal. General Ben forcefully stated that if the Kasolan Kingdom continues remaining silent on this matter, the Suolo Alliance will consider starting a war to take back the national treasure that rightfully belongs to them."

"...New Sea Tribe species and sea monsters have appeared on Auland's borders. The Queen of Storms' priests and shamans have entered the battle along with organized Sea Giant squadrons. The war between Auland and the Sea Tribe has escalated even further."

"...The Heen Elf Kingdom has announced that they will now be known as the Saint Heen Empire. Their Moonlight Elf Queen Afina has announced herself to be the new Elven Empress. She has requested the other Elven Kingdoms to subordinate themselves to her. Sixteen Elven Kingdoms pledged alliance to her, while twenty-three other Elven Kingdoms declared war against her. The Elves' internal war has begun... Silly cat, don't tear this magazine! How am I supposed to read it if you tear it up?"

Pitch-black magical waves roiled on the silly cat, and a shrieking banshee projection was forming on her black cat body. This was the first time I had ever seen Harloys angered to such an extent. It was obvious that she was truly furious.

I wisely ignored Harloys, who had all her cat hairs standing up on end. From a certain standpoint, the revival of the Elven Empire might be meaningful to ordinary elves. But as Harloys was the final Gold Elf, she would view this as the betrayers putting on a crown that should have rightfully been hers. This was a deep-seated enmity that could only end in one side's death.

I continued to see similar pieces of news as I flipped through the magazine. Some of it seemed unimportant, but I felt they were truly troublesome upon closer analysis.

"A Giant Worm species has been spotted around the North Sea. These Giant Worms have taken over the local underground ruins

and have incredible combat strength and are highly resistant to magic. It's suspected that they're a species from the immemorial generation."

"Many Great Demons have appeared in the Orcephalon District of San Antonio. There are many subspecies of these Great Demons, including Forest Demons, Snow Demons, and Cliff Demons. San Antonio has warned local residents to be on guard as they organize an anti-demon hunting team."

So many troublesome issues happened all at once. This seemed coincidental, but it was actually something definite. Now that the Holy War had begun, those who had hid their ambitions for thousands of years could act without restraints. Now that winter was over, the new spring was the perfect time to put into action these long prepared plans. These well-prepared ambitious schemers finally reached out their hands, making the world of Eich become quite hectic.

I closed the magazine and glanced over at the silly cat who was viciously glaring at the magazine, her banshee shadow furiously shrieking in anger. I shook my head at this scene. While it may seem like she no longer cared so much about the past, it was still a sore spot deep inside her that nobody could tread upon. And if anyone dared to touch my Northlands, I would probably react the same way, as if I were an injured beast with my hair standing up on end, hissing at all my enemies.

For Harloys, perhaps the deepest scar in her heart was about the Elven Crown that belonged to the Gold Elves. This inheritance passed down from so many generations and through so many rulers was lost by her.

The pain from losing one's country? The pain from being betrayed by those she trusted the most? The feeling of helplessness from watching everything still head towards Armageddon? Perhaps it was that I could empathize with her due to my memories of the Mist Kingdom, or perhaps I simply didn't want to

see anyone bully my pet cat. As I looked at Harloys, who had fallen silent, I felt a sense of pity for her and didn't like seeing her like this, which was why I made her a promise.

"Rest reassured. As long as I'm around, I won't allow anyone else to comfortably wear the Elven Crown that rightfully belongs to the Gold Elves."

Chapter 406: A Gift from the Past

As someone who had traveled to many places, I'd trodden across the most distant of lands. During my travels, I loved seeing the sights, but I obtained much knowledge and benefits during these voyages. Perhaps this was the reason for the "Treader" word in my Ice Treader Soul Imprint.

The frozen tundra was immaculate, nothing more than an unending stretch of pure snow white. Amid this vastness stood a colossal snowy mountain that pierced the clouds, a place where even breathing was difficult. It was a forbidden zone that lacked both color and life, a location with nothing else, but it was there I learned how to let go of myself.

No, I wasn't talking about something as glorious as emptying my mind in meditation. I was talking about abandonment and self-exile. Within that land of snow, where it was nigh impossible to tell the earth and sky apart, I abandoned myself. I left myself, sending my soul through tribulations, surrounded by this frigid, hostile climate. I dreamed, but at the same time, I was at the border of death.

"...Why is this world so harsh? I just want to live a good life—is that too much to ask? Why is it so difficult to just live life? Why do brave warriors who sacrifice everything still lose their families and homes and even have their names tarnished after death? Are there really no fairy tales in real life? Are all good people supposed to go to Hell? Is all of this my fault, my guilt? If I'm the one in the wrong, why not punish me alone? Why do so many good people have to enter Hell together with me?"

Past memories flashed repeatedly in my mind. Faces I missed, felt regret towards or apologetic to wouldn't let me go. Vicious slander wouldn't leave my ears.

"It's all your fault. If it wasn't for an arrogant, ridiculous

transmigrator like you, how would our country possibly perish?"

"The Twin Stars of Misfortune? No—no—no—the only misfortune is you, the outsider who took over our prince's body. It's all your fault, you jinxer! You caused our people to be slaughtered!"

"It's all your fault! Why are you the only person who survived? Why aren't you coming down to Hell to join us...?"

The faces, which had been warm and friendly in the past, were twisted ugly by hatred and anger. They would appear in my dreams, their intimate greetings now curses and vile words, left for me before I woke up every morning.

"That's right! Why am I still alive? Gods, why am I the only one still alive! I want to die! Let me die!"

It's unknown how I managed to make it through those nightmarish days. I had no clear concept of memory and time. If I looked back on the past now, I would see memories in tatters. All I could remember was the snow white and coldness.

It was possible I didn't even make it through. Perhaps I had sunk into utter insanity. Maybe my mere bit of good luck and coincidence helped pull me back from endless madness.

Maybe I was half-sane and half-insane. When I was insane, I would curse the unfairness of the world. When I was sane, I would curse my weakness and helplessness. Reality and dreams blended together in a confusion concoction, somehow combining my logical thinking and distorted insanity. Perhaps this was the most logical explanation for why my memories from that time were in such shreds.

But no matter what, I made it past all that. I managed to regain my sanity despite being at the brink. My restored logic and reason told me that all these people trusted me and adamantly protected my flag even while dying. How could they possibly regret believing

in me and my choices?

"A knight's heart is like an iron castle, pure and untainted. I actually felt that they'd regret following me? That's the greatest possible insult to them. I truly am unqualified to be a ruler. Even now, I'm still doubting loyalty and trust..."

Even though I regained my sanity, I chose to live alone in that icy location. I faced myself and my true feelings amid the calm and the peace, slowly putting my soul and memories through tribulations, considering my past failures over fiery passionate nights.

"If only I could have schemed better, been more sly, been more shameless, been more vicious... perhaps I wouldn't have failed..."

I was someone who used to love lively crowds, but I slowly fell in love with the icy, cold quiet in that swathe of snow. That was because I learned that when at a brink, passionate emotions and glorious causes became meaningless. Only with calm and swift thinking under pressure could one save oneself. I desired to freeze my emotions there.

"If a wish of mine could come true, I'd wish to leave behind my anger in this mountain. I shall never lose control of myself that way. I shall never make decisions in a fit of anger and regret them for the rest of my life. What passion? What anger? They're meaningless. Acting like a hot-blooded youth will bring me nothing but pain and misery. I spit upon anger, I curse being passionate. I wish to become a cold observer; forever steadfast, immovable, aloof."

Thenceforth I had no real anger. Instead, two soul shards appeared on my neck; they were my anger and passion. I became a solitary traveler on that icy mountain; a lone treader amidst the ice. I etched the scene onto my very soul, entering the realm of Legends yet again and establishing a foundation to reach the peak of power.

Perhaps I truly did accomplish what I had desired, becoming

someone who could watch the arrival of Armageddon coldly and dispassionately, forever making rational decisions with utter calmness. Or perhaps I was someone insane, who crippled himself by cutting off his own soul shards, a crazy person who only believed that he had calmed down.

But no matter what, I didn't regret it. That was my past. Those were decisions I made for myself. This guilt was something I needed to bear forever...

"I shall never regret—"

A powerful light flashed through my eyes as tears—real tears—streamed down my cheeks. My pillowside was drenched wet.

"It's this dream again?"

I gazed out the window and saw a sun and moon hanging high in the sky of the Dragon World. From their positions, it was dawn.

"Do you often have this dream?"

A golden-haired young elf was perched atop my pillow. Her silky, shiny hair covered the entire bed, and the indentations on the bed showed that she had used the laps of her white, tender legs as a pillow for me.

Her tone—ever sarcastic and arrogant—was a rare one of worry and care, while her red little face was tinged with a shy blush.

I shook my head, shaking away such useless emotions, flicking away the liquid of weakness on my face to the corner. With a shake of my head I opened my eyes, and the energetic and youthful Roland returned!

"No, as they're things I've already forgotten. But for some reason I keep having this dream this week... By the way, who are you supposed to be? How did you get in? Are you trying to ruin my reputation? I've already said that I'm not a lolicon—I'm a magnificent maid lover!"

Alright then. The worry on her little face instantly transformed into anger. She ground her teeth and pounced on me...

"Don't bite me! Ah! This feeling? You're Harloys? Ehh—aren't you supposed to be a cat?"

This was best evidence of the fact that when a person wakes up, their mind will be foggy and their memories unclear. However, not recognizing certain people at critical times could prove to be a very fatal mistake...

"Ohhh—now I remember! I'm so sorry, Harloys! I was in a bit of a daze after just waking up. Stop biting me! I'm bleeding, I'm bleeding, I'm really bleeding!"

I finally managed to remove the fake loli from my head, but this was only after promising her many things. I then put some medicine on my head.

"...These memory dreams means your soul is telling you to hurry and recreate your Soul Imprint."

That was Harloys's confident conclusion when I asked her the meaning of my dream.

"That's probably true. Those memories are from when I was creating my Ice Treader Soul Imprint. Such a pity—I probably had a grand death in that life because, out of all my lives, I lost the most memories from that one. Anyhow, does this mean I'll have such dreams when creating my Soul Imprint? I don't think such a thing has happened to me before in the past."

"Of course, you idiot. Before, you were creating brand-new Soul Imprints. A Soul Imprint is an accumulation of one's life experiences, but now you're restoring a past Soul Imprint. You'll need to face your past self, including your past tragedies."

"My past self? I really do have such a tragic past. No wonder I forgot about it... Wait a moment, how did you know that they were past tragic memories? You dared to peek at my dreams!? You used

magic to spy on my dreams?!"

"...Heehee! You should know that cats are curious creatures."

The next moment, the golden-haired loli transformed into her silly cat form and even pretended to act cute by licking her paw. Harloys was becoming more skilled every day at fooling others by acting cute.

However, I squeezed out a comment through my teeth.

"Cats are curious creatures? Yes, I should teach you the saying: 'curiosity killed the cat!'"

Although we had been in the Dragon World for less than a month, many of our warriors had made breakthroughs. Many of them had been at bottlenecks with their power levels, so they naturally broke through after staying for a while in this high Elemental Tide environment.

These breakthroughs couldn't be underestimated. In the human world, ordinary humans working hard for their entire lives, even with excellent teachers and resources, could only reach the peak of Silver. That was why those at the Gold rank would be revered and addressed as grandmasters.

If all these humans stuck at the obstacle of Silver to Gold entered Gold so easily, transforming their bottlenecks into true strength, their overall combat strength would soar by more than three times.

From the rank of Gold to Legend was more of an understanding and accumulation of one's life experiences. While there were preset paths to Gold, everyone would have to find their own to Legend. Many would work hard for their entire lives but fail to reach this rank, missing only a tiny bit.

However, there were some with sufficient self-understanding to reach Legend but were unable to progress in power level due to injuries, elderly age or stress. Actually, this was fairly common.

Human lives were short. Young people were energetic and didn't know what worry was. It was far more common that only when people were old and on the verge of death or suffered a huge setback that they'd have a better self-understanding of themselves capable of allowing them to progress to Legend. But it would be too late as their body would no longer be capable of handling the burden.

Yet these older and injured mercenaries and warriors mysteriously found their injuries recovering and lifespans lengthening in this high Elemental Tide environment, allowing them to pass this obstacle.

Simply living in this environment allowed the younger warriors to receive tremendous benefits and the older warriors to restart their progress. Naturally, they became even more confident in my cause.

Of course, in a few more decades, everyone in the mortal plane's world would be enjoying a high Elemental Tide. Our enemies would become even more difficult to deal with.

However, as everyone celebrated their power level improvements, I was actually the one who benefited the most.

The seven-day soul summoning spell had finished. The tremendous effort required meant that I fell asleep instantly right afterwards. It also forcefully raised my magic power level to the Legend rank. As for the issue of creating a Soul Imprint, which could make other people spend a lifetime, it was never an issue for me. In fact, my soul was forcing me to recreate my Soul Imprint as soon as possible, forcing me to face myself.

"How difficult. Although I need to reach Legend and then Saint rank as part of my 'grand scheme,' I really don't want to have this dream again."

"Then you can try recreating some of the other Soul Imprints first. But none of them have any pleasant dreams for you."

My expression instantly became rather strange as I thought about what memories my other Soul Imprints represented. Then, I viciously glared at the innocent-seeming silly cat.

"You—you—you snuck looks at my other dreams? How else would you know that they're all unpleasant?"

"Hmph! Do I even need to peek? Isn't your entire life a tragedy? Since it's obviously just a tragedy, there won't be any comedy."

"Comedy? Of course there'll be comedy! The 'silly cat's hilarious making a fool of herself comedy'—Schrodinger's Cat, with excellent reviews! Guess whether this cat is dead or alive!"

Chapter 407: God Equipment Set

Even without a way to swiftly get information from the mortal plane, I pretty much knew what would happen next.

The world would never act according to the will of a single person. There were plenty of examples of those who were crushed underneath the wheels of history. If someone knew about what would happen in the future due to whatever method, they would be better off buying some stocks to make money. If they wanted to make use of their knowledge of the future to meddle in international affairs, then the butterfly effect they created would likely come back to kill them.

"Those who follow the will of heaven shall live, while those who go against heaven shall die. Forcefully going against the heavens and changing your fate? If you want to use your personal strength to change the entire world, you must first mentally prepare yourself to die several hundred times."

Even I didn't want to forcefully change the future. I only wanted to slowly accumulate things and sit on the very edge of the scale, tipping it ever so slightly, trying to act as a tiny amount of force to change the overall direction.

"Directly eliminating all my enemies? I've never even considered that. However, I can begin by weakening my enemies and increasing our combat strength, postponing when the enemies arrive in the mortal plane. I don't need to single-handedly kill off the endless amounts of demons and devils. I can instead increase the number and quality of 'heroes' saving the world, using small accumulations to emerge victorious in the end and overturn the situation."

Actually, the current developments proved that this strategy of mine was already somewhat effective.

The Justice Points system and the currently developing field of

magical engineering had both vastly improved the entire mortal plane's average combat strength and potential. When science was at this level, technology would typically evolve by two generations every ten years. This head start would give us a bigger and bigger lead as time passed.

The changes in the Underground and the Northlands gave us hope. They were all important changes that never occurred in the game's history.

And the original "leader of the human world," the Holy Church, was now shaken to its foundation. It seemed like it was only because of my personal grudge—fine, I admit it was indeed partially because of my personal grudge. But if you checked what they did in the game's history, you would find out that what was even scarier than godlike enemies and garbage teammates were garbage teammate higher-ups who felt that they were the godlike ones.

"We have a great advantage, so let's just attack them with no strategy."
"Just defend the base, defend the base, and stall until next week so your victory will be a celebration present for the Pope's birthday. Reinforcements? Your reinforcements will probably come next month! No, they're not coming to help clean up your corpses, nor are they coming to steal your achievements... But there's a Cardinal's son among them, you understand how it is... F*ck, you actually dared to hang up on my magical message? I might just declare you to be a heretic!"

"...Ally? With those heretical dark-skinned non-believers? May the Holy Light descend upon them and burn them all to death. We need more Holy Wars!"
The biggest taboo on the battlefield was to have a non-combat expert be in charge of decisions. But it just so happened to be that in the game's history, the Holy Church was at its peak of authority and possessed many God Envoys, angels and people capable of

using God's Descent, meaning that the Holy Church became the main core of the allied Order armies.

The Holy Church sent a Cardinal to every country to command the Holy War. The end result was that these new "commanders" kept saying that "we're here to pray for the warriors and spread divine favor" but were actually quite helpful in battle... Yep, helpful in battle for the enemy, at least at the beginning.

As for why they only helped the enemy in the beginning? Since this happened far too much, the major countries started giving these "commanders" nothing but empty authority. Also, as the wars progressed, the accumulated losses and calamities made even more people turn to the Holy Light for salvation, but they simultaneously started ruining the Holy Church's reputation.

The reason? The warriors forced to the brink would do anything but obey the commands of a bastard who didn't know anything about actual combat. The cruelties of battle naturally eliminated the authority of these Cardinals who didn't know anything about warfare.

Even without my Southern Sect, the Holy Church was destined to split into major factions, and it happened in the game's history. The Holy Knights and Holy Light priests would split from the Holy Church's higher-up Cardinals. Miracle Hand Estrada, the strongest Holy Knight, would lead his Holy Knights in separating from the Holy Church entirely. This was something destined to happen in history, based on objective factors of what humans needed to do. It would be impossible to stop.

Of course, it would be impossible to make up the losses if I really did allow the Holy Church to take overall command of the Order armies in the upcoming Holy War.

But now the present was far better than the current time in the game's history. With the Holy Church's current reputation, it would be difficult for them to send Cardinals as commanders to the

various countries. They would need to first deal with the Southern Sect.

Also, thanks to the Holy Church's attempt to steal credit for the victory at Oak Town, there was now a perfect excuse to refuse to allow them to take lead. When Armageddon arrived, it would likely be impossible for the Holy Church to play the role of the garbage teammate leader.

Judging from these factors, history had already changed in many ways. Yet the world's development would never happen exactly as a single individual wished. Some parts were beneficial, but there would naturally be downsides as well.

For instance, the Bardi Empire. In the game's history, the Titan Giants and Undead Emperors viciously fought each other after the Bardi Empire was destroyed, the end result being that both sides were completely wiped out. This was a miracle that would be impossible to replicate. Although the Bardi Empire was still intact, the Titan Giants and Undead Emperors were huge threats. Since it would be impossible for the Titan Giants and Undead Emperors to destroy each other, they would be huge problems for us in the future.

And now, even though the overall situation was arguably better than the game's history, what was destined to happen still happened. Chaotic war started spreading on a worldwide scale. Preventing all this would be utterly impractical. Even if I somehow managed to stop all the wars, it would be very costly and tiresome and I'd obtain no benefits whatsoever.

To use an analogy, this was like a wooden ship with countless holes in it. Even if I plugged up every single hole in the ship, new holes would appear. By the time I plugged those up as well, the entire ship would have sunk.

That was why intervening in these small-scale conflicts was meaningless. Since it was now an era of all-out war, I was prepared

to use any means necessary to obtain victory in the end. To use a phrase that might not fit the situation: "Get on me if you dare!"

Cough—I think I made a wording mistake just now. I meant to say "Come at me if you dare!" It's the fault of the silly translator.

"Are you ready?"

I shook the dust off my cape. This new article of clothing I just received wasn't cheap in the least.

I was wearing a brilliantly blue crown, which was adorned with the emblem of the moonlight. Star power gathered upon this God Equipment crown, making it glow like a small moon on my head. I was yet to completely control this God Equipment's power. When I closed my eyes, I could see its divine light—the purest power of the Moonlight Goddess.

[Patricia's Protection. High-level God Equipment crown.]

It was the Moonlight Goddess Patricia's favorite crown. Extravagantly crafted out of the essence of the moon, it would forever be covered in starlight, and its wearer would appear to have stars orbiting around them. It was indeed true that Patricia was blessed by the stars, and this crown was celebrated as the most beautiful crown in the entire world. Back in the immemorial generation, it had been the cause of multiple wars between the Moonlight Goddess and the Goddess of Beauty.

[First ability: Sealed; inactive.]

[Second ability: Sealed; inactive.]

[etc. etc.]

[Seventh ability: Star Power Summoning. Summon countless stars to crash down in an enormously destructive AOE attack with yourself as the center. Limited to one use per month.]

[System Notification: Princess Peach, wear this wonderful crown that even the Goddess of Beauty is jealous of and you'll become the

most beautiful flower at any dance. Ha, but if you activate the only currently usable ability, everyone will be watching a meteor shower together with you, and the entire Dragon City will be blown up into the skies. So you'll also be the most dangerous flower at the dance. System Notification, addendum: Considering that the Goddess of Joy, Goddess of Laughter, Goddess of Beauty and a dozen other Goddesses are still fighting against Patricia for this crown even today, you should return it to Patricia as soon as possible. Unless, that is, you want to die to a Goddess's Descent, Sora no Otoshimono, or some Goddess personally descending from the skies.]

Yes, I was wearing a God Equipment, one given to me by Patricia. Although the great majority of its abilities were sealed, the only ability which wasn't was the most dangerous one this God Equipment possessed. The moment I activated it, its power would be no different from Patricia herself personally using this God Equipment. ...I didn't know the exact strength of this Star Power Summoning, but judging from the System's comment about how the entire Dragon City would be blown up into the skies, its strength was far above that of a forbidden spell's.

But right now, I wasn't wearing only one God Equipment. I was wearing an entire set of God Equipment!

In my right hand, I held a black staff with an emblem of a snake and dragon twined together. It didn't release any magical properties, making it easy for others to ignore its presence. However, I could confidently state that it was the second most dangerous God Equipment I had on me.

[Unpredictable Fate. High-level God Equipment staff.]

It even came together with a pair of reading glasses. The God of Fate was a truly sly one who typically loved to wear a cape, put on these glasses and support himself with this staff, pretending to be a common fortune teller, scholar or nomad. He would then hide in some dark alleyways and have fun giving guidance to others. If you

listened to everything he said, you would be fine, but if you didn't... Hehehe. Do you enjoy the feeling of accidentally slurping noodles up your nose? Or tripping and breaking every bone in your body? Actually, Catio didn't even need to personally do anything. This staff would do everything for him.

[First ability: Sealed; inactive.]

[Second ability: Sealed; inactive.]

[Third ability: Fate is Watching You. Choose a target, and the target's luck will decrease. The luck this individual loses will be added to you for the next two hours. This ability ignores all magic resistance and immunities. Even other True Gods are not immune to this ability. Note: This ability can only be used once on each target for their entire lifetime. The target will become immune to this ability afterward.]

[Fourth ability: Fate is Taking Care of You. Using this ability will make you the luckiest person in the entire world for the next ten minutes. But after this effect wears off, you will become the unluckiest person in the entire world with double the effects for the next three hours.]

[System Reminder: Don't use the 'Fate is Taking Care of You' ability unless you absolutely, absolutely have to. Changing your fate will only bring misfortune.]

The third ability was easy to comprehend, but the fourth one's true effects were confusing. Plus, it was rare that my System gave me a serious warning. In order to not be blindsided by the downside if I had to use it, I found an experimental subject and had him use this ability for me... and then I immediately understood how it worked.

Cough, my experimental subject was a mercenary absolutely addicted to gambling. I honestly told him the benefits and the downsides of this staff, and he immediately agreed to use it and started gambling. In just five minutes, he won enough gold coins to

buy a palace despite the fact that he started out with only two copper coins. ...But one hour later, he stepped on a banana peel and accidentally destroyed the family treasure of a noble. Just as I was sighing at how such a classical method was used, I learned to my astonishment that the broken family treasure's value was exactly double the amount of gold coins that he won... putting the mercenary in debt for the same amount of money he just won. So it was a certain thing that whoever used this God Equipment's fourth ability would lose more than they gained. But as long as I used it carefully, it could become an ace which could overturn the situation for me in a dire battle.

"Heehee, I won't make you lose face by being your female companion."
"...Actually, I feel that you should stand a bit farther away from me. You're too tall. Am I supposed to wear high heels? Cough—I meant secret shoes."

Wearing similarly extravagant clothing was a tall and beautiful elf standing in front of me. She was taller than me by so much I had to crank my neck to see her face. Her naturally perfect body proportions didn't have a single blemish, and her form-fitting classical golden attire and snow-white skin perfectly complemented each other. Her bright, long dress gave her an elegant and extravagant appearance. Soft straps accentuated her curves, while her silky-smooth golden hair cascaded down behind her, glowing like the sun: a specialty of Gold Elves.

Harloys raised her dress and formally curtsied. Today, she was acting as my female companion, as we were going together to the party that the Dragon City had prepared for us.

"Where did you get this ceremonial attire? I thought that long dress would be too small to fit you. I'm surprised it even has the ability to automatically change its size."
"...Yes, it has the function to automatically adjust its size as it's a God Equipment. Don't break it. No, don't even get it dirty.

Otherwise Beyana will charge us an astronomical amount."
That's right, the golden dress Harloys was wearing was also a God Equipment. I asked Beyana for a God Equipment as well, as we were all part of the same faction, but she gave me her personal long dress with clear evil intentions, even telling me to use it for myself. But I was no fool—I unhesitatingly gave this dress to Harloys and brought the silly cat along with me as my female companion.

The dress couldn't be judged by its extravagance or sexy appearance that revealed quite a lot of skin. It was indeed an excellent God Equipment.

[Beyana's Fortress of Wealth. Defensive God Equipment.]

It was a defensive item constructed out of pure gold. That's right—its primary function was as a defensive item, not ornamental clothing. Beyana wasn't a God who was foolish or wasteful of wealth; she was the opposite, quite practical and stingy. She created this endlessly morphing defensive equipment which was the representation of Wealth. As for why it had the form of a dress... I would never tell you that Princess Peach's drama play was now a bestseller even in the heavens! Princess, whoever you are, your embarrassment has been seen even by the heavens!

[Ability: I'm Rich! This defensive equipment is the embodiment of the Concept of Wealth. The more money you have, the more defensive protection this equipment will provide. Each attack it takes will cause your wealth to decrease.]

[System Notification: When Beyana is wearing this, not even a Main God can break her defenses. But in your hands... it's nothing more than a sexy dress. But you'll look really good in it! I highly recommend you try it! Friendly System Reminder: While Harloys is wearing it, her defensive abilities are better than the ruler of an empire's. You understand... Go and take her secret treasuries! The pet's spending money should belong to the master! Another friendly System Reminder: If you put on this dress together with

the Moonlight Crown, perhaps a certain grudge-bearing Goddess will be satisfied and stop being angry with you.]

Thanks to a certain grudge-bearing Goddess's efforts, the other Gods didn't give me any God Equipment. Well, there was one more helpless exception. A certain God sent over a robe I was quite familiar with: a silver judge robe.

[God Equipment: Justice's Authority. Soulbound to you. Law mage robe.]

[First ability: Confession of the Guilty. Sealed, inactive.]

[Second ability: Iron-faced Judge. Sealed, inactive.]

[Third ability: Soul Container. Sealed, inactive.]

[Fourth ability: Law Set Equipment Effects. Sealed, inactive.]

[Fifth ability: Wumianzhe's Will. The wearer of this robe can summon Wumianzhe's divine power. You can use three True God level Divine Arts per day.]

[System Notification: Can you stop blatantly cheating like this?]

Mages wearing their mage robes to formal occasions was an established tradition. The silver Wumianzhe's robe was majestic and contained his divine authority. It wouldn't be inappropriate to wear it anywhere. Plus, since I was wearing the Moonlight Crown and had the Fate Staff, I would seem even more mysterious and respectable. I felt like I was walking on cloud nine as I looked at the young archmage in the mirror.

Harloys charmingly smiled as she did her hair, placing her other hand upon mine. But right now I was unable to bow and kiss her hand as I was holding an outrageously lurid white rose in my mouth...

This wasn't because I suddenly wanted to act like a romantic. This rose was the most dangerous God Equipment I managed to borrow. That's right—when I said that the second-most dangerous

God Equipment I had was the Fate Staff, I never said that the most dangerous was the Moonlight Crown. The Fate Staff was actually more powerful than the Moonlight Crown, and this seemingly ordinary rose could make any True God pause in fear.

[Ayer's White Rose. Wondrous mystical item. Highest-level God Equipment.]

[If the highest God of Death, Ayer, starts smiling at some other God, that God will probably pee his pants. And if Ayer shows his white rose to anyone, I recommend that person to commit suicide on the spot.]

[Ability: The chosen target will instantly die.]

[System Notification: Yep, that's right. That's how simple the explanation is. There are no other effects. Believe me—not even a Main God can handle being targeted by this rose.]

As for why Roland foolishly kept holding that rose in his mouth? That was because Ayer told him that this would help the God Equipment get accustomed to him and not accidentally kill him when he used it. However, Roland kept feeling like something was off.

As for the Gods secretly watching this spectacle:

"Ahh, he didn't wear my dress! I spent so much effort designing it for him!"

"...Pahaha, he's actually holding the rose in his mouth! He really believed it! Quick, give me a memory crystal—we must record this!"

For some reason, I felt a mysterious chill run down my spine. But it was time for us to leave.

Obviously, I wouldn't be dressing myself so outlandishly for no reason. Compared to the power of these God Equipment, more important was the fact that the Ayer Faction True Gods had been willing to loan me their God Equipment. This represented the

entire Ayer Faction's unwavering and complete support for me. As I would soon need to negotiate with the dragons and fight the Titan Giants, all of this would be of great assistance.

From now on, I would no longer be on the level of a helper they could summon at any time. I was an equal. And to prove my strength to the dragons, I could only choose to attend their party in such a high-profile fashion.

"Ha! You think I'm going overboard? Compared to my 'grand scheme' I intend to execute, this isn't enough at all."

Chapter 408: Dragon City

"Who's Roland? Is he some type of new exotic food? I've never heard of him."

"I think he's the descendant of the Mist. Right, have you heard of the Mist Kingdom? It was destroyed around three centuries ago. He was the prince at that time."

"...Ah, I do have some recollection of it now. Has the Mist Family's inheritance perished? Sigh—I had a good relationship with the Mist King back in the day. Those Northlanders are much better warriors than the barbarians. Such a pity."

"Hah! No matter what things were like, he was only a mortal. What is there to pity?"

"You're right... Have you heard? Third Brother said that there's a special sauce that makes the Eternal Thunder Tribe really delicious. You want to try that with me?"

Whenever Dragon City held a welcoming party for a mortal, such conversations would be commonplace.

This was unavoidable. After all, the prideful dragons couldn't even remember the last time they formally invited a mortal and treated him so politely. For the older dragons, they would casually nap for a century at a time. A mortal who was only three hundred-ish years old would be nothing more than a young brat.

At this time, the Immemorial Gold Dragon Halos had a bit of a headache. As the highest-ranking leader of Dragon City, he decided to invite the Mage Country's special ambassador by using the dragons' utmost politeness. However, Roland was quite late to arrive, which made the other leaders start complaining with comments like "This is so humiliating,""He's only a human, why invite him? Let him get the hell out if he doesn't want to come" and so on.

"That's enough out of all of you! You'll understand when you see him! Also—"

He didn't get to finish his sentence. Halos found, to his shock, that not only could he not speak, but everything before him had stopped silent, as if frozen in time. Only the consciousnesses of the dragons remained; they were unable to move their bodies. Even the tiny particles of water and dust in the air had frozen.

The next moment, everything returned to normal, as if all this was nothing more than a nightmare.

"What happened?"

Just as the astonished dragons were beginning to talk about the abnormal scene which occurred, Halos stood up.

"He's probably here... It seems that there are many others like all of you, who are so shortsighted to look down on mortals. I hope they haven't caused a huge problem."

Half an hour ago, when my Borealis entered the Ake Canyon in which Dragon City was located, countless "curious spectators" gathered around us. But before the dragons attacked us, Blue Dragon Evelyn, who was leading the Borealis, helped us enter without incident.

The mountains around this area were strangely shaped. From the holographic projections I saw from the bridge, a gigantic airship like ours passing through would seem like a little toy. Compared to the tremendous mountains, the dragons around us were nothing more than ordinary sparrows.

"There are over three thousand and seven hundred Adult Dragons located in a radius around us. Around an equal number of young or elderly dragons are here too. And many areas can't be sensed by our radar; probably they are 'undetectable' due to the presence of powerful individual wills. As expected of Dragon World, one of the three biggest homes of the dragons."

Radar in this world far surpassed radar in my previous world, as we used sound magic and magical engineering to improve it. The only drawback was that technology and industrial level weren't up to par, so the size of the 'radar room' took up the space of two entire rooms. Still, that posed no problem for the spacious battleship.

"Actually, we need to prepare ourselves the moment that we enter Dragon City."

Many curious dragons would pass by. I was beginning to worry that the cannoneers wouldn't be able to control their trigger fingers.

In front of the gigantic Borealis, even a dragon would seem tiny. Naturally, this helped to curb their arrogance, and I managed to avoid the awkwardness of the dragons surrounding and gawking at me.

"So this is one of the three largest Dragon Cities? It's far smaller than I anticipated. Still, it looks quite valuable..."

At the end of the mountains, a group of castles appeared, and the first thing I noticed was that they were constructed out of attention-grabbing white jade. If I saw correctly, this was an expensive type of jade which could remain warm in winter and cool in summer. While it wasn't a magical metal capable of being turned into equipment, its price was equal to that of mithril. Rich people liked to make their beds out of jade to show off. Should I say that it was expected of the dragons to use this rare white jade to construct entire castles?

"They're only historical artifacts. The dragons guarding them have to deal with some younger dragons who try to rob the castles. The young dragons are capable of doing anything in order to decorate their dragon nests and find a partner."

Copper Dragon Evelyn naturally accompanied me as well. After we communicated about many things, the trust between us

deepened to quite an extent. At the very least, I would no longer have to intentionally avoid many things with her.

This wasn't my first time visiting a Dragon City. I had a certain understanding of these places known as Dragon Cities.

Dragon City wasn't actually a place where dragons gathered. For the city itself to have one percent of the dragons under its control living there would already be quite rare. Although this sounded inconceivable, it was understandable if you considered how individualistic and territorial most dragons were.

Adult and older dragons typically had their own territories, which would include magic beasts and other intelligent creatures that were their servants. They could live like kings there, so how would they possibly come over to Dragon City and live like an ordinary citizen?

Most dragons viewed Dragon City as a political organization where the veterans debated useless things. They also thought of it as a temporary marketplace where ordinary dragons could exchange items with each other. Most dragons would avoid coming to Dragon City as much as possible in order to avoid the veteran dragons conscripting them for some purpose.

It was mostly the same for the Underground Dragon City. But the environment was far harsher there, so the Underground Dragon Queen had a more centralized authority. On the other hand, the surface Dragon City's leadership system used a council of elders or even the inconceivable system where different dragons took turns being leaders.

However, every society's system would have its reasons for existing. This type of chaotic and inefficient ruling system was the only choice for the dragons. Every dragon species had fundamentally different personalities, and having a Copper Dragon represent the benefits of a Blue Dragon would be a joke. It would already be considered nice if they didn't simply go to war

with each other.

Unlike how there were only Red and Black Dragons in the Underground, there were far too many dragon species in Dragon City. Every species wanted a dragon to be their representative, and hence the ruling system was a council where all the leaders had the right to speak. But some powerful species had multiple leaders on the council, while other species had zero leaders. This was because of the dragons' typical habit: those who were strong could rule.

Since dragons were large creatures, most Dragon City residents would choose to remain in humanoid form. Otherwise, the city wouldn't have enough space to hold them all. The younger dragons that didn't yet have the ability to change their form would conduct trades with each other outside the city.

As I slowly roamed around the city, I didn't see that many dragons in dragon form. Apart from a few Infant Dragons being carried around by their mothers, the rest were strange humanoid creatures, with elves and humans the most common. There were also plenty of dragons that took beastmen or dwarf forms. I even saw a few dragons that looked like demons and even ogres. The strange part was that the dragon in demon form was one respected by other dragons.

"Adult Dragons will choose another species' appearance as their smaller form. Once they choose their appearance and species, they won't be able to ever change it. Those who choose elf appearances did so because the elves were the dominant species at the time. Naturally, there are more elf forms here than any other species. Now is the generation of the humans, so human forms are the second-most common, with mostly younger dragons choosing human forms. But if a dragon chose a demon form..."

The most obvious examples were Little Red and her mother Molly. Molly had a red-haired elf form, while Little Red chose to be a black-haired human.

"So this dragon must be from the great immemorial generation where demons ruled? I see."

From a certain standpoint, the ratio of different forms in Dragon City represented the history of the dominance of various species. More than fifty percent of the dragons here had elf forms. I could only sigh at how dominant elven culture had been for so long in history, but I also felt some mysterious pity. After all, the ancient Gold Elves always seemed ethereal and vulnerable to change. Who knew if the last remaining Gold Elf next to me still counted as a pure Gold Elf?

Although Harloys appeared to be smiling on the surface, through our soul connection I could feel that her emotions were in a turmoil after seeing so many elf forms. This was no surprise to me. I secretly patted her on the shoulder.

While we observed the dragons, the dragons observed us.

Since we were here for their welcoming party, I didn't take a single subordinate with me other than Harloys. The dragons here didn't have the habit of using horse-drawn carriages, so we toured Dragon City by walking.

As we walked, the full set of God Equipment on my body sent out waves of elemental energy I didn't even attempt to conceal. This made the eyes of many dragons light up in greed, causing us to have a huge entourage of dragons following after us. Although there was a law that prohibited conflicts in Dragon City, it was highly likely that we, as outsiders, would be attacked the moment we left.

"These are all younger dragons."

"Hehehe, youngsters don't understand the cruelty of the world. They'll learn after some setbacks."

We simply ignored the dragons following us. It was obvious that they were only younger dragons. This was partly because younger

dragons had entered their reproductive period and desired more wealth to establish a better nest and attract a better partner, but even more because older dragons were wise enough to know who they could and couldn't mess with. Since I dared to blatantly show off all this God Equipment, I obviously wasn't afraid of any robbers. I had nothing but God Equipment on my body, without even a single piece at lower ranks. Even if I appeared to be weak on the surface, how could I possibly be someone easy to pick on?

Suddenly, a large shadow loomed before us. A short and skinny white-skinned elf transformed into a White Dragon.

"...Should I say that not all dragons are smart enough to avoid conflict in Dragon City? Or should I say that it's to be expected of White Dragons, the dumbest of all dragons?"

"Dragon descendant! Give me all the treasures you possess. I, the great Hamast, shall become your new master."

"Whoa, he actually thinks that I'm a half-dragon?"

Dragons were accustomed to using dragon descendants and half-dragons as their servants and slaves, as dragon descendants didn't have high statuses among dragons. The Dragon Bloodline in my body seemed to make this Hamast mistake me for a half-dragon, which would be afraid of any real dragon.

I smiled rather evilly. When the other dragons saw that someone intended to make a move, several other malevolent dragons jumped out of the crowd. There were Blue, Green, White and even a few Red Dragons. It seemed that quite a number of Red Dragons had begun to come to the surface.

"You—you—you little brats, this slave of mine escaped with this great Hamast's treasures! Are you all intending to steal this great Hamast's treasures?"

The giant White Dragon had a stinky breath, and he swept away all the younger dragons with a swipe of his tail. From his power

level, we could see that Hamast was actually an Immemorial White Dragon with many years of experience. But the fact that someone as dumb as him lived until now was probably because he stayed as a hermit in Dragon City.

Well, he did have at least a few smarts since he called me an escaped slave who stole his treasure. He had done this to avoid the law of no conflicts in Dragon City. Anyways, by the time the dragon law enforcers arrived, the incident would already be finished and the victim nowhere to be found. It would be unlikely for the dragons to give an Immemorial Dragon like him any trouble for the sake of some unknown low-level dragon descendants.

Seeing that a conflict was brewing, many spectating dragons gossiped among themselves, boisterous because this involved Hamast, who was known to be vicious. None, however, tried to stop the conflict. They stood by as if they wanted to watch a good show. Obviously, none of them had good intentions towards me.

"Why haven't they started to fight yet?"

"I bet that Hamast will be the unlucky one. He was just punished a few days ago."

"...Those are all real God Equipment, aren't they?"

Some dragons looked forward to seeing a fight, some dragons wanted to see Hamast lose and some dragons were considering the possibility of stealing the God Equipment before Hamast could. But no matter which dragon it was, none of them had friendly expressions towards me.

I shook my head at this sight. My impression of dragons was becoming worse and worse even if I never had a good impression of them to begin with, no matter what species of dragons they were.

"Sheesh! They're so talkative. Evelyn, is this how Dragon City

treats their guests? Don't they recognize who you are?"

"Ha! For dragons, a human form doesn't have much meaning. They recognize the three-headed dragon Evelyn, not a young Copper Dragon like me."

"You're not going to do your job as one of the leaders of Dragon City?"

"My older sister is a leader, not me. Besides, don't you want to make an example of someone to make the rest more obedient? A perfect scapegoat is right in front of you. Wouldn't it be rude of me to take this opportunity away from you?"

I touched the hat on my head, and a black light flashed on my staff as I shrugged.

"It's no fun if you say it out loud. I wanted to enjoy the monkey prancing around in front of me for a little longer."

Malicious dragons had us surrounded. They were openly gossiping about us with negative intentions, something that greatly displeased me.

"...How noisy. Law Incantation: Silence!"

A silver figure of Wumianzhe appeared on my law robe for an instant as the faint silver light of Law cast out around me. This Law Incantation's level was as if Wumianzhe personally cast it, so the entire Dragon City was forcefully silenced for a moment.

The normal power level of Law Incantation: Silence would only be enough to silence the people in a small courtroom. However, my spell's power greatly exceeded my expectations. The effects of the Wumianzhe's divine power made it so that such an ordinary spell affected the entire Dragon City.

At this moment, everything became silent. The vicious gossiping stopped—they had lost the ability to speak. Meanwhile, up in midair, the flying dragons lost their ability to fly, and they fell to the ground. However, the Law Incantation would end before they

fell to their deaths.

I chuckled evilly as I glanced at how Hamast and the young dragons were all panicking.

"Law Incantation: Conviction."

This time, there was the silver light of judgement. The dragons that had intended to rob and kill me were marked in a deep red. They had been caught red-handed in attempting the crime.

"It would seem that Dragon City lacks public security."

I looked around me and saw numerous areas light up with red. Wumianzhe's divine power once again made this simple low-level Law spell expand to all of Dragon City.

No matter how stupid Hamast was, he still realized that he had bitten off more than he could chew. But I didn't wait for him to do anything as I raised my staff.

"Law Incantation: An—"

"Your Highness Roland, please wait—"

It would seem that I'd made too much of a commotion with my Law Incantations, catching the attention of the Dragon World leaders who were waiting for me. It was quite a sight to see a group of dragons rushing towards me.

However, I shook my head and completed the Law Incantation I was casting.

"—Law Incantation: Anti-Crime."

I simply touched the White Dragon's foot with my black staff. Hamast's giant head paused in surprise for a moment before he widened his eyes and opened his mouth with an expression filled with shock. He looked towards the Dragon City leaders, pleading with his eyes to be saved.

Boom!

Hamast didn't even get a chance to scream before his head exploded like fireworks. His blood went flying, painting the whole street a deep sheen of scarlet. Naturally, the dragon leaders' faces were splattered with plenty of blood.

I chuckled in satisfaction, looking at the grim expressions before me.

"Pleased to meet you all for the first time, respected dragon leaders. I'm Roland, Roland Mist. What a fun welcoming party this is, having someone like this come welcome me. You're all truly creative to have come up with such a method."

Chapter 409: Everyone Has Their Own Schemes

Did it seem quite arrogant of me to kill a dragon right in the streets of Dragon City and even splash the blood all over the dragon leaders' faces?

Of course it was arrogant! It was the equivalent of killing someone right in front of the police and then lecturing the police about it. Even if the person I killed truly deserved it, my actions would be a slap in the face to the local authorities.

The Dragon World leaders, who were mostly in the forms of elves or beastmen, all paused in surprise for a moment before appearing to be ready to explode in anger.

"...Is that Death God Ayer's rose Your Highness Roland is holding onto?"

Meanwhile, I quietly played with the White Rose in my hand. Each time I saw Ayer acting cool with this rose, I would feel like stealing it for myself and then... play "she loves me, she loves me not" with the rose petals. Cough—cough—I seem to have accidentally revealed something that would make me look uncool, so please ignore that last part.

"Finally! Someone who knows what I'm holding. This time, my friends were worried that I'd be bitten by a rabid dog, so they loaned me a few toys. It seems they were right..."

I looked at the blood and brains splattered all on the ground with an obviously contemptuous look of disgust.

"...Indeed, there are many rabid dogs here."

I didn't even try to hide my condescension, making it seem as if the dragon corpse before me was a dirty object. Naturally, my condescension fanned the dragons' flames of anger, making them lose hold of logic and reason. As I saw their faces redden in anger, I

felt as if I could hear their reason snapping into two pieces.

"...You dare do such a thing!"

A bad-tempered Blue Dragon leader was the first to transform into his true dragon form. However, the Gold Dragon leader Halos stopped him in his tracks.

"Don't be rash. That White Rose is Death God Ayer's God Equipment. It contains his essence. Do you have a death wish?"

The Blue Dragon leader paused in surprise and immediately stopped himself. Of course he'd know of Ayer, and he also realized that he would be committing suicide if he went up against Ayer's White Rose. But since he had spoken up, giving in would make him significantly lose face.

Only now did he have the free time to take a look at me, as he had just arrived. When he saw that I was wearing God Equipment all over my body, he could only think that he had shot his own foot.

His attitude of 'being right about to pounce on me' vanished. A cold breeze blew past, and the Blue Dragon leader had quite the awkward expression. Of course he didn't want to commit suicide by attacking me, but he would be humiliated if he backed down in front of everyone.

For some people, however, reputation was more important than their life. Just as he grit his teeth and decided to gamble that I wouldn't dare to kill him, a Dragon City leader, in Dragon City, Evelyn stepped forward.

"Hah! As expected of the Undying Roland who's currently ranked #20 on the Calamity Rankings. Oh, right, everyone, this is Lady Harloys. I believe she's also on the Calamity Rankings. I should congratulate both of you for recently having increased your ranks."

I inwardly praised Evelyn for her excellent introduction.

This was the perfect opportunity for the Blue Dragon leader to back down: "This is no mere mortal, he's a living Calamity—it isn't

a big deal if you back down." This also helped me take a step back too. After all, I only wanted to beat a little sense into the dragons' arrogant view of mortals. I didn't come all the way here just to become mortal enemies with them. Killing off a robber who jumped out to attack me and killing off one of their leaders were on completely different levels.

Meanwhile, Evelyn had a rather unique status in Dragon City. All the dragon leaders knew who she was. One of their own was helping to mediate, and this was something they found acceptable.

The Blue Dragon leader transformed back to his human form, but he held a steely expression. He stomped his foot and disappeared, too humiliated to stay here any longer. Even though Evelyn helped mediate the situation, he had lost face. Most likely he now viewed me as a mortal enemy.

"Welcome, welcome, our two honored guests. We've prepared an excellent welcoming party for you. Let's discuss formalities after the party."

What else could Dragon City leader Halos say after this? He could only try to ease the atmosphere.

Although many dragons glared at me as we headed to the party venue, I kept the condescending, cold expression on my face. Inside, however, I was delighted.

From a certain standpoint, this was the start I'd wanted most. Otherwise it would be impossible to negotiate.

From the very beginning, the dragons had never considered us worthy of their attention. The fact they requested the Mage Country to aid them was only because they had already tried everything else. And they'd asked for help with the way of thinking that perhaps a quack doctor could somehow use a home remedy to solve the problem.

"Our dragon mages can't do it, so there's no way human mages

can. But there's no harm in asking."

In the dragons' eyes, their only worthy enemies were the Titan Giants and their descendants, the giants. The dragons considered no other species their equals. As for humans, it was possible for powerful humans to obtain the dragons' respect, but if it was something related to the human species as a whole, dragons would have an attitude of overbearing arrogance.

This was the main reason I'd intentionally stalled coming to Dragon City for so long. If I came to visit them easily, not only would I not be viewed as an important personage but they might not even give me a chance to speak with them.

"You can't do it? You can do it? If you can, then do it. We'll pay you. If you can't, then return from whence you came. Yep—this means 'get the hell out of here.'"

That's why I absolutely had to do something just to receive the chance to negotiate with the dragon leaders as an equal. Even if that idiot dragon named Hamast didn't attack me, I would have intentionally caused some trouble myself.

"The dragons' personalities? They're nothing more than wild beasts that prey on the weak and fear the strong. You could say that they follow the law of the jungle. Aren't both concepts essentially the same? Based on my understanding of dragons, if you beg for mercy or kindness, they'll ignore you and think you're an idiot for wanting to trade or negotiate with them as an equal. If you really intend to make friends or do business with dragons... beat them up first."

Harloys agreed with my opinion.

"The more you beat up a dragon, the more it'll respect you. The friendlier and kinder you act, the more that dragon will look down on you."

As for the Immemorial White Dragon who was kind enough to

sacrifice himself as an example to the others, everyone tacitly agreed to forget about him. I would have killed some other scapegoat dragon no matter what, even if he hadn't attacked me.

This was why I borrowed so much God Equipment. I was prepared to even wipe Dragon City off the map before negotiating with the dragons if it was necessary. What I wanted to obtain through negotiations here was far too important.

"Dragon World, or I should say a part of Dragon World, is our final target. Only by obtaining part of Dragon World will it be possible for us to realize the rest of our plan."

This was part of the final goal I revealed to Ayer as well as my subordinates. But obviously the dragons treated the plane of Dragon World as their personal property. If I wanted to have my subordinates settle down here, I would have to enter the lair of the tiger and act forcefully.

Another reason that the dragons were so eager to reseal the Titan Giants was because this entire plane was created as a seal for the Titan Giants. If the Titan Giants escaped, then the entirety of Dragon World would collapse. If it weren't for this, they wouldn't have gone to the trouble of fighting the Titan Giants to such a degree.

In that case, it may seem that I had shared interests with the dragons, that neither of us wished to see the Titan Giants revive, which would result in the destruction of Dragon World. But actually we were more like two thieves who had reached into the same pocket. After all, neither of us were the true masters of this plane.

Of course, simply using negotiation would be far too insufficient. That's why I prepared many little tricks.

"Sometimes, if I act without limits, even I'm afraid of myself."

"...If you really act as ridiculously as that scheme of yours, you'll

definitely enter the top ten of the Calamity Rankings once people learn about it."

I was standing alone in a corner of the party, nobody else near me. Although I was technically supposed to be the main character, it was obvious that the hosts disdained me due to the ruckus I just caused.

Something rather unexpected but understandable was that Harloys became the main character of this party in my stead. Countless dragons invited this beautiful Gold Elf princess to dance with them and expressed their pity at what had happened to the Gold Elf Empire. They gave their condolences regarding the Royal Elves' backstabbing.

At its peak, the Gold Elf Empire wasn't necessarily stronger than the dragons, but ordinary dragons would still respect the Gold Elf Empire's strength. Most of the leaders of Dragon World had lived through that generation. From a certain standpoint, Harloys had a high status here. Even the dragons would bow to her in respect. It was just that due to her previous undead status, she'd never had any interaction with the dragons.

Still, the dragons were only making polite talk. They wouldn't actually fight to take revenge for the Gold Elf Empire. While it may be true that some of them were friendly with the past Gold Elf Empire, it would also be natural for them to strike up friendships with the current Elf Kingdoms. It wasn't like they had to pay any money for expressing sympathies and condolences.

Since I had plenty of free time, I observed how everyone circled around Harloys and kept up a conversation with her through our soul connection. Meanwhile, I also paid attention to the banquet before me.

"...Could this be the tail meat of a Scorpion Dragon? I've heard it's amazingly delicious. Wow, there's even some elven fruit wine from the immemorial generation. Judging from the aroma, it's

made from a combination of different fruits? I really want to try it."

Unfortunately, no matter how much I wanted to taste the food and drink before me, I was unable to take action. Right now, I was trying my best to smile in an inscrutable fashion and acting cool by standing like a decoration in the corner with all my God Equipment.

It may have looked like nobody was paying me any attention, but countless eyes kept looking in my direction. If I exposed my real way of thinking, I would face unending troubles.

Still, the dragons knew their etiquette and weren't too impolite to me. After the dragon musician at the party started playing a relatively gentle song, Halos, the leader of all the other dragon leaders, came before me and tried his best to put on a smile.

Even though I didn't have any mind reading skills, I knew he was cursing me under his smile. He was probably thinking something along the lines of "why the hell did you come here with so much God Equipment on you?" But he wouldn't dare antagonize me too much as I no longer only represented the Mage Country. The Ayer Faction would be far more useful than the Mage Country for the dragons.

But since he was only smiling at me without speaking, I smiled back at him without saying anything.

"Haha."

"Haha."

And then neither of us spoke again...

"Cough—I wonder what Your Highness Roland thinks about the Titan Giants' seal?"

Alright, he forced himself to initiate the conversation. But since he directly started with the main topic of our negotiation, it was evident that Halos wasn't a skilled negotiator. Perhaps, however, it

indeed wasn't necessary for him to be a skilled negotiator. He would simply need to "negotiate" with overwhelming power.

I then smiled for real at this. I loved dealing with newbie negotiators like him. They would always be sincere and easy to fool —cough—I meant easy to communicate with! And so I intentionally started by scaring him right away.

"We have indeed come to some conclusions. The Truth Symposium verified our way of thinking, and Ayer has confirmed it as well, so its veracity should be trustworthy enough..."

I paused for a moment after saying only the beginning. As I expected, I noticed many ears standing up and eavesdropping on our conversation. Since this matter had to do with the lives of all the dragons in Dragon World, they would naturally view this as important.

"...The Titan Giants' seal will absolutely become undone. Dragon World's collapse is inevitable."

Chapter 410: The Unknown Past History of Dragon City

"There's no saving you. Remember to buy a proper burial plot so you can rest well after dying..."

In China, if a doctor tells you something like that, it doesn't mean there's no saving you. Instead, he actually means...

"If you want to live, you need to pay up."

If you truly couldn't be saved, the doctor wouldn't even tell you about it. The doctor would either tell your family or try his best to not take responsibility.

In negotiation, such tactics would also be commonplace.

First, make the problem sound as serious as possible. Make things sound bad; really bad. If the other person got scared, all sorts of scamming conditions would become easily achievable.

In the past, I'd often used such scare tactics in negotiations. But this time, although I was still using a scare tactic, I wasn't lying.

"...It's impossible to stop this dimension from collapsing. Since the Titans have already awakened, it'll be nigh impossible to make them go back into hibernation. Even their incarnations are freely acting outside."

Indeed, if someone woke up after a long sleep and was well prepared to get out of bed, how would you make that person go back to sleep?

It was unknown who created the original Seal of the Four Elements on the Titans. However, only a God on the level of the Chaos or Order Goddess could create an entire dimension to seal away a species. Once such a perfect seal started breaking down, fixing it would be incredibly difficult.

"This ancient seal is like an exquisitely created lock, made by a

master craftsman. Now, a part of the lock is broken, and someone like myself who doesn't have such a high level of craftsmanship wants to fix it. To do so, I need to first understand how this lock was created. It would be best if I have the blueprint. Then I'd know how to take off and repair the lock. Of course, the easiest method will be to add another lock on top of this lock."

Based on this way of thinking, repairing this type of lock required unsealing it first. However, that would mean the entire Dragon World would be destroyed. As for the so-called "easiest method," simply adding a new seal on top of the old seal was meaningless. Since the Titans were capable of breaking through the old seal, they'd be able to break through the new one just as easily.

That was why the dragons couldn't come up with a method even though the they'd tried their best to come up with an idea and flipped through all their old records. Although they requested the human mages for assistance, they didn't have much hope the humans could help them.

But in this situation I directly told them that I couldn't do it. This was basically saying "Although you invited me to help you, you still can't be saved."

Halos choked when he saw that the person he invited was smiling proudly while saying such a thing as if it was only natural. It took him a long while before he managed to speak another sentence.

"You're... quite honest."

"Of course. Honesty is a virtue. Casually telling lies that will eventually be seen through, without regarding morality, is utter foolishness."

In some circumstances, lies would indeed help one obtain great benefits. However, based on my experience with Little Red, lying to a dragon, especially an older, veteran dragon, would be the most foolish thing possible. Dragons loved to cast lie detection spells and other such prophecy magics on themselves. Not only that, these

big lizards relied on their astonishing, highly reliable instincts that could determine if someone was lying or had good intentions towards them.

But if there truly was no method to save Dragon World, I wouldn't have come here in the first place.

I waved my wine glass in front of me. Everything appeared dreamlike through the blood-red wine.

"...Although they'll definitely awaken, and this dimension will definitely begin collapsing, there are still other methods. We can delay the time that the Titans awaken. There's even a method to prevent the collapse of this world. Of course, how far we can prevent things depends on how much you're willing to pay..."

After I finished my negotiations with Halos—or perhaps I should call it scamming—the welcome party reached its end. It was now deep into the night with many stars twinkling in the sky.

I didn't accept their invitation to stay the night in Dragon City. Instead, I chose to rest in the Borealis, which was parked outside the city. Tomorrow morning, when it was light outside, I would continue the formal negotiations.

It was always best to remain vigilant, especially if you were wearing all sorts of valuables and sleeping in a city filled with professional thieves.

"...Professional thieves? If Little Red learns how you're deprecating the dragons, won't she be quite angry?"

"Not at all. If she knew about this, she'd be really proud and give me a big thumbs up. After all, she's the dragon who wrote the 'Book of excuses you can use for stealing from others.' In her mind, stealing is an artform, and she's a grandmaster of this artform."

I walked around Dragon City's streets and enjoyed the view of the valuable jade buildings while talking bad about the dragons.

"...You don't say. They were like that back in the day as well.

They basically viewed robbery as a normal way of living. Forget about the Color Dragons being like this, even the Metal Dragons would often commit such actions but under the guise of 'fighting against evil.' All those they claimed to be 'villains' would find their treasures vanishing."

"Ha! It's because dragons were the strongest species in the mortal plane for a really long time. Nobody could do anything about them even if they committed bad deeds. Since there was nothing to control their power, they let the power go to their heads. They're like naughty children that have acted as they pleased for too long. They think it's only normal to view others' belongings as their property."

As Harloys and I walked on the streets, this attracted a great deal of attention from spectators. Even more dragons started "following" us, but as we kept walking, these "followers" disappeared.

The earlier incident caused the dragons to view us as walking time bombs. In order to not have us cause any more incidents, other dragons followed us secretly from a distance and chased off other dragons that had nefarious intentions in mind for us.

Although I knew that dragons were clearly following us, Harloys and I had no reservations about talking bad about dragons. In fact, we even intentionally spoke louder than normal.

"Shall we return to the Borealis now?"

"Of course not. It's so rare that we have a chance to visit. I want to tour Dragon City's nightlife."

"With all those lizard tails following you? You really like being a circus parade leader?"

"Of course not? That's why we should change our clothes now."

We casually found a random corner and swung in there. A series of "traffic accidents" then suddenly appeared behind us. When we

appeared again, Harloys and I now looked completely different.

I was now covered in red full-body armor and carried a huge heavy sword. I also emanated a powerful Dragon Bloodline's aura, something quite common in Dragon City.

Due to certain reasons, it was common that Dragon Bloodline warriors wouldn't show their faces. Fine, the real reason was that although Dragon Bloodlines typically brought great power, only the lucky were able to maintain a handsome or beautiful physical appearance. Pureblood dragons were just like humans in that they loved to judge others by physical appearance. Dragon Bloodline warriors obviously wouldn't enjoy being treated like mongrels.

As for typical detection magics that dragons were skilled at? I was immune to all of those to begin with.

I walked right past the panicking followers that ran here to search for me. After walking past, my heavy sword transformed back into a black cat that perched on my shoulder. She lazily rolled around and scratched at her whiskers. It seemed that this was the form she was most comfortable in.

"Where are we going? Shall we rob a dragon's treasury? Or go steal some dragon eggs?"

"...I'm not a dragon myself; I don't have such hobbies. Besides, if we do something like that here at this time, wouldn't that make it too obvious that we're the culprits? Let's go check out what the dragons are hiding."

"Hiding?"

"Yeah, haven't you noticed that this city is too calm and quiet?"

"You're talking about... giants?"

I nodded in agreement. Back when Halent showed us the memory crystal, the dragons here were fighting against the local giant species. I refused to believe that the dragons would be able to defeat the giants so easily. And even if the dragons won, they

would definitely take severe losses. I wanted to better understand the true power of the local giant species. It would be even better if I could obtain a combat report.

"Why aren't you asking the dragons to show you? No matter what, aren't we supposed to be allies?"

"...Would you show an 'ally' your own weakness?"

"...You have a point."

Unfortunately, although we did our best to search, looking for dragon medication stocks or food and water supplies, we were unable to find any traces of injured dragons.

"Even a powerful species like the dragons will need great quantities of food, water and medication to recover if they're injured. It would seem that they're probably not here at all."

"...Then where could they be? On the frontlines of battle? Perhaps there's another Dragon City somewhere. Hey, why are you seriously considering it? I was just joking around."

"No, I think it's possible. I don't believe the dragons would so easily reveal their true core home city."

Us two ambassadors chatted as we walked around. We also peeked around at streetside shops, trying to find some valuables... What? You're saying we're not doing our proper jobs? We're definitely doing our jobs! Aren't all diplomats secretly spies as well? Just take a look at how hard we're working at obtaining information on the locals here!

"...I can tell that you're thinking something disrespectful. Normal diplomats aren't all spies. They're the critical gears that help two countries get along with each other. Their job is quite hard."

"...Yep, yep, they're the critical gears that try their best to find the other country's secrets, incite the other country's citizens and finally give as much support as possible to the opposition party in the other country. They're really such hard-working gears."

Although I didn't obtain any major harvests, just chatting and having fun helped greatly improve my mood.

"Let's talk about something practical. If the situation allowed for it, I really do want to make trades with the dragons. Every single dragon has their own treasury, after all. So many accumulated resources can add up to be quite significant."

"...How would you trade with them? Dragons don't lack anything."

"Hmph! They lack plenty of things. Haven't you noticed how simple life is here in Dragon City? They don't even have the gambling dens, prostitution brothels and alcohol bars that normal cities do. And even if they don't lack anything, can't we simply make them start having consumption habits? Eating, drinking, having fun—everything costs money these days."

"You're saying?"

"For example, don't be fooled by how Little Red doesn't seem to take care of herself. Actually, she takes super good care of her scales. She'll make sure to have a volcano hot bath every once in a while, and she applies oil to her claw nails at fixed intervals. It's even said that dragons will lose combat strength if they don't take good care of their bodies.

I wasn't making this up at all. If a human's fingernails were dry and cracked, that would perhaps only seem slightly ugly. But if a dragon's claw nails snapped while fighting, their enemy would laugh uproariously. A volcano's abundant minerals and fire element would also help to harden and energize a Red Dragon's scales, meaning it was necessary to help improve personal defenses. Of course, the most important part was that a volcano hot bath would give all the scales a shiny sheen. This was perhaps the biggest reason why Red Dragons always fought with Silver Dragons over volcanos—it was said that Silver Dragons were the dragon species that loved beauty the most...

"See how troublesome things are for those dragon mothers? If they use humanoid form, the Baby Dragon will be even larger than she is. So difficult to take care of. We can provide dragon day care services so that mothers can happily do what they want! Yep, we can even sell leashes and collars to them so that they can walk their Baby Dragons."

"...Why does it sound like you're opening up a pet shop?"

"Cough, no need to mind the little details like that. Besides, apart from these classical services, we could even do beauty salon services. Just look at how simple their wings' colors are. They're all red, blue or just some other single color. We can provide coloring and tattoo services, such as tattooing a tiger or lion or something."

"...Let's not mention how awkward it is to tattoo a tiger on a dragon. Have a dragon with one red wing and one white wing? Would that count as a Red or White Dragon?"

"Yeah! Harloys, you're such a genius. Thanks for reminding me! Excellent idea! We can even provide disguising services to disguise them as other dragons. For instance, if you're tired of being a Black Dragon, we can give you a golden sheen and some special disguising services on the head and wings to make you appear like a Gold Dragon. That will make robbery much easier to accomplish. Nobody is on guard against a Gold Dragon as they're always obsessed about justice."

"...Don't say any more. I feel that if you really do such a thing, all the dragons will be hunting you down. Especially the Gold Dragons."

"Right, you..."

Making idle conversation was one of the best ways to relax myself. Honestly speaking, Dragon City was stressful to be in. Seeing so many individuals at Legend, Saint or even higher combat strength would be intimidating, not to mention I had to deal with

the full group of dragon leaders at that welcoming party. Those able to obtain the position of dragon leader would be at minimum from the immemorial generation, or even older. They would all be Myth rank at the very weakest. As for their strongest... there were at least five dragons for which I couldn't even assess their power levels. At a conservative estimate, it was likely that all of them were more powerful than me when I was at my peak.

"Dragons are so favored by the heavens. They have such a great advantage simply by being a Golden Species. As long as they grow up to reach Adult Dragon status, they'll be Gold in strength at the very weakest. With just some slight training, they'll be able to easily suppress ordinary Legends. Meanwhile, ordinary humans training for their entire lives will only reach the peak of Silver."

"...Right, since they're so powerful, the dragons probably did well in the 'game's history,' didn't they?"

However, I shook my head at this.

"They had the same outcome as the mages. For the first half of Armageddon, they were garbage teammates lost in their own daydreams. They believed, in their arrogance, that they could once again remain uninvolved. By the time they noticed things weren't right and finally started participating, the combat situation had already deteriorated.

"Just like the Cloud Tower?"

Only now did I recall that I had never mentioned to Harloys about the absolutely terrible end that the Mage Country met in the game's history.

"Yep, the end result was the same. Both were far too overconfident in their own abilities, which allowed them to get accustomed to watching the world change around them. Both the mages and the dragons felt that these changes were for the short term, something not important to worry about. By the time that they discovered that they're actually sunk deep into the swamp, it

was impossible for them to escape anymore no matter how hard they fought. Did you notice that whenever I mentioned the Holy War to that leader, Halos, he would always just touch his beard and smile uninterestedly or change the topic? Obviously, the dragons still intend to sit out the Holy War."

"...What happened to the dragons in the game's history?"

"Not much—it's just that others remembered to pay plenty of attention to them since dragons are so famous. The undead transformed them into Bone Dragon squadrons, the Evil Gods slaughtered them, parasitic worms took over their bodies, the giants cooked them alive and so on. Ah, near the end, the scattered dragons were reduced to the point of avoiding even human empires' airships. Of course, they still joined the humans' allied armies in the end, but it was already too late. The dragons took serious losses to the point where several of their species went extinct."

"Oh, are you someone with powers of precognition? The dragons will meet such a pitiful end? Can you tell me more about this?"

To my great astonishment, the "person" who interrupted my soul connection conversation with Harloys was right behind me.

I instantly turned around to find a seemingly young Snow Elf. He wasn't even as tall as a dwarf, and his apple-like little face was very cute.

"How is this possible? How can someone eavesdrop on a soul connection conversation?"

While I had an expression of astonishment, I immediately whipped out the White Rose which had been in my sleeves. Despite my shocked expression, I was mentally calculating what information was okay to be leaked and if I should kill this individual off despite the fact that we were in Dragon City.

"...Youngsters these days are truly frightening. They always want

to kill others so quickly. Relax, young one. I come with friendly intentions. Please put away that rose of yours. I don't deal well with scary things in my old age."

The Snow Elf, who looked just like a little boy, spoke as if he was an elder. Obviously, his physical appearance was nowhere near his real age. His silver-white eyes that appeared so pure had seen through everything I had thought.

"I am the Supreme Immemorial White Dragon, whose name has long been forgotten through the tides of history. You can call me Sam. I suppose I count as the great-many-times-removed grandfather of the White Dragon you just killed. By the way, how much money would you charge for a Gold Dragon paint job? Can I owe you the money? I'm really poor."

Chapter 411: Secret Information from the Past

"Owe me a debt? I'm sorry, that would be fine for other species, but I'll never allow a dragon to owe me a debt. I've been interacting with dragons for a long time now.

Making them owe me a debt is the same as allowing them to never return my money... they're on the same level of schoolyard bullies."

I unhesitatingly spoke about my negative impression of dragons. Wasn't I right? Borrowing money and not returning it? Stealing a little kid's toys? Wasn't this exactly what schoolyard bullies did?

"Isn't is racial discrimination? Aren't you discriminating against dragons in Dragon City? Do you have a death wish?"

"I think it's indeed fine to discriminate against dragons' concept of honesty. Have you ever tried to borrow money from another dragon?"

I continued speaking casually, but inside, I was hugely on guard.

What does such an old veteran want with me?

Although White Dragons were discriminated against by all the other dragons, even a pig would become ridiculous if it had the title of Supreme Immemorial attached to it. Not to mention, this Sam was still a dragon. Supreme Immemorial was the most ancient existence possible, from the very first generation. It would be absolutely impossible to calculate just how strong he was.

Since he was a Supreme Immemorial Dragon, then he must have survived all the ancient wars between the Gods. His age could be calculated with tens of thousands of years as the basic unit. Without a doubt, not only would he be one of the strongest dragons alive, he would be one of the strongest individuals in the entire world. As long as he showed himself in public, he would

easily reach top ten in the Calamity Rankings. A "little youngster" like me who was only three hundred-ish years old could never compare.

And an existence like Sam would naturally be uncontrollable by Dragon City. Most ancient dragons of his age, no matter what species they were, would become disinterested in authority and status after living through so many eons and wars. They would live a hermit's lifestyle. Him suddenly coming to find me was incomprehensible.

"Actually, I originally wanted to find you to do business and start a shop. But since I met a real person with precognition, I naturally want to know more."

I hated dealing with such ancient existences the most. They would always have a huge array of personal abilities. How was I supposed to play this game if I was seen through so easily? Didn't he know that prophets were all just skilled scammers? How was I supposed to scam him if he could see through me?

Snap

With one snap of my fingers, the blood-red dragon armor covering my body vanished, replaced by my full set of God Equipment. Wumianzhe's robe made me completely immune to inspection magics. I refused to believe that he was capable of piercing through a God Equipment's protection.

As I expected, this fake young elf furrowed his eyebrows upon seeing this.

"Perhaps we should change locations for a little chat. I really did come with good intentions."

"What type of good intentions would a Supreme Immemorial White Dragon have to contact me like this?"

"...The White Dragons' inheritance."

I paused in surprise for a moment. I never expected that

something I started so casually would attract such an ancient existence. But upon closer consideration this seemed quite reasonable.

Having the White Dragons become equal to other dragons in intelligence was something non-critical to us that would only be a small help in the grand scheme of things. But for the White Dragons, this was a critical technology that could change the fate of their entire species. No wonder such an ancient existence was drawn out of the woodwork.

And so I laughed. I was afraid of him attacking me for whatever reason as I would be unable to defeat him and could only run. But since Sam had something he wanted from me, that made everything much easier.

"Perhaps we can discuss working together and making a trade. Right, I can first show you a sample: a group of Baby White Dragons already capable of transforming. They were born less than a month ago."

After obtaining Frigidwinter Earth, I finally felt like I was more like a main character.

"Hmph! Other main characters have personal treasures or personal guides, but I have a personal world!"

By now, Frigidwinter Earth was no longer that barren icy tundra. Even the Supreme Immemorial White Dragon was astonished when he entered my world.

I had artificially increased the temperature in a patch of "naturally-formed" canyons. By now, there was an entire city in Frigidwinter Earth. This was the base for my experimental laboratory, which researched the wildest theories which could only come true here. Large amounts of researchers lived here full-time and worked hard on their own projects.

Snap

I lightly snapped my fingers, and we instantly teleported to my personal residence in Frigidwinter Earth, all of us sitting down in chairs. Although the fake young boy still had a calm expression on the surface, his widened eyes betrayed his astonishment.

Of course, I wouldn't show off for no reason. Even if he appeared to come with friendly intentions, just the fact that he was still a White Dragon meant that I had to be extra careful. Showing off the full extent of my powers would improve my personal safety and how much I could receive through negotiation, so there were no drawbacks.

I was exposing the information about Frigidwinter Earth, you ask? Actually, information on Frigidwinter Earth would begin leaking ever since I used it in my battle against Undead Emperor Zero's astral projection. With how fast the world was changing, soon there would be no need to keep Frigidwinter Earth a secret.

"Tea."

Steaming hot tea instantly appeared on the table. No matter how old Sam was, it was impossible for him to have ever seen the abilities of Creation. This was by far the best way to show my power.

"I just contacted the others. The little White Dragons are still in kindergarten. They'll be out of school after two more hours. Let's chat a little first and go see them later."

Where there were humans, there would be schools. It actually wasn't my idea to have the Baby White Dragons go to school. It was that my researchers were greatly interested in newly-born White Dragons that could be educated. They even intended to raise the White Dragons to have the same interests in research.

As for if I had a shota or loli speed-raising plan—cough—cough—let's not look too deeply into this matter. Still, the researchers here treated the smart Baby White Dragons as their own babies. I already visited this kindergarten before. It was all managed by my

researchers. Every Baby White Dragon had three teachers with specialized knowledge: one for alchemy, one for engineering and one for language... What was I supposed to do about the fact that there were more teachers than students? These researchers were even getting addicted to teaching and slowing down their research progress! What was I supposed to do?

I explained about the Baby White Dragons, but Sam was no longer focusing on this as the most important thing here.

"...As expected of the Order Faction's major precognitor in this Holy War. This is a complete real world, with the power of Creation? Of all the major precognitors in history, you'd definitely rank in the top three."

The old dragon drank some tea and felt hot fluid run down his throat. He was now certain that all of this was no hallucination or Soul World, causing him to instantly raise his assessment of Roland.

Originally, Sam had viewed Roland as nothing more than a somewhat accomplished junior. Sam increased his assessment of Roland once he learned that Roland truly possessed powers of precognition, and now, upon seeing that Roland possessed his own real world, he started viewing Roland as an existence equal to himself.

You shouldn't underestimate Sam viewing Roland as an "equal existence." For a Supreme Immemorial Dragon like him, he would only need to pay a basic amount of respect to other True Gods. And it was quite possible that he could even defeat a True God in a one-on-one battle. Dragons would never show respect to those they viewed as weak.

In fact, dragons even looked down upon the unlucky Gods that were restrained by their Divine Concepts. It could even be said that Great and Supreme Immemorial Dragons had the right to view the Gods as part of the world's natural sacrifices—as consumables. And

since dragons managed to stay out of countless Holy Wars, this made them even more view all other species as nothing more than ants.

Perhaps such an ancient existence would be able to have a friendly conversation with you. But actually a Supreme Immemorial Dragon wouldn't even view you as a trifle. It was just like a human dealing with a harmless tiny animal. When that person was in a good mood, perhaps he would play with it for a while. But if the tiny animal accidentally enraged the human, or if the human simply wanted to find an outlet to vent his anger, then the small animal might find death right around the corner.

Actually, dragons weren't the only species to have this problem. Many other ancient Gods and Golden Species shared this problem. It was just that the dragons'"arrogance" was extremely obvious. The only way to cure this illness was to beat them up until they respected you.

"This is an illness! It needs curing! First beat them up half to death." That was precisely how I dealt with the Black and Red Dragons that joined East Mist but still acted arrogantly. It was actually greatly effective.

But right now I was surprised to hear what Sam was saying. What did the power of prophecy have to do with Order?

"You're calling me a major precognitor on the Order Faction? Does this power have anything to do with Order? Isn't prophecy a neutral type of magic?"

If I didn't understand, all I had to do was ask. It was rare for me to meet someone so powerful, and dragons weren't known to be the type that loved to keep secrets.

"...Of course! It's even the ultimate ability of Order. Since Order is about rules, the highest-level dimensional rules are doubtlessly space and time. While the power of prophecy seems chaotic, it's actually calculating the future probabilities based on time and

space. Being able to obtain more information than the enemy is why the Order Faction has performed better overall than the Chaos Faction that actually has better combat strength. The concept of Fate is the same way. Otherwise, why would the God of Fate be in the Order Faction?"

Alright then, this was secret information from an ancient existence that went against everything I knew about prophecy magic. In the past, I had viewed prophecy magic as its own branch of magic. But upon closer consideration, what Sam said sounded logical. If I truly investigated more, there would perhaps be frightening implications.

I shook my head and tossed these idle thoughts out of my mind. I could research this topic at a later date. I needed to first deal with the troublesome existence before me.

"Do you have any expectations for the dragons' future? What do you think, since you've already heard my prophecy?"

"Perhaps you humans have too short lifespans to remember, but I've actually met several major precognitors." The old dragon silently sipped on his tea. He could already tell that this was Moyer Crystal tea, a specialty from the Wind Elemental Plane. It was impossible to find in the mortal plane. This meant that the world of Frigidwinter Earth was truly special.

It appeared that he was quite relaxed and didn't care much about the prophesized Armageddon. I carefully looked him over and found that it appeared as if he really didn't care at all.

"...Those precognitors would always make their prophecies sound as serious and severe as possible. However, something such as prophecies will be changed from the moment one obtains a prophecy. And, only prophecies of misfortune and disaster will be paid attention to. That's because people will be on guard against disaster, but prophesized future success and luck will actually make people lose motivation, which will change their fate in the

end. So, as you can see, no matter what type of prophecy it is, just the prophecy's existence will change the end result from what's prophesized."

"Ridiculous, we People of the Mist—"

If what Sam said was true, then why couldn't we stop the prophesized destruction of the Mist Kingdom?

"—Oh, right, you're a descendant of the Mist. Did you already prophesize back then that your country would be destroyed? I know some things about that. But from what I can tell, your country being destroyed was mostly because all of you were too weak..."

Before Sam even finished speaking, countless sharp blades of ice materialized with white frozen flames that caused even an ancient existence like himself to be instinctively afraid. He could tell that this was a weapon that could threaten someone as ancient as himself. Once again, Sam raised his internal assessment of the young person before him, but he still had a smile on his face.

Seeing this elderly dragon remain so calm, I closed my eyes, took a deep breath and squeezed the teacup in my hand, crushing it. The pain in my hand helped me regain my senses.

My logic and reason told me that Sam wasn't wrong at all. However, the anger in my heart kept accumulating. Hearing this type of comment about all the warriors who resisted against misfortune to the end made me extremely furious.

"Indeed, perhaps we humans are much weaker than you dragons, but—"

My furious words were suddenly interrupted.

"You misunderstand. How could someone such as myself be so shallow in judging strength and weakness? I'm referring to your power to change fate compared to the power that wanted 'history' to develop as normal. That's because the incident of the Mist

Kingdom's destruction was something far beyond the power of ordinary mortals to prevent."

Hearing this, my anger instantly turned to astonishment. Wasn't the Mist Kingdom's destruction orchestrated by other mortals that hid behind the scenes? Wasn't it purely the work of mortals?"

"As we're both ice type dragons, I have a good relationship with the All-Ending Dragon, Excelsius..."

"All-Ending Dragon?"

How could I possibly forget such a chuunibyou nickname? Wasn't that the nickname of the Frigid Nightmare King from the snow mountain? He treated me quite nicely. He even taught me my foundational magic of ice sculpting.

"...Back when the Mist Kingdom met its destruction, the snow mountain was cut off from the entire mortal plane. All the Frigid Nightmares were stuck on the snow mountain. There're probably fewer than ten existences in the entire universe that are capable of sealing off part of a plane and then reverting it afterwards with zero side effects. Honestly, I thought at the time that it was wasteful to the degree of shooting a mosquito with a cannon. But I understand why that was now that I've met you."

The next instant, the entirety of Frigidwinter Earth began quaking. Ice rivers sprang out of the ground and thunder filled the skies despite there being zero clouds. The entire world started to distort.

I no longer heard what the old dragon said next. I was only thinking one thing in my mind, which kept repeating itself:

"There was another culprit behind the scenes of the Mist Kingdom's destruction! The true mastermind still hasn't been punished! Our mortal enemy is out somewhere enjoying life!"

Chapter 412: Profitable Job

In creation myths, the Creator's fury would transform into thunder and his tears would manifest as torrential downpours. His delight would cause the lands to bloom with flowers, while his sadness would cause the land to freeze over. I never expected that I would prove this for real one day.

As the researchers outside shouted in surprise, the abnormal scenes gradually subsided. It was very rare of me to lose control of my emotions. However, my typical habit was that the angrier I got, the calmer I would become. After some careful thinking, I brought up a question.

"Why did the All-Ending Dragon Excelsius never tell me? I trust him; far more than I trust you."

"Would there be any meaning if he told you? Are you capable of taking revenge? You'd probably attract even more trouble if you knew too much. If Excelsius was really thinking about what's best for you, he definitely made the correct decision in not telling you anything about this."

As the Supreme Immemorial Dragon Sam was a bystander in this incident and didn't care either way, he spoke frankly without worrying about any consequences.

I thought about it for a little while and agreed with Sam's analysis. I now also faintly perceived the astonishing power of the true culprit behind the scenes.

First of all, that existence had managed to cut off the snow mountain's connection to the rest of Eich. Although the snow mountain was already a unique location—it was as if it was a different dimension—it was still a part of the mortal plane of Eich. I had never even heard of it being possible to cut off part of a plane and then revert it back to normal.

Even Ayer cutting off all contact to the Earth Elemental Plane wasn't something anywhere nearly this ridiculous. That was because Ayer cut off contact to an entirely independent, different plane. However, this culprit behind the scenes actually managed to temporarily cut off part of a plane and then revert it back to normal again.

"...So this existence is at a minimum equivalent to a Main God? They didn't even need to personally appear to suppress the Frigid Nightmares."

If this type of existence was the true culprit, then they would only need to speak up to easily destroy the Mist Kingdom. Why go to all that trouble?

"I don't understand why they took such a roundabout method..."

I didn't understand it, so I decided not to think about it for the time being. I forcefully suppressed the frustrations in my heart. Now wasn't a good time to let my emotions run rampant.

"Since I've already waited more than three hundred years, waiting for a little more time isn't much. So there's still a true culprit behind the scenes... One day I'll..."

There was no need for me to speak fierce words, swearing revenge out loud. It was enough if I was aware of the iron will inside my scarred heart. No matter who the true culprit was, and no matter how powerful the existence, I, Roland, would definitely make them fall into Hell together with all the other culprits.

"I need more power—I don't have much time left. It looks like I need to lower my lack of limits even further..."

I took a deep breath and calmed my expression. I wouldn't allow unnecessary emotions to affect my judgement.

The most important thing right now was the negotiation with the Supreme Immemorial White Dragon before me. If I did a good job, perhaps we would gain a trustworthy ally within Dragon City.

In fact, the rest of the negotiations were simple. Since this was our first meeting, both sides only made shallow promises, attaching nothing important to our discussion. It was as if we were casually chatting and improving our relationship. Still, when that old dragon saw the Baby Dragons, his eyes lit up—it was almost as if he was a certain type of gentlemanly existence.

The Baby White Dragons currently had intelligence similar to young human children, and they were delighted to see a "little boy about their age" join them. They pulled him into playing games, climbing mountains, singing children's songs and attending class together. I had to try my very best to not laugh out loud when I saw a Supreme Immemorial White Dragon play tag with the Baby Dragons—and even be called a "slowpoke."

When he finished playing with the Baby Dragons, he came out with a large red flower that the kindergarteners gave him along with doodles on his face. I finally couldn't help it anymore and burst out laughing, while he smiled and shook his head.

"I haven't been so happy in years. This is the first time I've met intelligent Baby White Dragons that aren't bloodthirsty. Can I take one with me?"

"No—they're still half-complete products. Being able to do this much is due to the uniqueness of this world. If they leave, they'll probably revert immediately."

"...So you're saying that it's still impossible to make ordinary White Dragons become intelligent?"

"Currently, it's impossible. But as research proceeds on these Baby White Dragons it should be possible to engineer an inheritance method that can be used in the mortal plane. It's only a matter of time. Of course, if you can bring me some Adult White Dragons as experimental subjects, the speed of my research should greatly improve."

Sam nodded upon hearing this.

"...I'll bring you the experimental subjects you desire. I should be able to bring you at least ten Adult White Dragons by next year. As long as they don't die—no—if you can develop an inheritance method for White Dragons with no negative side effects quicker because of this, it doesn't matter if they all die. However, I want to see an absolute, complete inheritance method in the end."

Such a generous old dragon he was. With just one comment of mine, he agreed to bring me ten or even more Adult White Dragons. Relax—even if they survived, they would all meet "accidental deaths" on paper. How could I possibly give up on such excellent combat beasts...? Of course, since he was said it didn't matter to him if they all died, he had tacitly agreed to allow me to use the Adult White Dragons however I pleased. What he really meant with his words was "I only care about the results, so you can do whatever you want."

"...It's best if you can obtain results in half a year or less. My ninety-seventh child will be born soon..."

Alright, now I completely understood. Sam was probably considering things for his own children more than for the entire White Dragon species.

Thinking about it, Sam was indeed quite pitiful. Baby White Dragons would forever be born with the intelligence of wild beasts. This was fine for White Dragon parents that only had bestial intelligence themselves, but for an intelligent White Dragon to watch their child be nothing more than a meat-eating carnivore for the next several centuries indeed seemed rather painful. It would also be difficult to manage the Baby White Dragon. What was the parent supposed to do, lock it up in a cage like a pet?

Plus, other dragon species' children would always be intelligent from birth, while White Dragons were forever discriminated against. Not only that, the intelligent White Dragons couldn't even counter any of the discrimination. After all, the entire world treated White Dragons as no better than wild beasts, and even the

intelligent White Dragons could only agree.

"...I hope this marks a good beginning to our cooperation. I shall pay an appropriate price for your services. Oh, by the way, can I occasionally stop by and play with these children?"

"Of course."

Sam didn't mention a single word about the specifics of what he would pay me, but this was a result I was already more than satisfied with. Right after letting Sam out of Frigidwinter Earth, I made up my mind.

"Activate my scheme. We have no other choice left. I'm scared of how patient that true culprit is. We need more power."

I refused to believe that an existence with the culprit's power level would have died off of old age in just a short three hundred years. And back in the day, when I was investigating who the culprits were but kept coming up blank, that existence surely must have noticed and interfered with my investigation.

And the situation in the mortal plane was worsening by the day. Looking at the situation, I made up my mind.

"...If word spreads, you'll become public enemy number one of all humanity. Your reputation becoming even worse than when you were Yongye. How about thinking over things some more? I think there are still other methods out there."

"Hmph! So what? If the heavens aren't kind and the skies are blind... Fine, stop glaring at me, I'll speak in a way everyone understands. What I mean is simple... If any bastard wants to kill me and my family, I'll do everything it takes to kill that bastard!"

"No matter the price? If this plan of yours fails or isn't dealt with properly, you'll probably never be able to return to the Northlands. You'll become the most hated target of all humanity."

Harloys was rare in that she was being serious this time. However, I responded with a bitter smile.

"Hah! Everything was wrong from the very start. With the world being what it is, do weaklings like us have any other choice? It's already difficult for weaklings like us to survive, so how can we ask for the right of the strong—the ability to choose our path or to care about our reputations?"

The silly cat suddenly jumped onto my shoulder, rubbed herself against me and licked my face.

"...Yep, I shall accompany you down this path, even if this path is destined to lead us to the pits of Hell."

"...In that case, the first thing we need to do is contact Hell. Let's use that accessory Ayer gave us to contact little Tias."

"Little Tias? Other people call him Kamiltias, the leader of the nine Devil Lords, the legendary Main Devil Lord, the Lord of Lies!"

"...Right, how about we simultaneously contact Elisa? I'm rather nervous about negotiating with a veteran devil by myself. Let's ask a veteran demon like Elisa to help us so that I can calm down."

"Calm down? More like you're inviting her with intentions of intentionally being able to jack up the price by having her as a fake competitor. Still, this is indeed a good idea. If he thinks that a Demon Lord is competing with him, he'll be more willing to pay a good price. But will Elisa be sufficient as a competitor?"

"...Probably not. Karwenz would definitely be sufficient, but he's too dangerous."

As I laughed and chatted with the silly cat, I activated a black crystal necklace that Ayer had given to me. A pair of pitch-black eyes transformed into reality in the shadows as all light disappeared from the room. I grabbed the opportunity to speak first to this Devil Lord, using the same tone that devils typically used to allure others.

"Little Tias, I have a really profitable job here. I wonder if you're interested?"

******

Right when Roland mentioned her name, Elisa was in a terrible mood.

She was recalling things from the past, something which naturally made her angry.

She'd spent a great deal of effort to send her incarnation to the mortal plane but made zero romantic progress with Roland, and he only treated her like a manager. In the end, she became too busy dealing with so many of Roland's matters to the point where she couldn't even stay by his side. And even when she was next to him, she had made zero progress in their interactions. Their romance remained at the level of elementary schoolers.

"Have you eaten yet?"

"Yeah. The weather's quite nice today. How about going out for a walk?"

"Oh, that's no good. I have too many things to take care of. How about eating dinner together and having a walk afterwards when I'm done?"

Their interaction was far too plain. Sometimes, being overly familiar with each other could also be troublesome. Their suddenly-changed relationship not only made Roland panic—even Elisa herself found things difficult to accept. It would have been better if they had stayed together after officially becoming boyfriend and girlfriend, but they just happened to split up from each other again, causing this romantic relationship, which had just begun, to stop at the starting point.

If only one person in this relationship was a love expert... or even a normal person. However, Elisa was someone who never said anything unnecessary and possessed a venomous tongue. She would always criticize Roland out of habit. It was almost her instinct now to make Roland feel awkward however she could. As

for Roland... fine, let's not mention him as he's worse than an idiot at all matters related to love.

The end result was that while Elisa and Roland were together in East Mist, they continued their confusing relationship as master/servant, father/daughter and teacher/disciple. While Elisa did consider trying to elevate their relationship to the next level, someone would always jump out to interfere. Most of the time, it would be Reyne, and sometimes it would be Amelia. In the end, comical or random incidents would always happen whenever she wanted to make a romantic move on Roland. The final result was that Elisa returned to the Abyss without gaining anything at all.

And she was currently in a state of fury because she just heard that Roland located the missing Lust of the Seven Deadly Sins. This was the greatest danger to her formal status as his girlfriend.

The reason? Amelia's research report, which was also one of the reasons leading to the birth of "Princess Peach."

"Roland's Original Sin undead creations all involve cutting off a piece of his soul. Judging from the current situation, he must have cut off his own, instinctive lust. However, human souls don't remain unchanging. As long as certain conditions are reached, the parts he's missing can be recovered. That condition is..."

Even now, Elisa could remember how evilly Amelia smiled while telling her this information.

"...to stay together with that Original Sin undead creation. Then, Roland's soul will synchronize with his soul shard and his soul will begin to recover its lost emotions, in this case lust. And my hypothesis is that Roland created Lust long ago but lost and forgot about it. Basically, the current Roland doesn't even know what love is. So what meaning is there in being his girlfriend? Right now, you're just playing a game to fool yourself. The real battle..."

Elisa gritted her teeth tightly as she forced herself to speak the rest out loud.

"...The real battle begins after Roland finds his missing Lust. But now that he's found Lust, I'm not by his side. Does this mean the sneaky cat will gain the advantage?"

Alright then. She started worrying more and more as she thought about this. She even felt like not caring about the consequences and rushing directly up to the mortal plane. But suddenly, even though it clearly wasn't yet their arranged contact time, her contract communication ring with Roland lit up.

The moment she activated it, Roland spoke to her with a serious expression, which was very rare for him.

"Roland greets the honored Marchioness Elisa. We have a major job here for you. Would you happen to be interested?"

Chapter 413: Giants and Dragons

[TL/N: Yes, I know it's confusing, but this chapter doesn't follow the previous chapter's end at all. While the author does this on occasion, it's usually not this bad of a jump.]

The Ash Plains were located at the very center of Dragon World, a forbidden zone no ordinary lifeform would ever want to visit.

The reason? Dragon World had ten times the Elemental Tide density than the mortal plane, but in the Ash Plains the density would randomly fluctuate between one and one thousand times, thus sinking this entire location into chaotic insanity.

It would drive one insane to use magic or fight there because nobody could know if the fireball they'd prepared would suddenly enlarge itself by ten times and explode them to death. Or perhaps one would spend great effort in preparing a forbidden spell that would mysteriously become nothing more than a tiny spark that sputtered out.

Even the highest-level Concepts of Space and Time were in utter chaos in the Ash Plains. Dimensional tears could be seen all over the place. Nobody knew what would happen if you were caught by a dimensional tear that trapped even light.

While it might seem that this place robbed even the colors, more accurately it had robbed all the "natural laws." The lack of natural laws here made it impossible to use most abilities. If one got tangled up by the "lack of rules" here, their physical body and soul would also be drained of color. And if one was infected with "Color Loss Disease," even a powerful dragon that didn't retreat in time would be reduced to nothing but tiny particles.

However, the Ash Plains just happened to be the site of a battlefield.

"Although it's said that you can't choose all of your battlefields,

this is literally the worst battlefield I've ever seen."

Blue Dragon Evelyn was soaring through the sky. Although her Blue Dragon combat maniac instincts were summoning her to join the battle, her logic and reason made her stay as far away as possible.

The giants had constructed their campground next to tremendously tall "statues" I couldn't even see the tops of. Magma Giants and Storm Giants were modifying the terrain together and constructing defenses. Mountain Giants were using their racial talent to summon giant stone spheres and hammers. These crude weapons would then be enchanted by Frost Giants and Fire Giants, transforming them into powerful magic weapons more than capable of slaying dragons.

The earliest chaotic period right after these giants awakened was over. These giants here had regained their Intelligence and were no longer under the effects of the Intelligence-lowering curse. They would no longer instinctively try to climb their ancestor Titans' bodies like ants. For the dragons, however, this was doubtlessly a bad piece of news.

Dragons roared in the skies as they patrolled like vultures, searching for weak points to strike. When battle had first broke out here, the dragons had suffered tremendous losses.

In this unique environment of the Ash Plains, mages became ticking time bombs that might blow both sides up at any moment. Purely physical melee battles became the most useful method of fighting. However, the dragons never expected that their melee fighting abilities that they were so proud of would lose so pitifully to the giants.

"...Ashpis just died in battle. He's a mixed-blood Rainbow Dragon with the glorious nickname of 'Perfect Rainbow Wings.' Even he died here, quietly and without a ripple."

"Perfect Rainbow Wings was his nickname? In such a battlefield,

only the strongest at melee fights will survive. I heard he was pulled down by a chain and then had his head chopped off by the giants."

"Rainbow Dragons are renowned as the number one dragon species at melee fighting. Are you confident enough to defeat Ashpis in melee fighting even if he had a flowery nickname?"

Every famous and powerful dragon's death would cause ripples of astonishment in the dragons. In such a battlefield, their magic talents, which they were so proud of, became utterly useless. While dragons were powerful enough to simply abuse their natural talents and suppress other smaller species in melee combat, it was now their turn to suffer. They met the giants, who were well experienced in battle and had excellent cooperation. It was as if the dragons had met a real military organization for the first time, and they had only been bullying grade schoolers before.

Indeed, large numbers of giants perished, but many dragons were knocked down from the skies as well. Any dragon unfortunate enough to crash into the ground would almost never get the chance to fly again.

Right now, some on the giants' side consisted of local species with the Titans' Bloodline that were summoned through their bloodline. But most were the giant armies that had been sealed here with the Titans. These giants would have the highest combat strength and morale for their generation. If it weren't for the fact that the dragons had the advantage of flight, they would have long since lost.

Of course, the dragons had one other major advantage, which was...

"It's the 'Black Mist King!' The Supreme Immemorial Black Dragon!"

A colossal pitch-black dragon glided across the sky. His very existence caused the sky to lose its calmness as black mist covered

all light and the dragon itself. Once he started inhaling a deep breath, even an idiot would realize that a major catastrophe was about to befall this place.

Whoosh!

The Black Mist King exhaled black flames that covered the skies. All the giants that came into contact with these flames howled in pain as they were transformed into nothing but ash. The land was scorched by the dark flames, and huge patches of the giants' campground collapsed.

That's right—the dragons' greatest advantage was the fact that there were Great and Supreme Immemorial Dragons living here. If this was any other location, these ancient monsters wouldn't even bother helping their own species. But they would have plenty of descendants after staying for so long in Dragon World. And since their own territory was being invaded, even the Supreme Immemorial Dragons would find it impossible to stand on the sidelines.

Of course, the reviving giant army also had existences on par with the Supreme Immemorial Dragons. However, the natural law of seals was that the more powerful an existence was, the more difficult it was to break out. The military commanders and heroes of the giant army were still stuck in hibernation, and the seals on the Titans themselves were the strongest.

Of course, if the giants were unable to resist against such a powerful dragon scorching the land, this war wouldn't even need to be fought.

"Ahhhh! Damned Titans!"

A flash of lightning streaked through the sky and struck the Supreme Immemorial Black Dragon through the black mist! His wail of pain reverberated through the entire battlefield.

"That's our Titan Lord Alfredo's Judgement of Thunder!"

A green aura spread out from a certain statue, immediately vanquishing the simmering black flames on the plains. Simultaneously, the giants that had just been burned to ashes came back to life.

"...Titan Lord Freya! She's awoken as well!"

If the most powerful dragons forced them too much, the still-sealed Titans would pay a price and counterattack.

There were only thirty-four Titan statues here, of which seventeen had displayed their special abilities. And these seventeen were all higher-ranking ones. Judging by how they all had to take turns to use their powers, for them to attack through the seal would require them to pay at least a decent price. For sure, this meant that that Titan would be delayed in breaking out of the seal.

The Supreme Immemorial Dragon named the Black Mist King glared at the statues and spat out another dragonbreath in anger before leaving the battlefield.

Theoretically speaking, a Supreme Immemorial Black Dragon's combat strength wouldn't be any lower than an ordinary Titan's. However, there were only five Supreme Immemorial Dragons in Dragon World. In fact, four Supreme Immemorial Dragons had previously combined their attacks but were still forced back by the Titans' mysterious powers. And even if they destroyed these giants, new giants would constantly revive in an ocean of unstoppable blood. So-called efforts at trying to "recover lost ground" were meaningless.

Why did I say "theoretically speaking?" That's because nobody would know who was more powerful without an actual fight. Once existences reached a certain level, they would all have their own way of fighting, and it would be incredibly difficult to say who was stronger or who was weaker. There were also great differences amongst the individual Titans in terms of combat strength, so it was unknown which type of existence would be stronger without

them actually fighting. As for whether these Supreme Immemorial Dragons had once fought against the Titans in the first generation, they must have—but it was impossible for me to know the results of such battles.

Both sides' battle was apparently at a stalemate. It was impossible for the dragons to destroy all the giants as they would constantly revive, but the giants were unable to break out of the dragons' encirclement and leave the Ash Plains. Both sides thus sunk into a helpless battle of attrition.

Since both sides were at a situation where it was impossible to deal a deciding blow to the other side, it would obviously be foolish to invest large amounts of resources and personnel in this battle. So, in the end, the dragons could only keep up this battle of attrition.

Meanwhile, on the Borealis, my warriors and I could only exclaim in awe at the images of combat that Blue Dragon Evelyn brought to us in memory crystals.

This scene gave my mortal warriors a tremendous impact. The arrogant dragons that were almost undefeatable by humans were being swatted out of the sky as easily as if they were sparrows. In human society, slaying a dragon was a majestic accomplishment that would be accoladed for ten generations, but for the giants it was as simple as slaughtering chickens.

"Do we even have the ability to interfere in such a level of battle...?

Even the weakest giants down there, the Mountain Giants, would naturally be born with power equivalent to Silver. And Silver was the power level that most ordinary humans could only achieve after working hard for their entire lives. If such giants were nothing but cannon fodder in this battle, how could human armies achieve any different results even if every country's elite royal knights entered this battle?

"...Will all the future battles be at such a level?"

Even Harloys was no longer able to remain calm at the sight. She knew through our soul connection and my knowledge that future battles would escalate in scale. Still, it was quite difficult for her to accept the scene before her, of the normal dragons and giants becoming nothing more than cannon fodder.

I first shook my head, but then I nodded.

I shook my head because Titans and Supreme Immemorial Dragons would be considered the strongest of the strong throughout all the planes. They were already extraordinary existences, so it was impossible for large numbers of such extraordinary existences to appear any time in the near future.

I nodded due to my predictions for the future. It was impossible for anyone to accurately guess the future, but as the Elemental Tide continued increasing, stronger and stronger evil existences would descend to the mortal plane. Such battles were indeed possible several hundred years after the beginning of the Holy War.

"...The Holy War is a slow and long process. Such battles are indeed possible during the later stages. But by that time we should have enough power to control our own fates—at least."

And this battlefield also caused me to cancel some of my original plans.

"I initially wanted to have my warriors gain some experience on the outskirts of the battlefield, but now..."

"That would be nothing more than sending them to their deaths."

"Indeed. There's such a big difference that it's not even possible for them to gain any experience. It would be tantamount to suicide for them."

As I watched the scene before me, my impression of dragons became even worse.

This battle's stalemate wasn't because the giants and Titans were stronger than dragons and dragon descendants. Actually, since the dragons had so many eons to rest or do whatever they wanted, their overall power was far stronger than the Titans.

For instance, let's talk about the difference between ordinary giants and ordinary dragons. Giants typically had a Silver Bloodline, and their adult warriors would only be at Silver power. Dragons, however, had Gold Bloodlines and their Adult Dragons would be Gold at the very weakest. In individual combat, dragons would absolutely dominate. However, when the two species clashed as a whole, the giants had a much greater advantage.

Apart from the fact that giants had much stronger reproductive abilities than dragons, more importantly the giants had a well-organized social structure. They had excellent cooperation when facing their enemies and were willing to sacrifice themselves. Meanwhile, the dragons didn't know anything about cooperation because they were all used to fighting as individuals. It was only natural that the dragons would get badly beaten in these large-scale team fights.

This wasn't even a hypothesis of mine. The battle we watched was the best example.

When a dragon attacked, a Cyclops Giant and Magma Giant acted as the tank as they had the highest durability. A Fire Giant, who would be more skilled at using weapons, used chains and flying axes to limit the dragon's maneuverability. The chains it tossed out eventually succeeded in pinning the dragon onto the ground, at which a strong and dexterous Frost Giant suddenly leaped out in an ambush and cut off the dragon's head.

This dragon died in basically one exchange of blows. Meanwhile, this small giant squadron was unscathed. Unlike these giants that were forced into hibernation right after their battles in the immemorial generation, the dragons had nothing threaten them for far too long and lacked combat experience, especially top-level

combat experience now that they were on a cruel battlefield against equal existences.

That was how the situation was for the low and mid-ranked giants and dragons. But actually the situation was the same for the top-level existences.

There were only a total of thirty-four Titans in existence. If you counted the number of Supreme Immemorial Dragons still alive, they would far exceed the number of Titans. However, asking all of them to help would be basically impossible.

Even now, the Supreme Immemorial Dragons that attacked and helped here did so only because their descendants were in Dragon World. And whenever they attacked, they would never do so with full force, leaving plenty of strength in reserve and staying on guard against the other Supreme Immemorial Dragons. After all, the grudges that these ancient existences had against each other could make for countless television dramas.

Just as Evelyn had said, dragons didn't at all care about their own species. Unlike the tribal giants, dragons were accustomed to living by themselves and having only one dragon per territory. The Supreme Immemorial Dragons in the outside world wouldn't possibly come over here and fight the Titans with all they had for the sake of the Dragon World which didn't have anything to do with them.

The giants had high morale and were unified as they fought for the cause of their species. Meanwhile, the dragons didn't care about each other, wouldn't fight with their full power, thought only about keeping themselves safe and always looked for opportunities to escape. The difference in the will to fight on both sides would become an important factor on the battlefield.

In fact, I even felt like the still-sealed Titans had the advantage here with such factors tipping the scales. However, the dragons weren't idiots. They noticed that the situation was worsening as

time passed. Otherwise, they wouldn't have requested for help from the human mages or prepared to evacuate Dragon World.

Despite all this, when I saw this scene, I laughed.

"It seems I'm quite lucky. Only in such a stalemate situation will it be easy for me to be hired as a mercenary."

Chapter 414: Scammer

Perhaps it was thanks to their cruel environment, where they were tempered through numerous battles and baptized by unforgiving nature, that the Northlanders didn't know of despair or giving up.

I didn't show only certain people the scenes of the battle between the Titans and the dragons. Instead, I showed everyone.

"They'll have to face these almost undefeatable enemies sooner or later. They might as well learn the difference between themselves and the enemies so that they can start working hard as early as possible to surpass them."

Seeing such high-level battles astonished the young Northlanders, but it also ignited the fire within them.

In the battleships, I could see passionate training scenes everywhere. No matter if the person was a cannoneer or a mage, they appeared to have imaginary enemies and training goals.

Only by knowing one's insufficiencies would one be able to make up for them. Those who'd shout out loud about how they were already the number one in the world would be killed off by a dark horse.

Meanwhile, my research team arrived at a conclusion about the situation on that battlefield, especially thanks to the Myth-rank earth element archmage Kaid. He had joined them as he had too much free time on his hands. I trusted in his judgement.

"This entire world is the seal on the Titans. In that case, if the Titans want to break free from the seal, there's only one method: to cause the entire world to collapse. And if I'm right the imbalance of the Elemental Tide on the Ash Plains was caused by the Titans."

Evelyn's information served to confirm this hypothesis with more circumstantial evidence.

"...You want to know when the Elemental Tide started becoming unstable here? It started suddenly a few decades ago. Everything here was normal before that. In fact, I even heard that before this was one of the most popular places for dragons to go on dates because of those statues."

Should I be astonished about how the dragons were so care free, not even thinking about any potential danger? They actually treated the Titans' bodies as excellent dating scenery? Perhaps they even did various types of censored actions right under the Titans' eyes. Treating others' bodies as a hotel bed? No wonder the Titans weren't able to take it anymore... Cough—cough—I seem to be going off topic yet again.

Anyhoo, no matter if the Elemental Tide was high or low, it would normally be balanced. This was like how water in a cup would always be level. Even if you shook the cup or tilted it, the water would still return to a level position.

But right now the problem wasn't only about the Elemental Tide. The fact that this place was losing its very color meant that the world's natural laws were collapsing. The dimensional tears were the best evidence that even the most foundational Concepts of Space and Time were being shaken. That was the biggest problem.

It was just like drilling a tiny hole into a dam. Perhaps the water leakage wouldn't be significant at first, but eventually it would cause the collapse of the entire dam. The Elemental Tide's unpredictable fluctuations here was only a side effect of the true core problem.

Of course, forcefully going against the world's natural laws was no different from fighting against an entire world's dimensional will. This was, most obviously, a foolish idea. Easier methods definitely existed out there, but evidently the trapped Titans didn't have any available to them.

The dragons had to have noticed what the Titans were doing.

The bigger problem was that there was no effective way to stop the Titans.

Actually, there was a relatively easy method to delay the Titans' revival: continuously send veteran Supreme Immemorial Dragons to attack the giants, which would force the Titans to act and save their giants. Naturally, the Titans would no longer have the free time to destroy the natural laws of this world. But, first of all, this would only be a band-aid cure—it didn't address the foundational problem. And the bigger issue was that the dragons weren't united in the least. The matter of which Supreme Immemorial Dragons went and who went when would be a huge problem.

"Helping the Bardi Empire fight against the Holy Church? I'm sorry, you can see our current situation for yourself. Our own combat strength is already insufficient. How can we possibly send combat strength to the outside world?"

As I expected, the moment I made this request to Halos during our discussion the Gold Dragon unhesitatingly refused.

And so I nodded and shrugged.

"How regrettable. Since I can't accomplish the duty the Mage Country sent me here for, let's talk about personal matters."

"Personal matters?"

"Right now, your biggest hurdle is of course your lack of combat strength. And if you know anything about me, you should know that I have some combat strength under me that's not suitable for seeing the light of day..."

I smiled as I casually pointed at the sky, as it happened to be dark outside. I also mouthed the word "Yongye," not saying it out loud.

I didn't need to do anything more except hint at things as Halos' eyes instantly lit up.

"You're referring to Undead Emperor Yongye. But... how much combat strength do you have on your hands, and can they really be

used...?"

"Xiluo is a mega empire. You should know just how powerful mega empires can be. It's not too convenient to use undead armies in the mortal plane of Eich, and it's also time that I give them something to do. This is an excellent location that makes even me want to settle down here."

"...I will never open up our dragon graveyards to you."

From a certain standpoint, even a justice-loving Gold Dragon would become tainted by the dark occupation of a politician. It was inevitable. Since he mentioned dragon graveyards without me even bringing it up, he meant that it was something he was willing to give me—at least in secret.

If I was still Yongye, the countless number of dragon bones and dragon corpses in a dragon graveyard would have greatly attracted me. But the current me had no interest in creating a Bone Dragon army.

"I didn't intend to ask for such a thing. I don't lack undead fighting forces under me."

"How can you promise that your undead armies won't attack us?"

"Contracts. You should know about the soul contracts between an Undead Emperor and his undead armies. I can sign contracts with you as well—the Devil Lords' ultimate contracts. I will promise that not a single undead soldier under my command will attack a single dragon. I recommend that all agreements we end up making be guaranteed by the devils' ultimate contracts."

Although devils had terrible reputations, their contracts were renowned and valued by powerful individuals in all the planes. Halos nodded, but then had another doubt.

"Roland, since you're making such great efforts, what do you hope to gain?"

"Heehee!" I immediately chuckled.

"Everything... sorry, I accidentally used the wrong word. Yep, I'm not that greedy. I just want a permanent residency permit for my people. Of course, for my own safety's guarantee, I also need one of the four Foundational Elemental Items. Don't look at me like that—it's not like the Seal of the Four Elements is a top-level secret. I know that all four Foundational Elemental Items are in your possession. It's not like I can do anything much with just one. And how am I supposed to open up a permanent Dimensional Door to summon reinforcements here without a Foundational Elemental Item? Were you intending on using the Bardi capital's Dimensional Door which has a random teleportation point to here?"

This world was complete and was crafted out of the Seal of the Four Elements. When I used the same spell, I needed to use four high-level elemental items—one of each element—as the core and catalyst for the spell. Once the seal was complete, these high-level elemental items would become the control panel for the new, sealed-off world.

If the Titans obtained the four Foundational Elemental Items of Dragon World—no, they only needed two items since the elements naturally countered each other— they would be able to instantly destroy this entire world. This was the much smarter idea I was referring to when I said that the Titans could only resort to a foolish idea. But since the dragons had ruled this plane for so many eons, they had obtained all four Foundational Elemental Items that had been used to create this world.

Short-term Dimensional Doors didn't have high requirements. However, permanent Dimensional Doors, especially teleportation points that went between dimensions, would need to obtain "recognition" from some type of dimensional will, just like how you would need to be invited before entering someone else's house. Otherwise, a tremendous price would have to be paid—like a major blood sacrifice. And the fact that the Bardi Empire had a zero-cost Dimensional Door to Dragon World confirmed my suspicions that

the dragons must have possession of all four Foundational Elemental Items.

"Even if I obtain one of the four Foundational Elemental Items, I will only get the powers of 'arriving any time I want' and 'leaving whenever I want.' At most, it's useful for self-protection. Are you dragons worried that I'm going to bring people here to mess up your world? This plane is gigantic, and there have been no clashes between us. It will be truly troublesome to both of us if the Titans destroy this world. Besides, I already have a solution that can foundationally solve the problem of the Titans."

Halos was astonished to hear this. However, his dragon instincts told him that I wasn't lying, that I really could solve the problem of the Titans.

"Let me consider it."

Although we hadn't come to a final agreement, I was satisfied with the outcome. After all, the dragons were ruled by a council leadership with many leaders, so overall authority was very spread out. It would have been impossible for Halos to make any decisions by himself even if he was nominated as the overall leader. He would still need to consult the others.

Indeed—the moment Roland left Dragon City, Halos immediately went to contact a Scroll Dragon leader who had been spying on their entire conversation. The Scroll Dragon leader informed Halos that his lie detection magic determined that Roland hadn't made a single lie. Only then did Halos feel reassured enough to convene a meeting of the dragon leaders.

At that time, I was walking on the streets with an icy expression, but inside I was trying my very best not to laugh out loud.

"Are you that proud of yourself for fooling him? Hah! He'll probably become known as the stupidest dragon leader who ever lived. Perhaps he'll even become a part of some future famous saying, like 'Halos invited Roland to Dragon World.'"

"I didn't lie at all! He simply had his own misunderstanding."

That's right—I didn't lie at all. It was almost impossible to lie to ancient dragons, so I only told Halos the truth—a carefully worded truth, that was.

I only mentioned that I was Emperor Yongye in the past, and that I had some combat strength under me that couldn't see the light of day. It was his own fault for misunderstanding that I was referring to my undead armies. As for signing the devils' ultimate contract with him promising that my undead would never attack the dragons? Of course that was fine, as I wasn't planning on bringing any undead here in the first place.

"However, you made a trade with the devils. Let's not even mention your reputation here, but aren't you afraid of playing with fire? Even with Ayer backing you up, a Devil Lord isn't someone easy to deal with."

Compared to the evil, vicious and sly devils, even the undead would seem like honorable knights. If I told Halos that I intended to invite a group of powerful devils into this dimension, negotiations would have instantly stopped. And the only way to possibly invite existences on the level of Devil Lords here would require me to obtain one of the four Foundational Elemental Items of this world, which would allow me to send out the cross-dimensional invitation.

"Who cares? No matter what the end result is, things will still be better than now. Rather than two major countries competing with each other and treating us as cannon fodder, I much prefer a three-faction situation where we can gain advantages from playing each faction against the other. Besides, this was all part of our 'grand scheme' to begin with. I just activated it slightly earlier than originally planned."

"I keep feeling more and more like this grand scheme of yours is unreliable. Can I ask if I can withdraw from this plan?"

"You'll be killed off to keep the secret if you do, dear. I've been recently feeling like I lack a pair of cat-skin gloves."

"Stop joking around. I've been feeling a chill recently, as if some major calamity is soon to be upon us..."

Chapter 415: Chaotic Situation

"The dragons still haven't come to a decision?"

"My sincerest apologies, but not yet. The lords are still in discussion. I shall notify you if there's any news."

The Silver Dragon that greeted me had the best of etiquette. He was also incredibly handsome—all Silver Dragons preferred handsome or beautiful forms—but no matter what he said, he couldn't change the fact that the dragon leader council was incredibly inefficient at determining overall policies that would affect all the dragons. Four days had passed since I last spoke to Halos, and they had not even reached a basic agreement among themselves.

I understood why they had such a council system but couldn't agree with using such a system at all.

The more council members there were, the more different benefits each member would be concerned about. It would be almost impossible to reach an overall agreement. Plus, dragons were notorious for viewing time as unimportant. It was likely that they wouldn't reach a conclusion anytime soon.

"...Evelyn, how's the discussion going?"

Still, things would be far more convenient with a spy, as Evelyn was also a member of the dragon leaders' council. Plus, she had a deep connection with both Bardi and Dragon World, so of course she would be invited. No matter which sister went to the council, they represented the entire group of Evelyns, and I could learn the progress of the dragons' discussion simply by asking Copper Dragon Evelyn next to me. But only after I asked did I discover that I was still too young and inexperienced, that I had been far too optimistic... Why was the dragons' discussion stalling? Because of every different species' personal benefits...

"...It's a headache. Blue Dragon leader Kennen is arrogantly shouting about killing all outsiders and that dragons are the mightiest species capable of destroying all other species like how he always does. Yep, he's the Blue Dragon leader that you made an enemy out of previously. He's a maniacal dragon purist, so he probably would have opposed you regardless. The strange part is that the typically low profile White Dragon leader is strongly in agreement for working with you, while the usually friendly Silver Dragon leader is adamantly against you. You understand how it is, though. Silver Dragons have natural hatred for the undead."

All of the above was easy enough for me to understand. The rest? I didn't even know how to comment on it.

"The Copper Dragon and Bronze Dragon leaders both said that they don't care either way. Both asked if Dragon City would pick up the tab for dinner tonight after the meeting. Most dragons that remain neutral on this topic have the exact same attitude. They're strongly requesting an extra honeyed boar for lunch and an extra roast cow for dinner. Rather than the council topic, they're more concerned about what's for today's lunch. Oh, someone's even complaining that Gold Dragon Halos is abusing his authority and breaking democracy, but everybody is ignoring him. That's because the Green Dragon leaders do that every time there's a speaker. They oppose every single plan, no matter what it is. Wow, one of the Green Dragon leaders just spat corrosive acid at the speaker's podium, causing Halo's podium to disappear... Halos got so angry that they're now fighting... Well, it's whatever. Besides, it's not like dragons are the only ones who break out into fights at leadership council meetings."

Evelyn's auditory livestream of the event helped me understand just how chaotic the dragon leader council meeting was. I suddenly felt a mysterious sense of sympathy for Halos the Gold Dragon and council leader. Just how bad must he have it to face a group of bastards like this every single day? ...Cough—cough—I definitely

wasn't sympathizing with him because I was recalling the bastards in Sulfur Mountain City! Of course not!

"Halos is so pitiful. Isn't him being the council leader the same as being everyone's venting target?"

"That's why the council leader is a job that the dragons take turns at. However, Gold Dragons have far too strong a sense of responsibility, so in the end a Gold Dragon is the unlucky council leader more than seventy percent of the time."

Even though this job of council leader would only be temporary, it seemed truly unpleasant. But the dragons had ruled in such a way for countless millennia. Their social habits and customs would be ironclad. Changing them even slightly would be incredibly difficult.

"...Then what happens if the dragons need to take action on a major issue?"

"Then simply take action. An overall agreement has never been achieved even once. We all simply do what we want. Besides, it's possible to accomplish things even on our own. For instance, if enough time passes, and the Gold Dragon leaders think that working with you will be worthwhile, they'll just grab those who agree and simply work with you. They'll act as the representatives of all dragons here in Dragon City."

"...Then is there any meaning to this entire dragon council? It's just to argue with each other and waste time, from what I can see."

"Honestly, I don't understand it either. However, it has been the custom for countless millennia, so there's at least that meaning to it. At the very least, it can act as a notification to all other dragons in Dragon City whenever there's a major issue, so that everyone can know about it. It'll also prevent anyone from intentionally causing conflicts."

"Intentionally causing conflicts? Are the dragons that bored with

nothing to do?"

"...Yes. Often. For instance, any time a Green Dragon or Blue Dragon leader wants to do something, the Gold Dragon leaders will probably want to see if it will go against basic morals. And whenever the Silver Dragons want to do something, the Color Dragons will probably interfere. Most of the time, it's not even because they oppose the issue itself, but they simply oppose the issue because of who brought it up. For instance, recently, the Silver Dragons decided to clean the ground of Dragon City. The end result was right after they finished cleaning, the Green Dragons immediately summoned vines and stink swamps and filled the place in. The Green Dragons claimed to prefer such an environment."

"...They really do have too much free time on their hands. First world problems. How much longer are they going to argue for?"

"It's common for the council arguments to last for anywhere from one month to two years. But Halos is the type to have others who agree immediately act together with him. Still, asking for others to act with him will take some time, and even those who agree will still need to have some discussions. That's why they should respond to you in about two weeks or so."

"This still requires two more weeks...?"

I was beginning to sympathize with Halos more and more. Apparently, working so hard to explain the plan at the council meeting wasn't even in order to help the plan pass—it was to beg the other leaders to not make trouble, or at least limit the amount of trouble they'd make when the plan was carried out.

The only reason the dragons had survived with such a ridiculous political structure for so long was solely that the dragons had enough power. They had no natural predators. Even if they spent most of their energy on useless internal struggles and pranked each other out of boredom, their foundational strength would not

be affected. However...

"This time, their enemy is the Titans. Is it really alright for them to continue behaving this way? The Titans are no small nuisance; they're unlike anyone they've ever faced before."

Yet Evelyn could only sigh. That was just how things were. Although she knew full well that the current dragon political system was horrid, there was nothing she could do about it. Due to their arrogance and overconfidence, the dragons had gotten accustomed to wasting their time like that.

"Forget it. I'm busy with my own affairs. Let me know when they're done."

Right now, time was precious to me; priceless, even. The outside world was in a mess—conflicts raged all over—so I had no intentions of waiting here for the dragons to come to a decision.

"By the way, it seems that you sisters don't care too much about the current situation in Bardi? Aren't you worried that enemies will find the entrance to Dragon World?"

"...Even if Dragon City doesn't send reinforcements, our First Sister will personally act if it's necessary. Please rest reassured."

Alright, I didn't need to say anything else on this matter. Now that I had seen Supreme Immemorial Dragons for the first time and could compare their sizes, I could now understand the ridiculousness of the physical size and draconic might of the first three, tri-headed Evelyn sisters. Although the three were still weaker than a Supreme Immemorial Dragon, it wouldn't be by much. Plus, if all ten Evelyns fought together, they could communicate with their souls and were fully committed to fighting for each other. I was curious just what combat power level they could achieve.

"Right, have you come to a decision about Cher? What does she herself think?"

If we considered the fact that the experimental subject's mentality would affect the stability, and potentially the outcome, of the experiment—cough—cough—I meant to say that I was worried that a little girl like her wouldn't be able to handle the truth! I originally didn't intend to tell Cher all the details; I wanted to only agree on a plan to cure her with the Evelyns before directly tossing Cher onto my surgery table and executing the final plan. However, the Evelyns absolutely insisted on telling her everything.

I was interested to know how Cher, with her stereotypical "class president" personality, would react when she learned all these worldview-shattering things.

"The existence she believed to be her adopted mother is actually her daughter. And this endless cycle of death and life and giving birth to new Evelyns is probably more than enough to ruin her worldview."

"...This iteration of Cher is mentally stronger than even we anticipated. She's decided to accept your plan to cure her."

"This iteration? That means that a past Cher—"

"We've told her the truth before. None of us would ever lie to her. When my idiot older sister told her the truth, Cher immediately chose to commit suicide."

"Eh? If she dies without falling in love, won't that break the cycle?"

"No, it won't. After she committed suicide, the cycle started all over again, and she became a baby with no memories. It was just that no new Evelyn sisters were born..."

From a certain standpoint, I must have truly hated Cher back in the year to do such a thing to her. But when I recalled the past self in my dreams, the man who hated the entire world, I felt it wouldn't be strange no matter what ridiculous things he did.

Although it might seem rather strange to refer to my past self as

"he," memories of that time would play in my mind whenever I was asleep as of late. But this past me was far too different from the current me, and this made it difficult for me to view myself as him.

"Perhaps the price of reincarnating is some type of foundational change. Perhaps, without realizing it, I'm becoming ever slyer, ever more mature, ever more... comical?"

Thinking about this, I looked forward to experimenting—I mean curing Cher even more.

"Alright. After we gather the required materials we'll immediately begin the surgery. I hope she can accept what she becomes. Ha! I'm like this after only four reincarnations. What will she become after she's had eight reincarnations? Perhaps she'll be reborn as someone amazing. I really look forward to this."

Out of all those unreliable methods I proposed, there was only one that the Evelyns found acceptable. Of course, this method was the only one usable from the very start.

"Plan 178 (Revised edition that's impossible to revise any more, and I'll get angry if anyone tells me to revise it again, but I'll have to revise it if you really tell me to...) Final Plan: Soul Net Construction."

"When normal lives are lost, they will lose all their memories in the River Styx and Heaven's Pillar. Cher, however, never entered the River Styx to begin with. She simply washed away all her memories and started over from the beginning, but this didn't wipe the memories deep within her soul. In that case, we can use an advanced magic spell—such as Memory Recovery—to help her regain her memories of her past lives. It's similar to restoring deleted data on a hard drive... Don't ask me what a hard drive is; I'm just making an analogy to make things easier for myself."

"Of course, in Cher's situation, if we suddenly place eight lifetimes worth of experience in her head, there is a seventy

percent chance her brain will directly explode and another twenty percent chance she'll go insane. But there's still a way to carry out this plan: every Evelyn was once a part of Cher, so their physical connection can be transformed into a memory connection. We can use the technology of Pride to create a soul net."

"Of course, creating a soul net requires a high degree of synchrony between the souls. Pride's soul net is successful because he's the only controller of the soul net. All other souls are his tools and slaves. But your souls are all foundationally the same, plus you had soul connections with each other to begin with. I have an over ninety percent chance of success in creating this soul net."

"After creating the soul net, we can use the Evelyns to help Cher absorb her memories so that she can accept the inheritance of her eight reincarnations. All of her memories and strength will be gathered into her current soul. Just these memories and new soul shards that will be born will give Cher an over seventy percent chance of instantly becoming super powerful. And as long as her own soul becomes strengthened, she'll naturally be able to control if she enters reincarnation or not."

"Actually, I feel that this should be the true complete form of Lust: the Evelyns will become an endlessly evolving group under Cher's leadership. The previous pre-programmed self-evolution was only because the leader Cher was far too weak. She was unable to keep up with the Evelyns' progress, which actually slowed down the progress of evolution and even made things random."

"As long as this surgery is completed, I can guarantee that she won't be weaker than any other Original Sin of mine, although I don't know how powerful she'll become in the end. In fact, it's quite possible that with you sisters' assistance she'll be able to directly skip through the Three Heavy Doors of Myth and instantly become a SemiGod. Of course, since she's the oldest sister of the Seven Original Sins, she should have this power level to begin with."

Evelyn nodded. This current iteration of Cher was already the strongest and most iron-willed out of all the previous Chers. She was able to become a Weaver of Fortune—also known as Summoner of Misfortune—on her own, best evidence of her excellent potential. All the Evelyn sisters were looking forward to how far she could progress.

"Then what's the price for this?"

"Everything... Sorry, I just really like to use this joke. In theory, there won't be any price. But the most common side effect of having too many memories is multiple personalities. Still, having a soul net will mitigate these problems. In conclusion, the success rate should be really high. After all, it's not that difficult for me to solve the problem that I created... and even if a new problem arises, I'll take care of it."

Evelyn nodded in agreement, and thus the plan to cure Cher was settled on. But this wasn't something that could be done instantly as all ten Evelyns would need to arrive together in order to help absorb Cher's soul shards and memories.

At this moment, Evelyn paused for a moment and then looked at me somewhat strangely.

"What's the matter?"

"...My sisters want me to ask you if you're really able to give us what you promised. What you promised us isn't something that's so easily achievable. Even Ayer wouldn't be capable of accomplishing it."

"Of course. I, Roland, always carry out my promises. I never lie."

"...My dragon senses are telling me that surprisingly you're not lying to me. You actually never lie? I feel more reassured now. By the way, I should mention that you've even managed to change my impression of you."

"Don't be fooled by him. He never lies, but he forever only tells

part of the truth. Aren't there so many out there that have been pitifully scammed by him?"

"Silly cat, shut up! I'm clearly a good person—a really good person!"

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[TL/N: A sudden scene change occurs here. Roland is talking to the devil Kamiltias that he was negotiating with back in Chapter 412.]

"...Alright then. It's settled. I really look forward to the day I meet you in person."

The devil face, which was hovering in midair, was also smiling. He seemed to be quite satisfied with what he obtained in our negotiations.

"I look forward to it as well. It's truly interesting to speak to you. I'm even beginning to suspect that you're secretly one of us devils in disguise."

"Hehehe! Others indeed call me the 'devilishly wicked and sly Roland.' However, I still feel that I need to work harder to live up to the name and be compared to the real deal.'"

The Devil Lord Kamiltias' image chuckled at this.

"Actually, there's a simple shortcut. I can transform you into a fellow Devil. I promise that after transforming you, I'll give you a position equal to mine—no—even higher than mine."

"By position, you're referring to physical position like standing next to you? Higher means lifting me above your head? Could you at least get a little more creative? Why play such word games? Besides, even if you were being honest, I still wouldn't have agreed."

"How regrettable. Alright then, chat with you next time."

The devil's face vanished. I then furrowed my eyebrows and

slumped over in my chair, completely relaxing myself and revealing my fatigue in a rare instance.

The Devil Lord was even more difficult to deal with than I expected. I really didn't want to have to talk to him again if I didn't have to.

As expected of an expert in tempting mortals into becoming fallen. Not only were devils naturally born with allure magic—one of the most difficult types of magic to defend against—they were also experts in psychology, hypnosis and all sorts of other little tricks. They were masters at making humans unknowingly fall for their traps.

Not only that, the devils' language possessed its own magic power. If you accidentally agreed to or promised them something you would likely be bound by a contract. I had to constantly be on guard with my words, which was quite tiring.

Talking to Kamiltias meant that I had to forever be on guard against any potential wordplay tricks, along with defend against all his magics. This was even more tiring than a battle of attrition. Moreover, he seemed to be having quite a lot of fun. After he saw how special I was compared to others, he kept trying to act like a salesman, attempting to make me promise to transform into a Devil.

"Luckily, we were communicating across dimensions. Otherwise, he would have been even more difficult to deal with. Considering that I really do have to meet him in person in the future, I'm truly shooting myself in the foot here."

But, from another standpoint, our "friendly interaction" here had greatly helped our negotiations. Meanwhile, the other competitor, the Demon Lord, was in a much worse situation.

"I'll definitely think of a method to return! Don't you dare give me flowers—"

That was Elisa's final angry roar when I ended my communication with her. It would seem that she was under great stress from whatever she was going through in the Abyss.

At her forceful request, this plan that shouldn't have involved her was forced to include her. She would be even busier in the future.

"Okay then. Although there are many troubles, at least there are some good things as well."

I looked out the window and saw everyone being busy. This camp of ours on the Ghostwind Plains was becoming more and more like our home. Our new city here, which was named Dawnlight Town, was changing every day. Everything seemed to be progressing well.

"...The pearl of the Ghostwind Plains? The largest business district in the entire world?"

In our time here, I discovered that this world was just like an unexplored treasure vault. How could we possibly let the resources here go to waste?

Of the three mega airships, only the Borealis remained stationed at Dawnlight Town every day to guard it. The other two mega airships were both utilized as huge merchant airships and went to other locations to trade with the natives every day. As I watched our treasury fill up, I felt like I could just about say "Robbery? That's far too slow a method to make money."

What? You're asking me if the bone airships were too scary to be used as merchant airships? The truth was the opposite. Only by having intimidating strength would it be easier to make trades with the bad-tempered locals.

At first, our people went out with the intention to peacefully scam—I mean peacefully trade with them. However, most of the natives had attacked them the moment they arrived, so now my people had learned from the experience. First, my people would

stop the bone airship at some major tribal gathering location and fire a couple cannon shots to destroy a few buildings. After that, trading with the natives became much easier.

Unfortunately, having only two airships was still inefficient. But I wasn't impatient about it, since my main goal right now was simply to let all the natives learn about my existence. My people were here to stay and would need to coexist with them.

The more I learned about this world, the more I didn't want to leave.

Every single day, countless warriors in the Gentlemen Alliance mercenary group would make breakthroughs. It would very much shock others in the mortal plane if they learned how many Gold and Legend ranked warriors I had despite their young age.

And in this environment magic research would have new developments once every few days, which, in truth, was even better news.

Resources, technology and personnel. If I could carve out a place of my own in this world, I would receive an endless amount of benefits. I completely understood why the dragons didn't want to give up on Dragon World.

Meanwhile, one of Timlad's new accomplishments truly astonished me.

"Artificial souls? You succeeded?"

Chapter 416: Reaching the Peak

"You actually succeeded in creating artificial souls?"

I was truly astonished. It wasn't that I didn't trust Timlad—it was that this was an unfathomable problem that even I had given up on. But Timlad had solved it so easily?

However, Timlad shook his head.

"Creating purely artificial souls is impossible. That's an ability only possible with the power of Creation. Otherwise, souls wouldn't have become the best currency in the lower planes. What we succeeded in making was simple versions of artificial souls. Or perhaps a more accurate term for them is artificial intelligence. It's a modification of current Mage Tower Spirit technology..."

Simply speaking, Timlad had managed to create smaller versions of Mage Tower Spirits. But just this accomplishment was astonishing enough.

"Does this mean that we can now create an automated mecha army?"

"Of course, as long as you can foot the bill for its creation. Also, although we managed to decrease the size requirements for the technology, the energy supply and mechanical parts required still take up the space of an entire room. And an archmage is required to awaken the soul. Also, the process will make the archmage permanently lose maximum mana, and it's also possible that the archmage will lose a power level. You can see that mass production is still unfeasible."

Normal Mage Tower Spirits would be created with the entire mage tower as the foundation, with mega-sized energy batteries and elemental pools providing their energy. The mage tower's master or an invited archmage would then need to cast a high-circle magic to awaken this type of artificial soul. The Mage Tower

Spirit would also need to be hosted in a highly precious and expensive magical gem as the vessel. Mass producing Mage Tower Spirits would be impossible.

"Fortunately, the newest edition of Olivia's Magic Box has improved the energy circuits. As for the research on the White Dragons—yep, I'm talking about their Dragon Egg shells—they actually make excellent soul vessels. Using them as the hosts for artificial intelligence can guarantee the artificial soul's survival. It's also possible for the soul to normally pilot a mecha. Although the cost for creation is still significant, at least this new type of artificial soul is capable of freely traversing the outside world without being limited to staying inside a mage tower.

"Wait a minute—the newest edition of Olivia's Magic Box? Are you talking about OMBox 6? I recall that OMBox 6 uses mithril cores and that it costs more than 30,000 gold coins to create just one. The Swordcasters are complaining that they'd need to sell their kidneys to afford one. Compared to the OMBox 5, its functions have improved by only 30%, but it costs ten times more. When we first started selling the OMBox 6, we only sold three of them. Plus, Dragon Eggs are required, which increases the price even more. How much does one artificial soul cost in total to produce? I'm asking about only production costs."

"The OMBox 6 has already decreased in price. It costs only 28,888 gold coins now... Cough—since two OMBox 6's are required to create an artificial soul's double core internal structure, the total production cost is probably around 100,000 gold coins for one."

"...I might as well go sell my kidney. Can't my research department be slightly more normal? Wait a moment, you said that the artificial soul is usable for mechas? Is it also usable for physical bodies?"

"It should be usable for both. We succeeded in giving a Rotten Abomination intelligence. The moment he gained intelligence, he started complaining to us about the stinky stench of his body."

My research department named this artificial soul project as "Soul Embryo." The technology to create this stemmed from Mage Tower Spirits, and the cost to create one was similar to that of Mage Tower Spirits as well. Miniaturizing the size any further would be impossible with current technology, but since these Soul Embryos could be used in undead magic creations...

"Alright, let's first install them in the Mizar and Alkaid. The best swords should be given to the best warriors. It will be great if these two battleships' combat strength can reach the Borealis's level."

When I had first created Envy, I was mostly thinking about how to make the incomplete Borealis start moving. But after so many years of battles, it could be said that we'd relied on this living battleship more and more.

The Borealis was swift, had great attack power, the advantage of flight and was excellent at logistical support. The most important part was that since this airship was living, it was easy to use and Marsolit could choose his targets to attack. Envy's special abilities —absorbing water and devouring for regeneration, which were gained from that Hydra—also far surpassed the other battleships' abilities. It could be said that the Borealis had no particular weakness.

Perhaps the Borealis hadn't accomplished any amazing combat feats by itself, but its usefulness in different situations and high maneuverability meant it appeared in all the battles I needed it to. The Borealis was becoming a more important combat unit under my command.

Meanwhile, its imitations, the Mizar and Alkaid, were top-level constructions of undead magic. Yet this had been a choice I'd made helplessly as I lacked money and resources; in every aspect, these two airships' specifications were inferior to the Borealis. Their greatest weakness was their slow speed, mostly due to their heaviness. The fact that they relied on outside sources for supplies and maintenance personnel also limited their effective usage radii.

Since I now had an opportunity to increase their power, how could I possibly let this chance slip by?

"Excellent job. Increase the priority of this research project by one level and continue making progress on this topic."

"...It's already at the highest priority research level, so there's no need to increase it. But I think that there won't be any progress for the short time being since the Haletdam people—the ancient cultures had only reached this point as well."

Timlad was muttering to himself as he left with his research, but I was delighted. Unlike the other people of this world, I knew that once artificial intelligence technology made its first breakthrough, technological advances would soon follow after like an avalanche.

"This is truly an accidental advancement in the science skill tree. Perhaps artificial intelligence-run mechanized production lines will be invented here even before cars and electronics. Timlad is truly amazing. As expected of a legendary hero from the game's history. I can rest assured about my subordinates with such people around. I also need to use the rest of my time wisely..."

I felt a lot better as I looked at the overall current situation and the recent past.

Currently, the Northlands Mist Alliance was developing at a high speed. I doubted that any major problems would occur with Reyne and Glina watching over it. And there was my secret agreement with Orloss, where he would give the Mist Alliance a great gift. The Mist Alliance would only develop even quicker afterwards. With the Underground allied armies added in, the Northlands' development should be absolutely stable.

Meanwhile, the Church of Law was also gradually becoming more accepted by the world. Although my bastard subordinates typically acted ridiculously, they were still quite trustworthy when it came to serious business. With them around, the Church of Law wouldn't change to become something I didn't expect.

The current relationship between the most powerful Underground Lords was probably at the most unified level it had ever been in history. Considering the special relationship between everyone, even if there was some major incident, the Northlands and Underground's combined power could take care of it.

As for Xiluo, Auland, Bardi, San Antonio and other such powers, they were all mega empires or almost at a mega empire's level. I didn't need to worry about them. Right now, only Bardi was in a truly difficult situation, but I didn't have to worry that they'd be completely devastated since the Mage Country and dragons were helping them.

Overall, it indeed seemed like I had greatly improved the situation compared to the game's history. All the seeds I planted had sprouted. With so many friends, companions and allies around that could take care of themselves, I could rest reassured about them and plan my own grand scheme.

"Grand scheme? What's that?"

"Do you still remember the summer rain by that clear lake...? Fine, don't hit me, it's not that I don't want to tell you—it's that I can't say it until it's time. There're some existences out there that can learn about things the moment you say it. And right now, what I intend to do is best known by as few people as possible."

While Evelyn was confused, she still decided to help me due to her past trust for me. I did, however, tell her about my Plan D: Allying with the devils and inviting devils into Dragon World.

"Who cares? The Titans will definitely revive, which means that this dimension will be destroyed. A ridiculous seeming cure is still better than no cure. Also, I trust that you won't do wrong by me."

Evelyn specially pointed at herself while she said she trusted me. She meant that she was separating herself from the dragons, that although I might do wrong by the dragons, I wouldn't do wrong by her.

"You're really confident in me, but even I don't know why you trust me so much."

"I still understand your personality. In a way, you're really childish. You'll be nice to whoever's nice to you. You're no different from an elementary schooler in this regard. Still, this part about you does help to make me trust you. As long as I treat you sincerely, you won't betray me. Hehe."

I felt rather helpless about how Copper Dragon Evelyn was all smiles. She made me sound like a harmless little rabbit! I really should pull the pitiful Sulfur Mountain City council members, beastmen and Emordilorcan out of Hell to have them tell her about how much I'd made them suffer.

"They probably all had evil intentions towards you or antagonized you in some way for you to make them suffer like that."

Upon closer consideration, this wasn't wrong. Could it really be that I was a good person? I was actually a good person! Someone like me was really a good person!

I could only sigh since I was apparently a good person.

"No wonder my lives are always so short. In this world, good people won't live long lives."

"You? A good person? Amelia. Touch your stomach; that's where your conscience is—you've already eaten it. Do you dare say that you've done right by her?"

"Fine, I'm a bad person. A really, really bad person."

Harloys' casual comment made me unable to counter her. From a certain standpoint, Amelia had truly treated me well. Back then, I was just a foolish novice whose mind was filled with thoughts of hatred and revenge. My talent for magic was awful, and Amelia helped teach me the basics while also giving me the foundation to start everything—knowledge on how to construct life. Even the me

from back then considered whether or not to simply spend the rest of my life together with her like that.

Yep, when I actually looked back on the past, Amelia was truly nice. She was beautiful, treated me excellently and was a powerful individual. But once I thought about the grudge of my destroyed country, how could I possibly allow myself to drown in personal pleasures? Thus, I unhesitatingly betrayed her...

"Wait a moment, something seems wrong here. Did I really consider spending the rest of my life together with her? Why don't I remember this at all?"

"...It seems you're getting closer and closer to becoming a Legend."

The silly cat's sigh confused me. What did my memories becoming more confused have to do with me progressing in power level?

"What the—what does this have to do with my power level?"

I originally wanted to use a cuss word here, but considering the silly cat's skills in certain areas, I decided to change my wording in order to avoid having my face be smacked instantly and embarrassing myself.

"This time, you're probably intending on combining all your past experiences and paths into one to reach a peak that you've never attained before. You should have already finished thinking about the path of leveling up that you want to take."

I nodded at this. There was no reason for me to deny it. From the very start, entering Legend and even Myth rank here in Dragon World was the most important task I set for myself.

"However, the portion of your memories that's most incomplete is from when you were studying at the Cloud Tower. The second most incomplete portion is from when you died in the Bardi Empire. I recall that when we met at the Cloud Tower, your main

magic was ice magic, but you were secretly studying undead magic as well."

"Yeah. In that life, I formed my Ice Treader Soul Imprint. But actually my talent for ice magic is terrible, and I was mostly cheating through my System..."

"Are you certain?"

Even without the silly cat staring at me as if I was an unteachable student, I couldn't believe my own words. After all, I recently obtained many memory fragments from these memories, reviving in my dreams. Actually, my second reincarnation Roland mostly relied on non-mainstream ice magic which was abnormal and incredibly difficult to defend against. It couldn't at all be said that my ice magic was weak.

After all, I was filled with desire for revenge and sought power more than anything. If ice magic really didn't have any potential for me, I wouldn't have studied it as my main branch of magic. Thinking back on things now, I must have lost much of my memories and power about ice magic after reincarnation.

"You probably used an immature technique to forcefully separate your soul shard to create Lust Cher. You then sacrificed your own soul in order to activate Cher's cycle of death and reincarnation. In any normal situation, this is the equivalent of drinking poison then slitting your throat and hanging yourself. You should have long since died. Being able to reincarnate yet again while only losing a large amount of your memories and power is already fortunate."

I nodded as I thought about what must have happened then. The fact I managed to reincarnate then, apart from me being lucky, was probably due to my ridiculous System which was capable of restoring my tattered soul in the River Styx.

Although it might seem that my second reincarnation Roland Blackhand wasn't very famous, my third reincarnation Emperor

Yongye was based on Roland Blackhand's foundation. My awkward, non-mainstream ice magic finally evolved into the peak of ice magic spells, the forbidden spell Ice Aeon. The life construction magic that Amelia had taught me evolved into undead construction magic, and I created the Seven Original Sins, becoming Emperor Yongye, Ruler of the Undead.

"Yep. Then what you need to do now is reform your four Soul Imprints of Law, Holy Light, ice magic, and undead magic. Then you need to combine them into a new Soul Imprint that represents your current life. As long as you have a good foundation, so that each type of power can support and improve each other, you'll be able to achieve a result where 1+1+1+1 is greater than 10. You'll have reached the peak."

I nodded, as this was indeed my goal.

"But haven't you considered just how hard reaching the peak will be? This is the equivalent of using four one-legged chairs and stacking them on top of each other. Any leg that snaps or is slightly short will cause you to trip and fall. Since you're lacking in ice magic more than any other area right now, naturally your dreams will be tilted towards your ice magic memories as it's telling you to hurry and make up for this weakness."

The silly cat's explanation was indeed easy to understand, but I kept feeling like it was awkward the more I listened.

"Also, when you fought with Zero, even I obtained benefits, so didn't you benefit from that at all? She's far superior to you when it comes to controlling temperature. Yet the 'Law of Energy Conservation' that you made in Frigidwinter Earth made her lose to you in the end. Your foundation in ice magic is already at a high level. Haven't you ever thought about deeply researching Zero's temperature stealing, Roland Blackhand's Shadow Ice, Emperor Yongye's Ice Aeon, and your current life's foundational magic of Ice Sculpting, and then attempting to combine all four types of ice magic to explain the essence of ice? If you can accomplish this,

only then will your ice magic truly achieve balance with your other three powers. Only then will your path to the peak have achieved a strong enough foundation."

Whenever the silly cat went into her lecturer mode, she would speak in a way that was hard to understand. But as I thought about what she said, this was indeed a worthwhile goal.

"My other powers aren't at such a strong level, are they? You're saying that my ice magic will only reach my other three powers' level after accumulating so many different lifetimes' worth of experience together? Isn't that overestimating my other three powers?"

"You're the creator of Law itself, the inventor of a brand-new power of Order. You think that gives you a low status? This puts you basically at the same status and accomplishment level as the God of Holy Light. You think that your power of undeath isn't that great? You're the only Undead Emperor in recent history. Not only that, you're no ordinary Undead Emperor. As long as your Seven Original Sins have enough time to evolve, all of them will be just as powerful as any Undead Emperor. This is plenty to be proud of."

The silly cat's words even contained a rare tone of praise, which made me feel like I was floating on cloud nine.

"Well, even if that's the case, my understanding of Holy Light isn't that great compared to my other powers."

"...Indeed. Even if starting the Church of Pure Holy Light is something incredible, it can't compare to your other powers. However..."

As I watched, the silly cat transformed into her youthful Gold Elf form. Her childish appearance had furrowed eyebrows and a highly worried expression.

"...If my guess is correct, you were naturally born with a higher purity of Holy Light than others. Your path with the Holy Light

Soul Imprint should have already been fixed."

I nodded. Without me even realizing it, my Holy Light Soul Imprint had fixed itself. Compared to how hard I had to work at all my other Soul Imprints, it wasn't even anywhere close to their difficulty level. My talent for Holy Light had given me the wonderful nickname of "Child of Holy Light," but some called me a more direct nickname: "Holy Light's Illegitimate Child".

"I already beat up all those who dared to call me that to my face back in the day."

I proudly told her about my past accomplishment, but Harloys's expression became even more worried and rather sad.

"...You're not following Holy Light, but Holy Light still takes care of you. No—it should be said that the Source of Order is taking care of you. This isn't necessarily a good thing..."

Chapter 417: Schemer

"...You're not following Holy Light, but Holy Light still takes care of you. No—it should be said that the Source of Order is taking care of you. This isn't necessarily a good thing..."

I was surprised at Harloys' final comment. However, no matter how much I asked her about it, she would only respond vaguely.

"...I still need to think more on this matter. Now's not the time for you to know. If you trust me, then don't force me to tell you with the magical pet contract. Otherwise, many things will become far more troublesome."

Since she said so, I decided to give up asking her despite my curiosity... Even my typically not-so-sharp senses told me that Harloys was telling the truth—that continuing to ask might cause me great amounts of trouble.

"Fine—fine—tell me when you're finished thinking about it. I'm not such a stickler that I'll force you."

I waved my hand to dispel my feelings of helplessness and being stuck in a quagmire as I could sense that I was potentially playing with fire. I then focused on the notepad in my hand, which listed the goals I had made for myself to complete in Dragon World. However, my accomplishment rate was rather worrisome.

1: Obtain the Foundational Elemental Items of Dragon World. Obtain a minimum of one, but the more the better. (Absolutely necessary.)

2: Obtain one absolutely top-level item of each element. The higher quality the better. The best would be the four God Equipment of the Elements. (Absolutely necessary.)

3: Establish a stable base in Dragon World so that the young warriors can train and quickly improve in power level. (Low priority. Can be done in my free time.)

4: Improve my power level to at least Myth rank. (Absolutely necessary.)

5: Have the devils enter Dragon World. (Originally absolutely necessary, but considering the devils' terrible reputation, I suppose that this should be optional, although it will be difficult to explain to Ayer if I don't have the devils arrive here.)

6: Final step: Notify Orloss to activate the 'grand scheme.' There's no more turning back after this step.

As for making Dragon City send reinforcements to the combat situation in Bardi? That was never in my goals to begin with. It would be nice if I could have the dragons send aid, but if I couldn't, I didn't need to worry about a thing at all. With my deep understanding of Orloss, I refused to believe that a sly old fox like him would roll over and die so easily.

After spending all this time in Dragon World, my other goals were either completed or in progress. Things seemed to be going well, but one of my absolutely necessary goals was now in a quagmire. I couldn't be happy due to this.

"It's impossible to speed up the process of progressing in power level. But if I really have no other choice, I suppose I could take a shortcut through my System. Although taking shortcuts will most likely result in me not having a stable foundation, it can't be helped if that's the case."

The System informed me that I only needed to give her Fate Points to improve my power level. However, she also told me that her type of leveling up wouldn't be as effective as me achieving the understanding I needed on my own to level up. My energy level had already reached the standard necessary to breakthrough. My Law and Holy Light Soul Imprints had already been fixed thanks to the Source of Order watching over me. My undead magic Soul Imprint had been restored as well. My ice magic Soul Imprint was the only one I was stuck on, but it shouldn't take me much longer.

Using my System to make a breakthrough here would bring me too many disadvantages.

"As for the Foundational Elemental Items of Dragon World, the dragons must have obtained all four after ruling this place for so many years. It's quite possible that they'll give me one, but it'll be far more difficult for them to give me two as that represents equally sharing the right to rule this dimension with me. But it'll be a great help to me if I can obtain two. Perhaps it's time to have a good discussion with my new allies..."

It was far too difficult to be a proper major antagonist these days. The major antagonist would have to spend so much effort creating an excellent villainous scheme with no flaws as well as find loyal, reliable and hard-working subordinates that wouldn't be easily converted to the hero's side with a simple talk of some sort. The major antagonist would also have to show up early to kill off some mooks to let people know of his existence. In the middle of the story, the major antagonist would always send out subordinates equal to the hero's strength almost as if he was helping the hero level up...

Right, there were also antagonists that told the heroes classical lines such as "I am your father" or "You're actually the legendary _____" all in order to show off how special the hero was. At the critical moment, the antagonist would naturally expose their greatest weakness, such as telling the hero or their daughter about the location of a divine weapon capable of killing themself... And why was it that the antagonist always had a daughter? Why was it that a demon king's daughter would forever become the hero's girlfriend in these types of stories?

The antagonist would work hard for so many years, but their scheme would always fail at the last step. The final boss always died because they liked to talk too much... and would even leave behind some top-level equipment after their death, supporting the heroes in their journey.

How, in any possible way, was this what a major antagonist was supposed to be like? They all treated the heroes so well, as if they were the heroes' parents!

"I never understood how antagonists, who are so skilled at scheming, always mysteriously get killed off by simple-minded heroes in the end. My scheme is perfect. I have countless subordinates, and I've been scheming from behind the scenes for so long. I, Roland, shall never be defeated so easily and incomprehensibly!"

"...Emperor Yongye and Adam."

Alright then, when Harloys mentioned this, I instantly recalled the past and all my passion vanished. In fact, I now recalled that I had raised more than one disciple who had personally killed me.

"That was an accident; there are reasons for that..."

"Still, it happened. And it was all your fault, wasn't it?"

I found myself unable to counter what the silly cat said. I only wanted to be alone by myself; don't ask me why...

Cough—cough—getting back on topic, although I always had countless plans in motion, this particular grand scheme of mine was quite thorough. I chose the best people to carry out my scheme, so it definitely wouldn't fail.

"...Your Highness Roland, bad news. Lady Elisa has returned from the Fire Elemental Plane. She failed to retrieve the God Equipment of Water!"

"What? She's the Fire Sea Marchioness, and she was the fire elemental demon who had acquired her position by walking on top of the previous Fire Elemental God. She actually failed in the Fire Elemental Plane? Could this be the legendary 2% failure when the obsidian treasure chest is supposed to have a 98% success rate? Is our luck that terrible?"

"...I think it's the curse of you being a jinxer."

"It's not my fault!"

But once I read the detailed report, I understood what happened. This really wasn't at all Elisa's fault.

Any lifeform that chose to embrace Chaos was capable of becoming a demon—even elemental creatures. However, if an Elemental God became fallen and transformed into a demon, that Elemental God would naturally be rejected by their Elemental Plane. Even an Elemental God would lose the favor of the Elemental Throne and their Godhood if they became a demon.

After the original Fire Elemental God had perished, the Fire Elemental Lords became busy fighting each other to determine who was the strongest. But if the "original successor to the Fire Elemental God" arrived, the situation would be... to use an analogy, it was as if the previous emperor died, so all the domain lords started fighting over who would be the next ruler. But suddenly a prince appeared and said that he was the rightful successor. This would naturally make all the domain lords band together to deal with this prince.

Actually, the Fire Elemental Lords already knew about Elisa. They noticed her presence the moment that she had arrived in the Fire Elemental Plane. And so all the Fire Elemental Lords came looking for her together. In fact, even the dimensional will suppressed this former Fire Elemental Lord that had "fallen to become a demon." When faced with the enmity of an entire dimension, it would be impossible for even a Demon Prince to deal with, much less a Demon Marchioness. All Elisa could do was turn and run away.

"It would seem that I chose the wrong person for the job? Should I contact her and soothe her emotions?"

"...I feel that you're the person she wants to see least right now."

Thinking about her forceful personality, I could only silently nod in agreement. But then I felt that I should contact her soon

regardless. This was such a rare chance for me to laugh at her! Elisa always made fun of me, and this was my opportunity to have some revenge!

I obtained much information about top-level elemental items from the Great Stone Sculptor. However, the highest-quality items would be the God Equipment of the Elements or the Elemental Thrones themselves, so those would naturally be the best choices. However, obtaining an Elemental Throne would be far too difficult as I would have to face off against both an Elemental God and the entire Elemental Plane's dimensional will. So of course I focused instead on obtaining the God Equipment of the Elements. After all, very few even knew of their existence, so this should have been the most likely part of my plan to succeed. Instead, this part directly failed together with Elisa failing to obtain the God Equipment of Water.

The God Equipment of Fire was stuck in the Water Elemental Plane. The Water Elemental Plane was a completely water-based world with no land, so almost no land-based species would be able to enter and survive in that environment. The few strong enough to survive permanently underwater would also have their power levels seriously reduced. I didn't even bother sending anyone to the Water Elemental Plane because of this.

The God Equipment of Wind... was currently in Camdian's possession, given to him for his assistance with the God Equipment of Earth. Borrow it from Camdian? This was something related to his very life. If I even mentioned the topic of borrowing it from him, he would be on guard and perhaps even directly form a grudge against me.

The God Equipment of Earth was naturally in the possession of the new Earth Elemental God, the Sand Worm King "Little Sandy." As I recalled his mountainous size, I felt like his name was truly awkward. While I did tell a certain Beast Tamer to go and retrieve the God Equipment of Earth, I didn't have much hope for this.

Even if Little Sandy wasn't very smart, he was still the Earth Elemental God...

"Your Highness, as you wished, the obsidian treasure chest... I've obtained the God Equipment of Earth!"

Alright then, it was truly as my System had called me—I was truly like Pele the jinxer. Anyone I felt would succeed ended up failing, while anyone I felt would fail would end up succeeding.

"How did you accomplish it?"

"Oh, Little Sandy is too big and can't use the God Equipment of Earth. So I simply played with him for a while and he gave it to me."

"...That was all it took!?"

I was smart enough not to ask what they "played" as the answer would surely be mind-scorching. Still, didn't Little Sandy trust Beifeng a little too much? Being able to obtain the God Equipment of Earth so easily? Was Beifeng actually the main character, favored by Goddess Eich herself? Was there anything he couldn't accomplish?

However, I understood why Little Sandy was unable to make use of the God Equipment of Earth. It was a small, exquisite, colorless mage staff. It was the perfect size for me.

"All God Equipment should have the ability to change their size. Why is Little Sandy incapable of using it?"

"...Little Sandy doesn't have any hands."

Alright, this reason was so logical I could only agree. And so I directly accepted the staff and tossed it into Frigidwinter Earth. The God Equipment of Earth was emanating tremendous waves of elemental energy, so I was worried that it would attract unwanted attention if I left it outside.

It would be impossible for me to obtain the God Equipment of

Wind unless I wanted to kill Camdian. I had just failed in obtaining the God Equipment of Water, and the God Equipment of Fire was in the Water Elemental Plane, an environment none of us were suited for going to. In the end, I only obtained the God Equipment of Earth.

However, I needed one top-level elemental item of each element for my Frigidwinter Earth's development. Even if the dragons gave me one of the Foundational Elemental Items of Dragon World, I would still need two more elemental items.

"Perhaps it's time for me to contact the Water Elemental Goddess Aylos. She should be able to help me retrieve the God Equipment of Fire from the Water Elemental Plane, since I have a hostage on my hands..."

Aylos was the immemorial generation Ocean God Sidunwar's wife. His only hope of revival, the Ocean Bottle, was in my hands. And I was the only person in the world capable of reviving him.

But if I contacted Aylos right now, I probably wouldn't be able to accomplish anything. After helping us last time in the Earth Elemental Plane, she had left us right away, not giving me the opportunity to extort her. And if I contacted her asking for her to obtain the God Equipment of Fire for us, someone with so many millennia of experience like her would definitely never give it to us unless I revived her husband. And for that...

"Reviving Sidunwar is one of my Myth-ranked Quests. Of course I want to earn some Fate Points and do it. However, I need to hunt down powerful sea beasts and sea monsters to obtain divine power. This is truly difficult."

I wasn't actually worried about the sea beasts and monsters themselves. Previously, just the Borealis alone was more than sufficient to kill off several top-level sea monsters. Now that I had three large aerial battleships, why would I have to worry about sea monsters? I was worried about...

"The moment I enter the ocean, that crazy lady will surely start a rampage because of me."

Actually, not only myself, but even the Borealis didn't dare anymore to travel over the deep sea. Otherwise, powerful sea monsters would surely show up together with thunderstorms and tornados, followed by a certain Goddess's personal incarnation.

"As expected of the Goddess who possesses the Divine Concept of Revenge. She really knows how to hold a grudge... wait a moment, one of her Divine Concepts is Revenge. Isn't that one of my goals for my grand scheme?"

I hesitated for a moment but finally picked up my notepad, adding one more goal to the end.

7: Kill off that crazy Queen of Storms and steal her Divine Concept of Revenge and divine power over the ocean, reviving Sidunwar along the way. (High priority.)

Of course, considering that she was a newly-rising star in the Chaos Faction along with being a powerful Goddess, it would be nigh impossible for me to do this. And so I quietly started writing a letter.

"Boss Ayer, I think there's something that only you can do. There's an idiot in our way; you understand how it is. I'm talking about the crazy woman who rules over the blue depths—yep—I'm talking about the woman with the strange hairstyle who even colored her body ridiculously blue. Boss, I should tell you that she's absurdly arrogant..."

Chapter 418: Oath

Although I wrote a letter asking for help and trusted that Ayer knew how to deal with things, my enemy here was a powerful True God. It wouldn't be easy to kill her off, and it definitely wouldn't be accomplished quickly. Still, it wasn't my style to leave everything up to others.

"How many ways are there to kill off a True God? No, I'm not joking around here. Please answer me seriously."

At this time, I naturally asked Doraemon—I meant Harloys! Weren't they both cats? Was there a difference?

"Directly kill a powerful True God? How many ways, you're asking? To my knowledge—zero."

"What? Didn't Lorci die rather easily?"

"That's because she was incredibly foolish. She descended using her true body and was then wiped out by Karwenz, a Main God-level existence, for breaking the taboos. In most normal situations, have you ever seen a True God idiotic enough to descend with their true bodies? They all have Divine Kingdoms. As long as a True God stays within their Divine Kingdom, they'll be the master of that little world. You know just how ridiculous their administrator privileges are there. Plus, they also have countless believers' souls as replenishment. You need to first destroy her Divine Kingdom before killing the Queen of Storms. Even a Main God might not be capable of doing this, and someone who could would definitely pay a great cost doing so. It would be an very bad deal to do so."

"So not even Ayer will be able to forcefully kill her?"

"...That might not be the case as Ayer is truly unfathomable, even among the True Gods. He directly killed those two Follower Gods in another True God's Divine Kingdom. I don't know if he's capable of doing it or not. But even if he's capable of doing it, it will be the

equivalent of their two Divine Kingdoms clashing. Ayer will definitely lose a significant amount of power doing so, which will be disadvantageous for our future plans. I feel that you can consider a more normal method to weaken the Queen of Storms first."

"...Eliminate her believers, which will weaken her as there will be less faith in her?"

"Yes. And this isn't the only option. Corrupt her temples, kill her priests and destroy her divine power summoning points. These will all have far greater impact than killing off her ordinary believers. Also, killing her incarnation will be the greatest possible blow of all to her divine power. Many True Gods even end up perishing when their incarnation dies. Otherwise, she wouldn't have run so quickly last time when she saw Ayer. Also, you can diminish her power by attacking her reputation and authority, by spreading rumors and using other underhanded tactics that you excel at."

For some mysterious reason, I felt like the silly cat was making fun of me. But considering the fact that thanks to Harloys' advice, the first thought which flashed through my mind was "Breaking news! She's actually a mistress!? Now revealing the triangle love relationship between Ocean God Sidunwar, Water Elemental Goddess Aylos, and the Queen of Storms," it was indeed impossible for me to counter what she said.

"As long as she weakens to a certain extent, she'll be forced into hibernation to recover unless she's willing to weaken her Divine Concept and Divine Kingdom. And if she continues weakening with nobody to help her, she'll end up in eternal hibernation."

"What will happen if she's willing to weaken her Divine Concept and Divine Kingdom?"

"She'll drop in power level from a High God to a Middle God. Voluntarily weakening her own power level is the same as cutting

off a large portion of her own divine soul. Her soul will receive a permanent injury that's the equivalent of a human being seriously injured to the point of being bedridden. That will make it much easier to kill her. If you can weaken her till she has the power of only a Medium God, it should become very easy for Ayer to just kill her."

"...Why do I feel like none of these conditions are achievable?"

"I agree with you on this."

Considering that the crazy Queen of Storms had an incredibly high level of vigilance, killing off her incarnation would be extremely difficult. And even if I managed to set a trap that successfully killed off her incarnation once, she was the type who would shut herself in her Divine Kingdom afterwards. Killing off her incarnation more than once would be impossible.

As for killing her believers, spreading rumors, corrupting her temples and so on...

"Her main believers are the Sea Tribe. Of course, they're in the sea. How am I supposed to kill them or spread rumors? Even her priests are Sea Tribe members. What am I supposed to do? As she's the Goddess of Storms and Sea Monsters, she's can even obtain faith from ordinary fishermen and the Sea Tribe's fear of storms and sea monsters. This will be really difficult."

Precisely because her main believers were the Sea Tribe the Queen of Storms could greatly increase in power once the Sea Tribe established their kingdom, defeated the humans and conquered their capital. More and more Sea Tribe members were beginning to worship her for her grand accomplishments. And once Auland started regaining the advantage, she... she was actually shameless enough to personally intervene in a battle between mortals. Her sea monsters and storms caused tremendous damage to Auland and made the Sea Tribe into more pious believers, establishing a virtuous cycle that kept increasing her

power.

"How about a plague? What if I create a plague that's spread in the sea to all the Sea Tribe? That will cause her believers to start dying in large numbers."

"...An ocean version of an Undead Calamity? Considering that land and ocean animals have completely different breathing systems, are you sure that you'll be able to successfully research a new plague in a short period of time? Maybe you could try looking for the Plague King, who's currently ranked #11 on the Calamity Rankings. He should be able of accomplishing this."

"How about having large amounts of undead go underwater and hunt the Sea Tribe down? Fine, don't stare at me, I was just joking around."

Indeed, the undead didn't need to breathe or eat, so they were capable of fighting underwater. However, just being capable of fighting underwater didn't mean that they were skilled at fighting underwater. The water pressure and water currents would greatly slow their movements. Meanwhile, the Sea Tribe was highly skilled at underwater fighting. Not only would winning against the Sea Tribe be difficult, but even if the undead won, the Sea Tribe members would only have to run away. It would be impossible for the undead to catch up.

We came up with various ideas that we then shot down the next instant. We continued thinking about how to weaken the Queen of Storms but were unable to come up with a viable idea.

"...If the Sea Tribe was so easy to defeat, they would have gone extinct long ago. They're the undisputed rulers of the sea. Perhaps we should change our way of thinking. How did the Queen of Storms become a powerful Goddess in the first place?"

"Rain City!"

At this moment, both of us came to a sudden epiphany. We had

arrived at the critical point.

The most important reason that the Queen of Storms became a powerful Goddess was as the Guardian Goddess of the Sea Tribe, she had helped them actualize a dream that the Sea Tribe had possessed for tens of thousands of years. The mystical Rain City was the land of her divine miracle. Rain City allowed countless Sea Tribe members to return to the land. The Sea Tribe could enjoy sunshine and rain, delicious cooked foods and the right to live and reproduce there.

But what if Rain City suddenly disappeared?

"Faith in her would collapse? That would absolutely happen."

"Meeting with despair after living the best life will cause the formerly most fervent of believers send curses of despair at the Gods."

"Also, if the divine power forbidden spell gets dispelled, there will be a huge backlash on the caster. That's important to keep in mind as well."

Right then and there, Harloys and I analyzed the consequences of destroying her Rain City. The Queen of Storms would likely directly lose a power level as a True God. But now, there was a new problem. How were we supposed to destroy her Rain City?

"Diana... perhaps she'd be able to do it if she had a thousand years more time to cultivate her power."

Although Anti-Holy Knight Diana and her new companions were working really hard, there would still be a long way to go until they could directly challenge a True God. Previously, Diana had only managed to dispel a very small portion of the forbidden spell in Rain City. But soon the forbidden spell filled this area in yet again. The most difficult part about dealing with divine powered forbidden spells was that divine power allowed these forbidden spells to self-repair and keep up an eternal cycle.

"Actually, this is a conundrum with no solution. A divine powered forbidden spell is always cast by a God, so dispelling that God's forbidden spell requires fighting against their divine power, which is no different from fighting against that God in person. Killing off that God will naturally dispel the forbidden spell, but who would need to think of ways to deal with forbidden spells if it was that easy to kill a God?"

Indeed. If we could directly kill off the Queen of Storms, why would we have to bother with Rain City?

Even a divine powered forbidden spell followed the most fundamental law of forbidden spells. Killing off the caster would naturally dispel the forbidden spell. That was why back when the Water Elemental Goddess and Queen of Storms finished casting this forbidden spell, Aylos had directly returned to the Water Elemental Plane while the Queen of Storms canceled her incarnation and returned to her Divine Kingdom.

"...Wait a moment—this was a dual-cast forbidden spell, with two Goddesses casting it together!"

"Aylos!"

Alright, we were now at even more of a conundrum. From a certain standpoint, Aylos was now our ally. And I even wanted her to help retrieve the God Equipment of Fire from the Water Elemental Plane. And if we changed our plans to try and kill this immemorial Water Elemental Goddess in her home Water Elemental Plane, that probably would be just as difficult as killing the Queen of Storms.

"...Perhaps we can convince Aylos to commit suicide."

Harloys hesitatingly gave an idea, but I felt that this idea of hers was ridiculous.

"Stop joking around."

"I'm not joking! You could definitely tell Aylos that as long as

she's willing to commit suicide, we'll use the Queen of Storms' divine power to help revive her husband. Tell her the full story about what's necessary to revive Sidunwar and let her decide for herself. We won't be lying to her as this will indeed be her only chance. If she misses this chance, we won't have any free time to help revive Sidunwar."

"She won't possibly accept the idea of committing suicide!"

"She will! I recognize that expression she has! She's the type who's constantly reminiscing about how wonderful things were sin the past! She's the type who constantly curses her own foolishness and weakness for allowing the beautiful past to go up in smoke! She's the same as me! For a person who lives in the past and feels such guilt, as long as there's a chance to restore the past—no—even if there's just a chance to make up for past mistakes, that person won't care about giving up their very life! She will choose to commit suicide; I would make the same choice if I was her!"

Harloys was shouting frenziedly at the top of her lungs. This was the first time I had ever seen her lose such control of her emotions. I mysteriously felt a sense of pity as I saw her young-seeming Gold Elf form have such reddened eyes.

"...I don't dislike people who always reminisce about the past, but if one only obsesses about the past, how will there possibly be a future?"

"Hah! Don't make yourself sound so high and mighty. Aren't you the same? Have you left your past behind you? What do you think your nightmares are? Also, the Infallible Diffindor. You dare call yourself someone who isn't obsessed about the past?"

I could only laugh. Since I had a soul connection to her, it was impossible for me to counter what she said. The person that Harloys referred to who lived in the past and felt such guilt could refer to Aylos, herself, and of course it also applied to me.

If I had the chance to regain everything I had in the past, perhaps

I would become even crazier than Aylos or Harloys. No, I had already been crazy in the past. Or perhaps I was crazy even now.

"Yep, we're the same. But even if I'm in Hell, I shall do my best to look up at the heavens... No, only looking up at the heavens isn't my personality. I shall definitely think of a way to steal or scam the heavens for myself. I, Roland Mist, am someone who prefers happy endings. Harloys, as my soulbound equipment, don't you dare treat yourself as the main female lead of a tragedy. Let us..."

Our hearts instantly connected and the Gold Elf girl broke out into a smile despite her tears. Her golden hair glistened brilliantly under the sunlight. The most beautiful of elves and the densest of all men made the same oath together.

"...Let us scam and obtain the heavens together."

Chapter 419: Return

"Work hard! Work really hard! Work especially hard! Surpass Kasolan in three years, surpass Bardi in five years, and become first in Eich in ten years!"

"Utilize the full extent of your motivation! Your courage equals productivity! One day is equal to twenty years!"

"We'll see at the kiln just who's the best! If you produce a ton of metals, we'll produce two tons!"

"Ants can chew on bones, and cows can be cooked in teapots! Watch me create a mecha out of thin air!"

I felt like I was dreaming as I walked down the streets of Dawnlight Town and saw all these bright red banners. For some reason, my hands were trembling. I felt as if I had accidentally shot myself in the foot again—in a major way.

And so I asked what these banners were about...

"Didn't you personally direct us to write these? Saying that we elite warriors of Dawnlight Town needed to work super hard, using only two or three years' time to reach the accumulated status of the other corrupt countries that have had centuries of time. That we needed to prepare for war, to prepare to win, to prepare to fight against the entire world! You personally wrote the words for these banners."

"I... was I so foolish? I couldn't possibly be so foolish!"

"But didn't you personally state one week ago that these were our strategic goals? You even requested us to make these words into banners so that we could constantly remind ourselves to work hard."

One week ago? What was I doing one week ago?

Confused, I had a dazed expression as I did my best to remember.

"One week ago, I think Little Red and Molly arrived. They snuck into Dragon World by hiding on one of the supply ships. I then had a party to welcome Little Red. She was complaining recently that nobody would accompany her to drink, and so we had a bit of a drinking party... What else did I do after that...?"

Alright, I could only recall my hangover headache the next day, and it sure made me want to cut off my own head. It was definitely the fault of the wine that Little Red had brought with her. It tasted really sweet but had an incredibly strong kick to it. I soon became hazy, which might have caused me to act crazily due to alcohol...

"...Your dancing that day was beautiful: especially when you performed Swan Lake together with Eaglestorm and the Dragon of Ultimate Evil."

Who was the "Dragon of Ultimate Evil?" That was a certain Dracon's nickname on the Calamity Rankings. Of course, the name meant exactly what its definition was—that he was the "evilest dragon alive." Being able to obtain such a mighty nickname as only a mere Dracon far exceeded the nicknames of any Great or Supreme Immemorial Dragon. As expected of the super main character of his legendary story. Plus, since Eaglestorm habitually went around naked, the three of us actually danced Swan Lake together? That was such a "beautiful" scene that I didn't even dare imagine it!

The silly cat yawned as she said those words, petrifying me. I could only stare at her in astonishment, hoping to my utmost that she was only joking.

"I'm not joking with you. That night, you decided to change the party into a torchlight party and even decided to personally go on stage to everyone's cheers. Even I was startled by you. Right, you also had a nice dance together with Little Red. Despite the fact that you can't sing on key to save your life, you're surprisingly talented at dancing, especially that part about the ugly duckling transforming into a swan. Even with my standards as a Gold Elf I

rate it as top-notch quality content. Right, I recall that the original Swan Lake didn't have such a section. Did you modify the story yourself?"

Smack! Smack! Smack!

I was doing my best to smash my head against the wall in an effort to get that scary scene out of my mind. But unfortunately, the more I smashed my head, the clearer my memories became.

Eaglestorm transformed into a pudgy bird and acted as the swan's mother. The Dragon of Ultimate Evil opened up his wings and performed as a black swan. I acted as the ugly duckling which would transform into a white swan. After we started dancing, even Little Red joined us as she tried to act the part of an eagle attempting to catch the ugly duckling, and then we really did start dance-fighting on stage... Now, I could only pray that there weren't many spectators, and that please, please, nobody remembered to record this scene in a memory crystal. Otherwise, there would now be a new page in my dark history.

"Give me a sword! I want to commit seppuku!"

"Will a fruit knife do?"

Clang!

Alright, I felt even more helpless as I looked at the broken fruit knife that had only its hilt remaining.

"Your skin is too thick. It would seem that only a magically enchanted knife will be able to harm you. Don't look at me like that. Do you think that I carry around fruit knives enchanted to the +15 level? How bored would someone have to be to enchant a fruit knife to +15?"

"...Alright, what else did I do?"

The silly cat pointed at the banners before me.

"Nothing much. You decided in your fun to summon all your

military and civilian leaders for a major meeting and gave a speech about 'Comrades, our main problem right now is our lack of industrial productivity and how our needs are increasing by the day, so our goal is to..."

I looked at my "Roland's plan on the current important tasks for Dawnlight Town, 115th revised edition" which plagiarized so many reports I'd read before and saw all the philosophies and wild dreams on how to increase our military strength and productivity. I felt too shamed to face my seniors who wrote such things, and only wanted to go quietly hide myself in a corner.

"Don't speak anymore! I want quiet... Don't ask me who 'Quiet' is. Oh, that's a nice joke. Maybe I should create an artificial person named Quiet and go look for her every time that I do something foolish."

"...Then you'll probably be looking for Quiet every single day. Actually, these phrases on the banners are pretty nice. At least, it's a far more serious topic than the Swan Lake performance that you put on. Haven't you seen that your young subordinates are all incredibly motivated? Your banner phrases seem to be effective."

"This actually worked!?"

"Of course. Your phrases are all really encouraging and motivating, so why wouldn't they work?"

"...Fine, I was the foolish one. This is a cultural difference—no—a world difference."

From a certain standpoint, at least in the world of Eich, it wasn't wrong to use such motivational phrases. I apparently wasn't out of my mind enough to use completely nonsensical phrases. And with the high magical properties of the earth here, Amelia's magical seeds had grown up into crops at an astonishing speed. With the druids' careful cultivation, apples grew as large as watermelons, while watermelons grew to the size of ponies. It was indeed possible for one acre to produce more than five thousand

kilograms of food.

And when I learned that this land was home to a great abundance of all sorts of magic metals, I instantly had seventeen large-scale kilns constructed here to help the metallurgy process of creating all sorts of magical metal alloys. The engineers and smiths would then create engineering products, weapons and equipment. It was indeed possible to produce more than one ton of refined metals in a day.

However, while I had countless engineers on hand, I had very few smiths, and their average abilities were exceedingly average. The weapons they crafted out of these top-level magical metals lacked in quality. In the end, I could only tell my smiths to give up on crafting top-quality weapons in order to avoid wasting these top-quality resources.

Actually, I had extorted both Auland and Bardi, and there was the inheritance from the former Mist Kingdom, so I had many elite or ace type troops' equipment design plans and training methods available to me. If I could truly produce their equipment, I could directly start establishing combat squadrons of these troop types. Without a doubt, this would be the fastest way to improve my warriors' overall combat strength.

For this purpose, I went to ask my smiths about "Where are the most skilled smiths? Especially those the most skilled at creating magical weapons and equipment?" Unfortunately, their answer made me feel rather helpless.

"All Titan Bloodline descendants have excellent talent for smithing. Smithing grandmasters are incredibly common in giants, particularly the Fire Giants or Magma Giants. Both these species are extremely gifted at smithing. They're the best in the entire world. Right, dwarves are also expert smiths. Previously, more than seventy percent of the weapons and equipment being used in the Underground were crafted by the Gray Dwarves. However, no Gray Dwarf smithing grandmasters came with us this

time."

I felt helpless because this was all common knowledge. Of course I would know it already. And actually if you looked deep at the dwarves' ancestry, they were also related to the Titan Bloodline. Since I wanted to avoid problems as their Titan Bloodline would summon them to the Titans' side, I didn't bring a single Gray Dwarf smith with me to Dragon World. My smithing industry, which was weak to begin with, was reduced to the point of not even having a single grandmaster on hand.

As for the elven smiths? Forget it. I'd already insulted the elven smiths plenty of times before. Let's not insult them anymore. Ever since an elf smith "grandmaster" forged my top-level tear sapphire into a sword accessory for me, I stopped having any hopes for the elven smiths. That tear sapphire could have been crafted into a thunder staff, a high-quality, powerful mage staff that could sell for several tens of thousands of gold coins.

What? You want to know the effects of the tear sapphire as a sword accessory? It would improve the sword by a miniscule—to the point of ignorable—amount of thunder damage. Meanwhile, the sword would have the extravagantly beautiful effect of sparkling with thunder while you waved it. That was the important part for the elf smith! In the end, I sold it off as a piece of artwork for a good price. There were plenty of idiots out there among the human nobles and royalty that would pay a good price for something so useless. However, people like us who were self-sufficient and barely had enough of such top-quality resources to begin with would find it best to stay as far away from elven smiths as possible.

Cough—cough—I seem to have accidentally insulted elven smiths again... Getting back on topic, as I was quite worried about lacking smiths, a certain someone laughed out loud.

"Are you an idiot? You can't find an excellent smith? Can't you find one that's right in front of you?"

I was instantly delighted to hear Little Red say this.

"You actually know how to smith? Wonderful! I see, Fire Giants and Magma Giants are both fire element giants, and the fire element is naturally suited for smithing. And Red Dragons are also of the fire element, so it's only natural that you know how to smith!"

"Haha! Ridiculous! Red Dragons know how to smith? Who would we smith for? There's not a single dragon that fights with weapons, so of course none of us know how to smith."

Alright then, I paused in surprise for a moment as I carefully thought it over. Obviously, I was indeed a fool for thinking so.

"Then what did you mean...?"

Seeing that I still didn't understand, Little Red pointed outside and then made a grabbing gesture with her claw.

"Oh, I understand now. As expected of Red Dragon logic. This is indeed a good idea."

What did Red Dragon logic mean? Red Dragon logic—I should call it Little Red logic—was: "What's yours is mine, what's mine is also mine and anything I want is mine."

Although it was unreasonable, when had a dragon, especially a Color Dragon, ever been reasonable with mortals?

Since Titan Bloodline descendants were highly skilled at smithing, and most of the natives here were the Titans' descendants, I only needed to find a dwarf or giant tribe and kidnap their most famous smiths.

However, I was still slightly better than Little Red. At least I could be reasoned with.

"There's no need to resort to kidnapping. We're merchants that do everything by the law; we're cultured people... Hey, you there, help me ask the natives how many smithing grandmasters we can

exchange for with a sack of magical wheat seeds. Yep, I'm talking about the wheat that's capable of growing into stalks that are like giant bludgeons. Why are you looking at me like that? You think I'm taking advantage of the natives? This is called the law of supply and demand and the needs of the market! We can obtain things legally far quicker than through robbery!"

******

Didn't Little Red say before that she wasn't going to come to Dragon World? Things were different now. Previously, she didn't come because the Dragon World leaders made their attitude clear that she wouldn't be welcome in Dragon City. But now she came over because another Dragon World leader privately invited her. That dragon was the Supreme Immemorial White Dragon, Sam.

Although the Blue Dragon leader Haros was sent out to negotiate with Little Red, which represented a certain degree of tacit acceptance, there was another level to things. Those that made the final decision in Dragon City would forever be the Metal Dragons that had a dominating advantage.

Ignoring the neutral dragon species, in all the Dragon Cities the Metal Dragons that were formerly on the Order Side had the greatest advantage and thus ruled. The reason was simple: they were good at fighting.

Yes, that was the only reason. The rule on who could rule in dragon society was just that simple. Those good at fighting would become the big boss. But if one looked into things deeper, why were the more aggressive Color Dragons unable to defeat the relatively more conservative Metal Dragons?

"The Black and Red Dragons have all been exiled. It would be ridiculous to dream of winning against the Metal Dragons after that."

Although there were many branch offshoots and SemiDragon species, the five main Color Dragon species were still the most

numerous. Although each species had their own specialties, if one looked only at pure combat strength, Red Dragons would be the strongest. Second would be the Blue Dragons, with minus points for lack of intelligence. Black Dragons would be third, with plus points for good intelligence. Despite this, Black Dragons couldn't compare to Blue Dragons in direct combat due to the latter species' simple and direct way of violent fighting. Green Dragons were fourth, only stronger than White Dragons. White Dragons had super minus points for their extreme lack of intelligence and could be ranked absolute last, behind even the branch species.

Since the number one and number three combat strength Color Dragon species were no longer aboveground, it would be inconceivable for the three remaining Color Dragon species to still win against the full five Metal Dragon species.

But if the first and third-ranked Color Dragon species returned...

Obviously, the current leading species, the Gold Dragons and Silver Dragons, wouldn't want to see this. And their will would naturally be the will of Dragon City. When it came to major decisions that represented the entire species, the Blue Dragon leader Haros could only carry out Dragon City's official will.

Of course, dragon study experts also ranked the dragon species' combat strength all together with each other, purely judging the average combat strength of the individuals in a dragon species over their age group. The first tier, the most powerful dragons, were ranked as Gold Dragons, Red Dragons, Blue Dragons, and Silver Dragons. The second tier dragons were ranked as Red Copper Dragons, Bronze Dragons, and Black Dragons. The third tier, the weakest dragon species, were once again the Green Dragons and White Dragons who always ranking last. Although Copper Dragons were also categorized in the weakest third tier, that was mostly because they had unique personalities among the dragons and greatly disliked fighting. It would still be very easy for a Copper Dragon to defeat a Green or White Dragon of the same age.

With this, the situation would be quite easy to understand. It would be impossible for the Color Dragons to gain a strong enough position to obtain leadership unless the Red and Black Dragons returned. This was something that the Gold and Silver Dragons definitely wouldn't wish to see. That was why Sam had privately invited Little Red. And how could Little Red, of the species famously known for pride and arrogance, possibly pass up on such an excellent opportunity?

Currently, the Supreme Immemorial White Dragon Sam had brought his wife over and they were both living in my Frigidwinter Earth. Publicly, they claimed that they were there to observe the White Dragon inheritance research and hoped that their soon-to-be-born child could avoid the fate of being born with a wild beast's level of intelligence. But actually, Little Red, Molly, and the White Dragons would discuss all sorts of ridiculous things every day. Occasionally, the Green and Blue Dragons would visit them as well. It would seem that the Color Dragons would soon be making things very difficult for the Metal Dragons.

"The fires of Armageddon are almost upon us, yet they're still squabbling over authority. Honestly..."

Harloys felt rather helpless about the situation. However, I didn't mind it so much.

"Hah! This actually means that all intelligent creatures are the same. Aren't human nobles and royalty the same too? Bardi just finished with their princes' internal conflicts, while Auland's new emperor killed his father to obtain the position. Perhaps it's exactly because there's not much time left that it's all the more important to obtain authority."

I didn't want to have anything to do with Dragon City's internal affairs. However, if our side had the advantage, I might be able to obtain two of Dragon World's Foundational Elemental Items. Even if I couldn't obtain two items, it would also increase my influence over the dragons, and I would perhaps be able to pick and choose

which element Foundational Elemental Item I would receive—I could pick an element I was lacking. So naturally I was more than happy to sit on the sidelines and watch the Color Dragons scheme.

But what made me the most delighted was that Little Red, who was originally one of my helpers, successfully entered Dragon World. My combat strength here had improved even further. And if she was discovered here, I wouldn't even take the blame—that would go to the Color Dragons of Dragon City.

Of course, her arrival also helped me have a practice opponent I could use my newly-regained ice abilities against. These ice abilities were an inherited gift from my previous life as Roland Blackhand.

"Roland... do you dare face me directly from the front!"

"Of course... not! Face a Red Dragon in battle directly from the front? You think I'm an idiot? Ice Hallucination; this is such a shameless ability... I love it!"

Chapter 420: Ice Hallucination

Anyone who knew Roland Blackhand well enough would come to such a conclusion. Even I became certain that he was a bastard as I regained more of his memories in my dreams.

"...If he wasn't a bastard, he was definitely a scumbag."

Stealing, scamming, robbery, assassination, extortion, kidnapping, rape... Fine, the last one's just a joke—rape wouldn't bring him any personal benefits. Physical pleasure was meaningless to someone hellbent on revenge. But the other evil actions could give him personal benefits as well as Fate Points which he could strengthen himself with, so of course he wouldn't hesitate to do anything.

In order to obtain the strength necessary for revenge, he hid his real name while studying at the Cloud Tower and unhesitatingly betrayed Amelia, who had treated him so well (although Amelia kind of deserved it, if you looked at what she was really like in secret). In fact, he had even felt that the proper path of obtaining power was too slow, so he secretly became Harloys' disciple and researched taboo undead magic and life modification techniques. It could be said that he had zero moral limits whatsoever when it came to obtaining power.

He had zero limits on all those earlier mentioned evil actions all in order to find his enemies. He also accepted his own disciples only because they could bring him benefits. From a certain standpoint, he received what he deserved when his disciples ended up betraying him like that.

Even I didn't expect that the former Child of Light would become fallen to such a degree, twisted so much by hatred and a desire for revenge. The more memories I saw of my past self, the more I felt like I was different from him and his utter disregard for all moral limits of any type.

Hatred was capable of making anyone go insane. It would turn even a saint into the most vicious of villains. Now that I thought back on the past, perhaps Roland Blackhand's personality had been utterly twisted after he'd returned from death, carrying such a deep grudge.

Perhaps I should even thank the terrible end he had finally met, which left his memories and soul incomplete. I should also thank the fact that he had successfully achieved his revenge (or so he thought at the time—he was unaware of the existence behind the scenes that I just found out from Sam) which helped somewhat reduce his hatred. Otherwise, my next life as Rolo wouldn't have come about.

Holy Knight Rolo was actually the life I led where my personality was closest to my original self. If I still had my twisted personality as Roland Blackhand when I met Adam and Little Red, something frightening would likely have happened.

But from a certain standpoint, perhaps my dark personality had more charisma. At the very least, I had met and befriended Amelia, Harloys, Evelyn and Cher in that life. In fact, that life appeared to be my only one where I could be considered a winner in life with women. Were the legends really true? Did women only love bad boys, after all?

"The past Roland is different from how I am today. We need to look forward to the future." Perhaps I was fooling myself here, but that was the only way I could look at things.

However, all my lives would have parts in common. Baron Roland Blackhand was still Roland, an incredibly sly transmigrator. Ice Hallucination, the culmination of Roland Blackhand's lifetime of effort, wouldn't possibly be something simple.

A crystal-clear droplet emerged on the ground and transformed into an ice crystal seed. This seed pierced through the snow on the

ground and sprouted, gradually and slowly. Its tiny roots were ice crystals and its leaves were decorated with dew droplets. Meanwhile, the clouds in the sky started sprinkling a light shower. With the rainwater's nourishment, this ice flower started blooming, but unlike a normal flower its ice crystal petals let off a cold, frosty mist.

"You actually hid this ace up your sleeve back in the day? It's amazing how you were capable of manipulating simple ice magic to such an extent." The silly cat's assessment made me feel rather proud. Only an expert would be able to best understand this performance.

Although on the surface it appeared to be a simple magical performance using snow and ice, it actually showed off every single form of water: snow, frost, ice, cloud, rain, dew, mist and steam. To accomplish this one would require outstanding control and a deep understanding of water's various forms.

With how magic worked in Eich, wind, fire, water and earth—the four major elements— constituted the foundation of all magic. Ice magic was categorized as a branch of water magic, which meant that most ice magic experts would need to first study water magic for a lengthy period of time before starting to study that of ice. Before an ice mage could summon ice, they would first need to learn how to summon and control water.

It would be crucial for water mages to understand every single form of water. Controlling water while conforming to its natural properties would make things much easier for any water mage. Certain special magic spells also required a deep understanding of the forms of water, such as the spell "Summon Mist" which was capable of creating a large patch of fog. Water magic based hallucination spells were the same.

Roland Blackhand became an ice mage just like most others, by first studying water magic. However, he was a transmigrator from Earth who understood the scientific properties of water far better

than an ordinary mage. Incorporating his knowledge of physics into his magic, he diverged from other mages, who simply treated temperature as the main factor influencing water's forms. They would adjust their magic output to create the desired form of water, but Roland understood that water's forms were the result of numerous factors in the environment, such as air pressure and gravity. He even performed countless experiments to confirm the conditions necessary to achieve each form of water, like the different amounts of magic energy output or an environment with high air pressure.

Of course, only having a better understanding of how to change water's forms would slightly improve his water magic power—it wouldn't be very meaningful. Yet Roland Blackhand hired an alchemist to create a special magic ring for him. This ring had many special settings for the magic output required for each form of water recorded into it. This meant that as long as he injected mana into this ring, he could instantly choose whichever form of water he desired to use. For instance, even though he was clearly using ice magic mana, he could still create water colder than zero degrees Celsius. He was far faster at casting water-based spells—and more efficient—than any ordinary mage. In fact, he could freely change his magic to create any form of water at a speed more than ten times faster than other mages at his power level.

He had eight such water-controlling rings created for himself. He wore another two magic rings, a total of one ring on each finger. In order to conceal his specialty as well as the weakness that he relied on ring accessories, he wore black magical gloves all the time. He also called himself Roland Blackhand to hide the real reason why his hands were always seen in black gloves. That was the origin of his self-created name.

Archmages typically proved their power with very high-level magic spells. Being able to manipulate all forms of water at a much faster rate didn't mean that he was capable of using the highest-

level spells which could help him win. Normally, this should have only been a tiny advantage. However, Roland Blackhand had successfully created his own unique fighting style using this specialty of his.

My current practice duel against Little Red was a perfect example of the "Blackhand style."

The rampaging Red Dragon before me displayed her excellent combat techniques and prowess. Yet she remained forever unable to catch her sly opponent. Her powerful punches would be led astray by the water and ice twirling around her. She would slip or trip over ice that suddenly appeared around her feet. And whenever she caught a glimpse of my shadow, her dragonbreath only managed to attack a reflection in an ice mirror. The Roland that she managed to capture with her attacks turned out to be nothing more than a statue of ice and snow.

"Come out here, you bastard!"

The more Little Red fought against me, the more frustrated and impatient she became. However, she remained unable to catch me.

Meanwhile, the mist around her was imperceptibly becoming thicker. However, this icy mist, which could freeze an ordinary human to death, was only capable of making Little Red's human form unable to clearly see around her.

Finally, a sharp blade of ice silently stabbed out of the mist without warning.

"Roland, do you think I'm an idiot!?"

Little Red turned around and punched the blade of ice but whiffed, as the ice blade directly dispersed into snow. The ice blade had only been a feint.

Five spears of ice suddenly stabbed out of the ground, directly

aiming for Little Red's thighs...

Clang!

Unfortunately, this too didn't succeed in breaking past her defenses. But when the furious Red Dragon turned around, she felt something against her neck: a sharp line of ice capable of easily beheading any human.

Shing!

This line of ice which was sharp enough to cut through even the frozen earth still didn't manage to damage her in the least. I once again failed to break through her defenses...

However, a sudden torrential downpour descended from the sky. A cloud appeared approximately three meters above Little Red's head—the rain fell only on Little Red herself. Before she could escape from being drenched in water, something Red Dragons hated more than anything—a ball of cold water—suddenly appeared around her head, not letting her breath.

"Graahhhh!!!!!"

Meeting with breathing difficulties, Little Red was furious. Ever since the beginning of this duel, she hadn't even managed to touch me even once. The ball of water on her head infuriated her so much that she completely forgot about her promises to "not use dragon form" and "not fight at a power level above Legend". She directly transformed into a dragon and then...

Ein Mezus took a deep breath and soared into the sky.

After the Immemorial Red Dragon used her dragonbreath to completely annihilate the entire patch of land the duel had taken place on, she started worrying if she had gone overboard. However, she then saw that Roland was actually drinking tea on a nearby mountain together with the black cat and the Supreme Immemorial White Dragon in his young elf form. And so...

Ein Mezus took a deep breath...

Ein Mezus took another deep breath...

Alright then. By the time the furious Red Dragon transformed back into her human form, this entire area of Frigidwinter Earth was completely wreathed in flames. She arrived just in time to hear Harloys' assessment of Roland Blackhand's Ice Hallucination technique.

"Such a dirty style of fighting. It doesn't have even the slightest speck of a mage's elegance or pride. It's a purely practical technique for killing one's enemies, just like what gutter rats (the thief job class) would use..."

Indeed, Harloys was absolutely correct. Ice Hallucination was actually quite weak in attack power by itself. Although Roland Blackhand reached Legend power level in the end, he didn't know a single forbidden spell, and he actually barely knew any large AOE magic spells. His magic fully focused on confusing his opponents and obstructing their attacks with tiny tricks. What killed his enemy in the end would be the "Blackhand style" of stabbing them from behind.

"...Although it's a dirty way of fighting that I don't even want to look at, I must admit it's quite strong, quite fatal and quite difficult to defend against, especially for mortals. Your style of attacking has given me much inspiration. Excellent."

White Dragons were all ice elemental dragons. Since Sam was a Supreme Immemorial White Dragon, he was doubtlessly a world-class ice mage as well. I silently nodded at his assessment.

Yes, Ice Hallucination was a technique born purely for the sake of killing others—especially fragile humans. I had countless methods to confuse my opponents. The ice blades that would suddenly appear to attack them were only feints. All the forms of water I controlled—such as steam, mist, and rain—actually existed at

subzero temperatures through my unparalleled control over water. This was the true killer, as my enemies wouldn't be as on guard against them. They would freeze them to death without them even realizing it.

"Rather than saying that Roland Blackhand was a mage, it should be said that he was a magic-wielding assassin."

There were plenty of powerful individuals far stronger than Roland Blackhand that ended up dying to him. Even a Myth-ranked archmage had died to a sharp line of ice hidden in the mist after accidentally slipping. "Baron Blackhand" was no mere nickname.

The fact that even Little Red in her human form lost to me made me rather proud of myself. I knew that even in her human form, she could easily defeat a human Saint-ranked warrior. However, no matter how great her Strength stat was, it would all be meaningless if she couldn't touch me. This fighting style was the perfect counter to warriors who relied on brute force—as long as I was able to break past their defenses, of course.

The moment Little Red landed on the ground, I smiled and handed her two bottles of excellent centuries-old wine. This instantly quelled her anger as she happily went off to drink her alcohol.

"How was it? Can you give me any pointers?"

I requested Little Red to have a practice duel against me and even asked Sam and Harloys to watch. Naturally, this wouldn't only be for fun. I was hoping for these two magical experts to give me some pointers. Although I had recovered just about all of Roland Blackhand's abilities, I didn't find a method yet to make a breakthrough so that my ice magic abilities could reach the Legend rank.

Out of the two before me, one was a magical genius with the

wonderful nickname of "All-Knowing" while the other was an ice element Supreme Immemorial White Dragon. If even they couldn't help me with this, I would likely have to return to the snow mountain to try and find a path for myself.

However, I could only give up helplessly when I saw the two experts before me silently shaking their heads.

"It's not that I don't have any ideas for you..."

My eyes lit up momentarily when I heard Harloys speak up, but then I could already guess what she was going to say next: something I probably didn't want to hear.

"...It's that everyone needs to find their own path. I'm worried that if I tell you, it'll actually be a negative influence for you."

Sam finished what Harloys was about to say. I had predicted what he was going to say, and understood why he'd said so as well.

Every powerful individual achieved their power levels step by step. Nobody obtained their power through luck and coincidence. Of course I knew that "Everyone has their own path to take. Someone else's path will be a narrower one with limited potential." But the problem was that I still couldn't come up with a path on my own no matter how much I thought about things. Why else would I ask for help?

The deadline I had set for myself to improve my power level was approaching. I had very little time left. If this part of my plan slowed me down, it might cause problems for my other plans. I would naturally be anxious about this.

[Perhaps I have a method that can help you.]

But at this moment my System, which had been abnormally silent recently, suddenly made her presence known.

Chapter 421: Falling Water

Known as the Blue Star, the Water Elemental Plane was a chaotic abyss of countless layers of water. Unlike the other Elemental Planes, which had fixed coordinates, the Blue Star had many hidden teleportation points and dimensional portals. Nobody knew if going through a particular layer of water would lead to another unknown dimension.

Although it was called the Blue Star, only the water close to the surface was a clear blue. Its lower layers would be gray or even pitch-black, impossible for anyone to see through. In fact, nobody knew how many powerful residents and treasures there were in the Blue Star. The abnormally strong currents and natural environment there would directly kill off visitors who were too weak.

Laiwengedadan, a tongue twister of a name, what the light blue surface water layer was called. In the elementals' language, this word meant "transfer station."

There were even some ships here, obviously not from the Water Elemental Plane, floating on top of the water. The "transfer station" area was one of the very few layers of water in the Blue Star that contained air.

This area was still entirely water—there wasn't a single place in the Blue Star that didn't have water. The entire plane was created out of water, after all. However, some of its water layers lacked oxygen, which whales and other normal aquatic animals would need in order to breathe. Some water layers were magically enchanted and were colder than negative thirty degrees Celsius. In comparison to those water layers, this surface "transfer station" layer was a friendly one where ordinary lives could survive.

Although the numerous water layers were just water, they had different amounts of salt, water pressure, temperature, gravity,

Elemental Tide density and so on. Every single water layer's residents would be utterly different. The surface water layer was basically the equivalent of a very pleasant vacation island.

The "transfer station" water layer had a rather gentle temperature along with a good climate and breathable air above the water. There were even waterless districts that had been artificially created by explorers and merchants from other planes. Their bases in these waterless districts would be rather lively. But today there wasn't a single person in the streets.

This was because the Water Elemental Goddess was about to receive a venerated guest. She didn't want a single person to see them meeting, which was why she first had her water elemental armies clear out this area.

From a certain standpoint, Aylos had it the best out of the Elemental Gods. Right after escaping from her seal, she had taken over complete control of the Water Elemental Plane and had caused much havoc in Eich. She had been able to easily regain her power here because the water elementals weren't as ambitious as other elementals, but even more because she had always enjoyed an excellent reputation here.

But right now she had a terrible expression. Her pale face's expression was unclear, but her trembling fingers betrayed her emotional state.

"Is Ayer commanding me to do this?"

Aylos looked off into the distance after putting down the letter.

When in her own world, Aylos' physical body appeared just like pure, white jade. Her appearance was so beautiful it exceeded mortals' comprehension, but right now her tremendous divine power was making the air around her tremble. Although her expression hadn't changed, powerful tempests had arrived outside the waterless district. Her shaken, panicky emotions were evident in how she used her divine powers.

However, the messenger before her seemed oblivious to her reaction. His appearance seemed to be that of a handsome young elf bard who was a bit down on his luck. Yet no ordinary person would be able to remain so calm in front of the Water Elemental Goddess.

He was the very incarnation of the Concepts of Music and Dance as well as the Guardian God of Bards and Wood Elves, but now this powerful True God's incarnation was simply a messenger waiting for a response.

"You want me to commit suicide and die!?"

As the Water Elemental Goddess roared in anger, rampaging whirlpools started to form. The currents transformed into water dragons that slammed themselves into the walls keeping out the water in the waterless district, causing panic as the magic runes began to shatter.

A healthy Elemental God in their home plane wouldn't be afraid of any God. The furious Aylos was displaying her powers.

However, Solo shook his head.

"The letter should have explained it quite clearly to you. We don't have any hostile intentions towards you. We're simply giving you a recommendation."

"A recommendation for me to kill myself?"

Although she was still furious, Aylos had managed to somewhat calm herself down.

"Yes, but as long as you die, Rain City will lose half of its power. The mortals will then take this opportunity to attack the Sea Tribe, which will cause 'her' to lose a huge amount of her belief. We will then act as stated in the contract and use the full extent of our powers to kill 'her' and then use her divine power over the sea to revive your husband. If you miss this, there won't be any more opportunities for us to revive him."

Everything Solo told her was written quite clearly in the letter she'd just read. The Gods themselves had sworn an oath guaranteeing the veracity of the letter's contents, so Aylos wasn't at all worried about the contents being fake. However, the fact that all this must be true shook her even more and caused her to panic. She knew that this was the only chance to revive her husband. She had to choose between sacrificing herself and sacrificing her husband's chance at revival.

"There are no other possibilities? I'm willing to pay anything in order to exchange for Sidunwar's revival."

Solo didn't answer her. His silence was evidence that only the cruelest answer remained.

Perhaps Roland could indeed revive the Ocean God Sidunwar at a later date when it wouldn't be so difficult. But right now his "grand scheme" was at its most critical junction. Not a single problem could be allowed to occur with any part of his scheme. The Ayer Faction couldn't afford to wait around or gamble on any "perhaps" at this time. Nor could Ayer afford to go to the trouble of forcefully killing off a powerful True God at this time.

If the Water Elemental Goddess was willing to sacrifice herself, then the Ayer Faction would fully activate a plan to kill the Queen of Storms. If Aylos was unwilling to sacrifice herself, well, it would be even harder to kill off a healthy Elemental God in their home Elemental Plane than killing off the Queen of Storms. In that case, all the plans revolving around the Queen of Storms would have to be put off. And considering the current situation, if these plans were to be put off, it would be permanent. The Ocean God Sidunwar wouldn't have a chance at revival... No—even if Roland had a chance at reviving Sidunwar, he wouldn't possibly choose to revive him after today's conversation.

The entire situation and all the conditions had been handed over to Aylos. Either she would have to die, or her husband would lose his chance at revival. She had never expected that agreeing to the

Queen of Storms conditions to ally with her and cast a forbidden spell that would give mortals nightmares would sink herself into the most difficult of life-and-death decisions.

"...I—I need some time to think about it..."

Aylos, who typically had a direct and impatient personality, hesitated. She deeply hesitated. Her tightly clenched hands crushed the letter to little pieces, fully revealing her emotions.

However, Solo cruelly shook his head.

"We lack time more than anything right now. You must give your answer by the end of today."

Perhaps truth was forever the cruelest. Even Solo, who wasn't attracted to women, started sympathizing with Aylos.

Aylos fell silent for quite a while. It was only after a long time that she finally managed to reply with a bitter smile.

"...I understand. Give me three hours."

Solo nodded and left after bidding farewell. The Water Elemental Goddess obviously had unstable emotions at the moment. If she wanted to vent and he lost an incarnation because of it, it would be a huge, underserving loss to him.

But unlike what Solo envisioned, Aylos didn't vent or go on a rampage after he left the room. Instead, she told her subordinates to leave her alone and sat down quietly before taking out a dimensional storage bag. She then took out an old fishbone comb and started combing her hair while looking at herself in a mirror.

However, since Aylos' hair was now made of water, the comb naturally passed through without any effects. Aylos paused in surprise for a moment and then shook her head with a wry smile.

There was a white flash as she transformed herself into a blue-haired beauty with a physical body rather than the famed Water Elemental Goddess. Her silky smooth hair reached the ground, her

beautiful face was exquisite yet appeared soft and weak, and her fragile body lay on the ground. Only some shells faintly covered her upper body, her species' traditional clothing. The pink scales and fish tail were the best evidence of her identity as a mermaid.

In this form, she returned to silently combing her own hair, just like how that strong man would always do so for her every morning in the past.

At that time, she would always sit quietly on her tail and wait for the man behind her to comb her hair.

"...How many years ago was it? You always told me that this form of mine looks far too soft and weak, so my subordinates will disrespect me. You always told me to use a powerful-appearing form like yours to suppress the others..."

As the comb went through her silky-smooth hair, she whipped her long blue hair in the air, which transformed into water that gave off a beautiful rainbow-like reflection.

However, together with the water shower were also numerous hair strands and unstoppable tears.

"...You always said I was a crybaby, that I needed to learn how to be forceful, otherwise my subordinates would take advantage me..."

No trace of the powerful Water Elemental Goddess could be seen here. There was only a weak and beautiful mermaid, crying because she lost her lover.

Her tears continued to drop onto the ground, transforming into silver pearls which shattered with every drop. Meanwhile, the entire world of the Blue Star was sprinkled with a small rain shower.

"...Do you still remember how angry you were when I let my maid who stole my pearl tears go free without punishing her? You told me that this would only make others think that I was weak

and easy to bully..."

Her tears didn't stop. The rain falling down on the entire dimension became stronger. The very essence of water itself was falling down together with her tears, and the mermaid's body was becoming translucent.

"...I've always worshiped you. You were so strong and so resolute. Nobody was a match for you, as if you were the main character of the world. But what I liked most about you was that gentleness in your heart. You even asked me one time why I fell in love with you, and I got angry... Ha! Did you think I was angry because I thought you were doubting my love? I was angry because you had forgotten about the little mermaid that you saved from that magic whale so long ago..."

Tears made Aylos' vision hazy as she brought out a red memory crystal from her dimensional storage bag. It projected an image of a powerful figure who was taller than the skies. With a confident smile he looked over the ocean, a crown atop his head. Everything under the sky was his domain; he was the undisputed ruler.

"...You told me that weakness would be taken advantage of, that I should use power and authority to make others truly subordinate themselves to me. But why is it that you were still betrayed by your most trusted subordinate when you fully carried out what you always taught me...?"

Although her body was beginning to collapse, Aylos reached out her almost crystal-clear arm to lightly touch the handsome and heroic appearing image. However, her arm passed through the projection without making contact. And as she looked at her half vanished arm and the projection of this image, she smiled, as she felt as if she could really see him again.

Everything returned to the very essence of water as the mermaid's final words echoed in the now empty room...

"Big guy, your little mermaid really wants to see you again."

All that remained behind was a puddle of water...

In a way, Solo had rather complex feelings. It was finally time to actualize the goals that they were all looking forward to, so of course he was happy. However, it was quite a distressing task to have to come here and be such a messenger.

Not long after he walked out of the meeting room he saw furious waves crashing into the anti-water walls of the waterless district, causing them to begin collapsing.

Solo was shocked. He sensed a powerful change in the Elemental Tide emanating from the room he just left.

"No way! Why is she being so hasty? Didn't she say to give her three hours?"

He immediately ran back to the meeting room at top speed while reaching into his pockets. After bringing out his harmonica, some leaves, a flute, olive oil, and other such items, he finally found what he was looking for.

It was a white ice crystal which contained a brand-new power never seen before in this world. It was created in an entirely different world.

"...If Aylos agrees, then give this to her. Perhaps it might be able to save... Forget it, the success rate is too low so just treat it as a possibility. If at all possible, I don't want Sidunwar to immediately come trying to kill us after he's revived."

That's what Roland told Solo at the time. However, this mystical ice from Frigidwinter Earth was still in Solo's possession, rather than having been given to Aylos as it was supposed to have been. He waved it furiously, shouting as loudly as he could.

"Aren't you supposed to be a water elemental with a super slow personality? Why are you so hasty? That's not how things are supposed to be like! Boss Ayer will kill me!"

Chapter 422: International Negotiations

"We can destroy Rain City, and we can even kill the Queen of Storms. How much are you willing to pay us to help you reclaim your capital?"

When he heard this, Darsos wanted to laugh out loud, as if this was a really good joke. But when he thought about the special identity of this messenger from the Northlands, he just couldn't laugh or dismiss it as a joke. Instead, he fell silent.

This messenger was Glina, the Queen of the Sleuweir Kingdom from the Northlands. She had personally made an unexpected visit to the Auland Empire, which was still in the middle of warring against the Sea Tribe—quite astonishing in itself, but it wasn't as inconceivable as her proposal. However, since it was her, Darsos had to carefully consider everything she said.

Glina was the messenger and representative of that person. Or perhaps the more accurate term would be to call her his successor.

The times were changing without people realizing it. More and more people were beginning to pay attention to the changes that occurred in the frozen Northlands. The miracles that occurred after that person returned to his homeland had already caused observers to have a glimpse of the future. There was nothing that could stop the newly-born Mist Alliance from ruling over the entire Northlands.

Too many miracles had already occurred in those formerly barren wastelands.

The Northlands was the birthplace of magical engineering, which was becoming more important by the day. It was a model for how different species could peacefully live together, and it was the holy origin of the Concept of Law. The Northlands also consisted of an alliance between elves, beastmen, undead, the Underground and humans. Their new social structure allowed countless species to

live together without major conflict. Even enough sand gathered together could build a castle, not to mention how those that gathered there were species skilled at war. Those with foresight were predicted that a new, powerful faction would soon be born in the Northlands within the next two to three years.

Unlike how the countries in Eich were always chaotically warring with each other, the Northlands was relatively peaceful. Perhaps it should be said this was a deserved period of respite after their previous tribulations. Other countries and species in the mortal plane were currently busy dealing with their own troubles, yet the Northlands received an opportunity to grow and become powerful in a peaceful environment. It even had the free time and power to help other countries like Auland.

Two women were at the core of power in this newly-born faction. One was Reyne Qin Mist, who Darsos had already met. The other was Glina, who was currently before him. Of course, Darsos didn't realize that he had already met her other form, Clint.

In the world of Eich, where royal authority was everything, the ruler's personal abilities and charisma were extremely important. The saying that a despotic ruler would ruin a country and a wise ruler would lead a flourishing country was no exaggeration.

As for his Northlands allies, Darsos had already analyzed both these princesses of the Mist. He had only a slightly higher assessment of Reyne compared to before. Although she now had plenty of combat achievements and obvious progress in her power level, his spies' reports confirmed that she habitually ran away from handling political tasks. She had evolved from a flower vase into a brave warrior who only specialized at fighting and nothing else. On the other hand, Darsos had only a one-word comment for the other Northlands Queen who rarely appeared in front of others: unfathomable.

Ever since she was young, assassins had been hunting her. She escaped into the Underground and matured in that chaotic society

before forcefully taking back the country that belonged to her. Any excellent bard or author would be capable of spinning this tale into a classic story about a princess's revenge.

Perhaps ordinary people would only treat this as a story, but a powerful emperor like Darsos saw many other things in this tale.

"The Underground. Didn't he return from the Underground as well? Could it be that Glina obtained his recognition while in the Underground, which was how she was able to regain authority over her country?"

Often times, how accurate the truth that one could derive from the "facts" in reports would depend on the cognitive abilities of the analyzer. For schemers and those with authority, they saw zero coincidences in the world. They believed everything to be the result of planning and foresight.

However, Darsos' opinion was that his spies' reports were indeed quite accurate. This teenaged young girl appeared exactly her age, but she happened to possess abilities far surpassing what her age and physical appearance would suggest. She was skilled at government, industry, economy and political maneuvering. She had gained authority over her country for just a year, but she already had Sleuweir firmly within her grasp. Her kingdom was even beginning to flourish.

Some things could be explained away by saying it was natural talent. Yet succeeding at governmental and industrial affairs would require sufficient practical experience and theoretical knowledge. It would be impossible for someone as young as Glina to acquire all this experience and knowledge without a veteran showing her the ropes. One time, Darsos' spies heard the young queen address Roland in a certain manner that explained everything.

"Adopted father."

So Glina was that person's adopted daughter. That person would

also often have private discussions with her. Now that Darsos thought back on it, he must have been teaching Glina various things.

And now Glina represented far more than a single country. She was one of the most active leaders in the newly established Mist Alliance and worked hard at integrating all its members. She personally made decisions on every major political decision. As the Mist Alliance became more mature, Glina was becoming one of its greatest authorities.

In fact, whenever Roland wasn't in the Northlands, everyone there recognized her as his representative. This was no easy matter—it was basically a case where Princess Glina had full authority.

The Northlands citizens were also firmly beginning to recognize their suddenly returned young queen as their rightful leader. In fact, Glina even had a reputation equal to the incredibly well-liked "Princess Knight" Reyne. They were known as the "Twin Star Princesses," obviously a comparison to the legendary Twin Star Princes, Roland and Karwenz.

And now the People of the Mist viewed the courageous and talented warrior Reyne just like the reckless combat maniac Prince Karwenz. Meanwhile, the wise and talented Queen Glina was clearly the successor of Prince Roland with her abilities, even if she didn't always have a kind smile like the "Child of Light" did.

"Thanks to our Twin Star Princesses, our People of the Mist will finally be able to lead good lives again."

The era of three hundred years ago belonged to the Twin Star Princes. Perhaps these two princes ended up dying together with the Mist Kingdom, but no country or powerful individual would be able to ignore how brilliantly they shone in the end. Their final, angry roars made the entire world tremble. How the Mist Kingdom defeated seventeen allied countries by itself was considered an incredible miracle. Not to mention, two Undead Calamities and a

demon invasion followed after because of this. Even though everything was finally destroyed, people still remembered their names and deeds. The Twin Star Princes' statues were commonly found in the Northlands. They had become symbols of the Northlands' spirit, worshiped like totems.

But now the world learned that the Mist's bloodline and inheritance hadn't died off. The destroyed Mist Kingdom's Prince Roland had been hiding and acting in the shadows. When his chosen successor finally waved the banner of the Mist, all the people of the Mist naturally chose to return to this flag. Every day, countless People of the Mist would arrive in the Northlands, having traveled thousands of kilometers through treacherous terrain in order to return to their homeland. This newly-born Mist Kingdom and Mist Alliance was becoming stronger every day.

Truth was always stranger than fiction. Fate had played a joke on everyone here. Actually, Reyne was Roland's true successor as he was her teacher, while Glina had technically been Karwenz's descendant until her demon blood was replaced with Roland's. It would seem that some things were destined to work differently from how they would seem, while other things would return to the starting point.

At this moment, after Glina made the incredible claim of being able to destroy the Rain City, she didn't even attempt to hide the dangerous glint in her demon eye. Darsos could only gulp down his thought about asking if she was only joking.

This little girl who looked to be only ten years old despite being a teenager was expressionless. Darsos didn't dare to wrong her in any way despite her appearance. In his opinion, Glina would become an existence equal to himself in the future. Someone like her wouldn't possibly travel thousands of kilometers just to tell him a joke. And as long as it was something she claimed, no matter how ridiculous it seemed, he would need to seriously consider it.

After a long contemplation, Darsos gave his answer.

"I originally wanted to joke and say that as long as you could accomplish it, I could even give you half of Auland. But when I think about your adopted father who's capable of accomplishing almost anything, I feel like I probably shouldn't joke around like that."

The emperor paused for a moment before making a promise.

"I won't make any empty promises like swearing to be eternal allies. Neither of us would believe as ethereal a concept as 'eternal.' But as long as you do this for us, our two countries will naturally become the best of friends. And as Emperor of Auland, I promise, that as long as you can accomplish the miracle of destroying the Rain City, we shall give the Endo Dukedom and Safa Kingdom to the Northlands. We shall also fully open up our markets to you, tariff free. You'll be able to buy anything you want with gold that Aulanders can buy at the same price. This will be in place for a limit of thirty years."

The Endo Dukedom and Safa Kingdom were two of Auland's subordinate countries located in the north. The Endo Dukedom was mountainous, but it was also a country rich with mineral mines. However, the mines' production had slowed down in recent years, beginning to run out of resources. Meanwhile, the Safa Kingdom was a country where many different species lived together, with the most common species being mountain dwarves and gnomes.

From Darsos' offer, it could be seen that he had truly done his homework on the Northlands. Neither of these two countries he offered were large. Nor did either country have a sizable population or any combat potential. However, these two countries had what the Mist Alliance and Northlands lacked the most—a large number of expert miners, smiths and craftsmen.

The Northlands didn't lack mines. What they lacked were experienced miners. The Northlands also didn't lack cutting-edge technology and researchers, but they lacked outstanding smiths

and an industrial foundation. If the Mist Alliance obtained these two countries, it was a definite that this would greatly increase its power after but a short period of time.

Meanwhile, opening up the market with zero tariffs appeared simple, but it was actually a tremendous offer that was almost impossible to come by in this feudal generation. Transportation in Eich wasn't convenient. Merchant convoys and other travelers would have to risk their lives to travel to other countries. It was only natural that one country's local specialties would be increased in price by ten times after being transported to another country, a country which greatly lacked and needed such a specialty product. But despite the huge profits to be had in the import-export trade, the biggest trouble of all would forever be not being able to purchase what one wanted.

Let's say that during wartime a certain type of secret weapon would require sapphires to be crafted. However, you might not be able to purchase any sapphires. Or perhaps your food stocks weren't high enough, but none of your neighboring countries would be willing to sell any food reserves to you. Such affairs were common in Eich.

Auland was a semi-mega empire. It had vast territories and an abundant amount of leisure goods, military resources, rare metals, magical weapons, food reserves and crop seeds. These would all be crucial strategic resources for any small country, but none of this was that much to Auland itself. And if Auland completely opened up its market to a certain country, it would form an absolutely ironclad relationship of shared mutual benefits with that country. Although Auland would definitely sacrifice some profits by not charging tariffs, the Mist Alliance and the Auland Empire would become the best of friends.

This was Emperor Darsos' strategy. What he gave the Northlands wasn't all that important to himself, but it was what the Northlands needed the most. Besides, in the end, he would be able

to obtain more benefits than what he'd given up. As long as he successfully reclaimed the Auland capital, his reputation would succeed even the founder of Auland. With his citizens fully supporting him, his country's power would reach its peak in history together with the birth of his airship squadron.

As for giving up some subordinate countries? It was quite common in this day and age for subordinate countries to change masters. Forcefully sucking a subordinate country dry of all it was worth wouldn't bring that many benefits. As long as it wasn't widely publicized that the subordinate countries were given away, it wouldn't be a big deal.

"Give us the Milos Federation as well."

The Milos Federation was another subordinate country of Auland. There was nothing special about this country. However, it was geographically connected in the mountains to the other two subordinate countries being offered. Having the region would help the Mist Alliance solve the difficult problem of transportation to these two new countries. It would seem that Glina had done plenty of political homework as well.

"Does the Mist Alliance intend to expand southwards?"

"We won't be expanding any farther south. The area we can protect is limited. Blindly expanding will only give us trouble."

"Deal."

And so Darsos and Glina shook hands. This trade, which involved the fates of the Queen of Storms, the Auland capital and three countries, had now been agreed upon.

Chapter 423: The True Nature of Ice

[...What is ice?]

When Harloys was my teacher, her questions were always designed to stimulate my mind. In a similar fashion, my System started off by giving me a question and telling me to think about it by myself.

But unlike my confused self from back in the day, I could now count myself as an ice magic grandmaster.

"Ice is a special form of water. Ice magic is a branch magic of water magic. As long as I pay a certain amount of mana, I'll be able to quickly change the form of water I create into ice."

That was Roland Blackhand's answer to this question back in my second life. It was a transmigrator-like answer, very scientific and practical, and was how he had developed his Ice Hallucination technique which was most suited to his combat style.

Being able to utilize "hallucinations" to the utmost extent would require outstanding manipulation abilities and absolute coldness and calmness even in the most heated of combat situations. However, this was a perfect ability for Roland Blackhand, who had abandoned human emotions. No—it should be said that only someone like Blackhand would be able to use such a power.

"Ice? It's nothing more than a tool. It's foundationally no different to fire or wind magic. It's just a tool that I'm using for revenge. I absolutely must have those bastards pay the price for what they've done. I still don't have enough power. I need more, I need absolutely destructive power."

My third life as a lich answered this question by coming up with Ice Aeon. My incredible System gave him a path to reach the void of dreams, reality and illusions, where he saw the frozen age where the world and universe were first forming. He brought back that

age that could freeze anything to death back to reality with him.

Emperor Yongye, the Emperor of Eternal Night, desired to bring eternal darkness upon the living. That was how the Ice Aeon of despair had been born.

"Power? Existence? No—the frozen age is only that homeland in my heart. I shall draw the Northlands' beauty with my own brush. And my foundational magic of ice sculpting is the best paintbrush I could ask for."

With Harloys and the Frigid Nightmares' guidance, I was able to begin gaining a new understanding of ice.

"No, just this alone isn't enough. Ice is only the base material for painting. I can use ice to create an entire world. I can create my own Frigidwinter Earth."

During the danger of the Emordilorcan crisis, I took the most important step. However, it was likely that very few people knew what this step of mine truly represented... it represented the hope of the world.

I arrived at different answers at what ice was in each of these three lives of mine. Every piece of the puzzle seemed real but also like part of a blank jigsaw puzzle, which would be incredibly difficult to put together.1

"I should consider myself lucky. Very few people will have three completely different understandings of ice. Actually, it's impossible for anyone other than myself to have more than two understandings of ice."

Anyone learning about a specific type of knowledge would have to progress from a shallow to a deep understanding. Once they reached a certain level, they would have their own path and understanding, unique in the world. Even if another person walked down the exact same path, there would always be small coincidental factors different in that person's life that would make

this path impossible to completely replicate.

And people could only have one life experience. To use an analogy, it was like pouring water into a cup. A full cup of water wouldn't be able to contain anything more. Even if you emptied the cup and started all over again, you couldn't escape from the traces of water left behind in the cup. It was impossible for a person to have more than one Soul Imprint. The only method would be for that person to empty their entire head, starting from their very soul, and start over. That would count as a new life but was obviously straying far from common sense.

However, some things did, indeed, stray far from common sense. For instance, reincarnation. For instance, my System.

Each person who saw a painting would have their own opinion of it. I, however, had three completely different angles and opinions. Just like a filled cup of water, life experience was something that couldn't be cleaned out so easily. Yet I had started over with a clean slate three times.

I studied ice magic in these three most recent lives of mine. Me being able to start over with a clean slate was due to my soul being damaged every time I reincarnated. This was both a good thing and a bad thing. But now this "bad side effect" of having to start over again had become "three life experiences" that nobody else in the world could possibly obtain. I doubted that a single person in the world had a deeper understanding of what the true nature of ice was.

[Then, what is ice?]

"I still don't know! I had three completely different ways of looking at ice. Is the correct answer the addition of all three? What if I have four lives, five lives... or even thirteen lives' worth of experience? Would I have to come up with yet another new answer, one that would also be correct? Is this the legendary multiple-choice question on a test?"

As I asked myself what ice truly was, I realized I had less of an understanding than when I first began. Was this the actualization of the legendary saying "The more you know, the more you realize how little you know?" The me in the past would have unhesitatingly answered the question. But now I found myself unable to define what ice was.

And so it naturally became impossible for me to add all my life experiences together and come up with a new answer.

"I don't know. Isn't ice... just ice? It doesn't get any fancier. Hey, System, just tell me the answer. I'm not smart enough. I can't figure it out."

[...Didn't you literally just come up with the answer? Ice is just ice. It's a form of water, one of the four major elements that the entire world is created from. Every additional definition of ice was added on by others. Even ice magic was something people came up with by experimenting with water magic. How could any of that possibly be the true nature of ice?]

"...Are you kidding me...?"

Yet I was unable to say anything more as countless scenes and knowledge suddenly poured into my brain. The earliest mystical secrets were shown before my eyes: the scene of the universe's creation. The information contained within far surpassed what an ordinary human could take in. At first I felt a headache but was unable to fall unconscious no matter what. Only when the knowledge infusion stopped did I directly fall unconscious, not able to say a single word.

...I could only hope that my understanding this time was correct..."Ice is just ice."

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The world didn't stop revolving because Roland was busy having a headache.

"Damn it! Where the hell is the God Equipment of Fire?"

Even Solo, who typically had a good temper, was frustrated. Due to Aylos' rash suicide, the original plans had all gone up in smoke. The plan to have the Water Elemental Goddess help retrieve the God Equipment of Fire could only be temporarily set aside. The Water Elemental Goddess herself—or more accurately the few remnants that remained—was contained within the ice crystal in Solo's pocket.

It was unknown whether Aylos would live. Right now, Solo had nobody he could talk to about his worries.

If he was unable to complete his task, he would have a difficult many days ahead of him. He was currently wandering around the Water Elemental Plane, without a clue about where to search for the God Equipment of Fire. And this had already attracted the attention of many powerful existences.

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"Have you heard? We're starting another campaign to reclaim our capital."

In Auland's temporary capital of New Kagersi, the dark clouds that always surrounded the city seemed to have greatly decreased. In the military campground, the high-ranked military officers and high-ranked knights were chatting among themselves. They hadn't yet received formal orders, but these warriors had experienced more than seventy rounds of battle by now, and from the resources and personnel they suddenly began receiving they understood what was going on. A new major campaign to reclaim the capital was about to begin.

"Weren't we going to wait for our airship fleet to be completed? Why is His Majesty Darsos taking action now? Could it be that our airship fleet can be used?"

"No, I heard from my uncle who's working on them that only five

of our old ships have finished with the basic modifications. They're far from being ready to use."

"Why's His Majesty in such a big rush, then? Is the Sea Tribe about to take the initiative to attack us?"

"No... What I heard was that a new batch of reinforcements arrived from the Northlands. Apparently, the Princess Knight is leading them, and there are many Aurora Knights. This will be another cooperative battle."

"Wonderful!"

These young warriors desired the chance to obtain combat accolades, but not a single Auland warrior would ever imagine that their next battle would be the final one, the battle to reclaim their capital.

Meanwhile, in New Kagersi's Mist Alliance embassy, the two princesses—also known as the Twin Stars—reunited with each other.

Their mission? Suffice to say, it was of Myth-level difficulty.

Chapter 424: Fairies

Very few people knew how the tiny fairies became the most powerful information specialists in the world. While it was true that their sizes varied among themselves, even the largest fairy would reach only up to a human's knee. The smaller fairies would only be capable of dancing on a human's hand. If they had to fight in battle, their tiny size would leave them at an immense disadvantage.

Size didn't always represent strength. However, the fairy species had been around for many years but had never once produced a famous hero or warrior. They didn't have any outstanding natural racial talents apart from their outstanding fleeing abilities. Naturally, the fairy species also never had any major combat achievements throughout history. Despite this, fairies managed to lead good lives in the mortal plane that was rife with competition between species. In fact, fairies maintained their own merchant associations, contact points and intelligence divisions even in human kingdoms that greatly discriminated against them. This was incredible.

There were indeed people who tried to uncover the fairies' secrets. However, such people would vanish without a trace. And when they reappeared, they would blather on about "Fairytale kingdoms," "So many cute little fairies," "This strawberry cake is so delicious, but I'm so stuffed. How about giving it to the little bunnies?" and other such crazed words.

Perhaps it was due to this that ordinary people felt that fairies' countries would be really cute and just like the fairy tales. However, reality and what people thought were two very different things.

"God damn it! The entire world is at war. It's making business so difficult. I guess I'll be having a hard winter this year."

A one-eyed Dark Fairy was currently smoking a cigar. He even held a small goblin rifle in one hand as he spoke, puffing out clouds of smoke.

He was heavily overweight. Looking at him from afar, he resembled a round ball. However, he also had clear rainbow-colored wings on his back that continuously trembled and sprinkled glowing powder, making him seem like a nice and kind fairy from a fairy tale.

"...But actually I've recently made more profits. Compared to last year's winter, our Black Forest series of magazines have increased sales by thirty-five percent. Our best-selling magazine, the Famous Knights series, has increased sales by a whopping ninety-one percent. It's mostly our hero figurines, paintings, toys and other such accessories that have decreased in sales."

This Dark Fairy wore a neatly pressed suit and had golden-rimmed spectacles on his face, the type that typically represented wisdom. However, this appeared quite strange on him as this Dark Fairy had a crooked nose, eyes like a dead fish and ugly and disgusting warts dotting his face.

It appeared more—no—it definitely appeared like this Dark Fairy resembled an evil witch in the fairy tales. After all, he had a nose ring and a crooked wooden staff in his other hand.

"...A New Year's Party hosted by the Kasolan Dukedom? Are you an idiot? Why would you report about such a minor event in such a minor country? I'm going to dock your wages... What? Major news that the Kasolan Dukedom will be leaving San Antonio and joining the Mist Alliance will be announced at this party? F*ck! This is big! Gather as much information as you can. I'll immediately send you additional backup and resources."

"Those great demons are beginning to construct their own cities? They didn't eat those pitiful human villagers and are raising them instead? Are you kidding me!?"

As the Dark Fairy talked with another fairy about the magazine's contents, countless fairies were busily working behind them. Some were shouting into black rune crystals used for sending magic messages, while others were shouting into pipes connected to strings. Even more were furiously at work writing articles. This chaotic scene resembled a busy editing department right before a deadline.

They weren't in a green-forested, blue-skied fairy tale land at all, however. They were in a city filled with the trappings of culture. Hordes of people busily walked in the streets, while nearby factories were loudly at work. There were printing factories, toy factories, handicrafts factories and so on—clearly a large variety. The main difference from other cities was that all the people walking down the streets were actually tiny fairies.

The sky was quite overcast with no sunlight to be seen, but the streetlights forever provided lighting. The fairies didn't construct a miniature city just because of their tiny sizes. This was mostly because there were other species working here. Muscular giant pixies, which were two meters tall but had slack-jawed expressions that indicated their lack of intelligence, were the tiny fairies' distant relatives as well as their protectors.

This mystical city wasn't located in the mortal plane—it was in the little-known Grayshadow Plane. The fairies didn't fear death as they gathered information throughout all of Eich because they weren't actually capable of dying in the mortal plane. Their bodies in the other planes were, in fact, a special type of shadow negative energy projection. If any fairy met with danger, all they needed to do was cancel their projection.

However, this didn't mean that they were undying. They had special bodies capable of living in such a negative energy plane as they themselves were a combination of energy and life. Fairies were actually an abnormal species made of half energy and half life power. They were like other lifeforms' shadows, and they needed

to have other species recognize and know about them to provide them with an energy similar to the power of belief, which would allow them to remain "alive." Otherwise, they'd become nothing more than decayed corpses.

They also needed to constantly replenish this type of special energy. Eating food wouldn't provide them this energy—they were capable of eating actual food but could only taste it. If a fairy said he was starving, this meant he was about to die.

That was why, from ancient times to present, other species had gotten accustomed to these little fairies that were seemingly everywhere, always making the news. In fact, other species even believed them to be members of the mortal plane. The fairies also gradually mastered the artform of "keeping a constant presence" in front of the other species in the mortal plane.

The fairies were by far the most skilled at establishing information networks and merchant associations even in the most dangerous of locations. The fact that the news and advertising industries were so well developed in Eich was also thanks to the fairies. However, even every other news industry added together wouldn't compare to the fairies' news. No ordinary species could compare to how the fairies could instantly gather information across dimensions.

Of course, in order to constantly remind other species of their presence, they would modify and publish or even create their own legends and stories. And they intentionally gave all the branch offshoots of the fairy species opportunities to appear in such stories, such as the tiny pixies, prankster fairies, shadow monsters and so on. And when fairies discovered that children were the best providers of the "recognition energy" that the they required to exist, they established special teams to scare children. There were even great fairies in charge of giving well-behaved children presents at the end of the year just like in a certain legend, the reason why fairies had many toy factories working all year round.

This pudgy Dark Fairy named Blake was the third biggest boss in this city. He owned four toy factories, two printing factories and more than ten magazines, newspapers and editing departments. The "recognition energy" he obtained was more than enough for him to take care of several thousand fairies under him. And as someone who liked to look cool on the surface, he had more than ten wives, among them which included tiny fairies, giant pixies, and even humans and elves from the mortal plane.

Why was it said he liked to look cool on the surface? A half energy lifeform like a fairy would have a different way of reproducing compared to normal lifeforms. Fairies would undergo splitting after their energy was filled, and their newly split off child fairy would be completely unrelated to the original fairy. Blake's so-called wives were only capable of providing a tiny amount of recognition energy for him.

And right now this powerful fairy was frustrated. He swore on his beard—the beard he hadn't shaved in three thousand years—that his business was having the greatest trouble it ever met.

"What? It's fine if our 'food producing' information and news industries don't have any problems, but as my vice general manager, you're too shortsighted. I'm beginning to consider if I should have you fired and replaced."

"I'm sorry—I'm so sorry, Boss! Please tell me what I should do."

Although he knew that his fellow fairies couldn't provide him with food energy, Blake loved to see his subordinates view him with such fear and reference. Blake took a big puff on his cigar and blew several smoke rings before speaking up in a vicious tone.

"Hmph! If it wasn't that an idiot like you has been working under me for one hundred years, I would have already done so. You see, the daily necessities business is booming in the mortal plane and leisure goods' sales are greatly decreasing. Plus, there are so many species and powerful individuals suddenly popping up after

disappearing for a long time. This means a seasonal calamity is about to arrive—a great famine!"

"A great famine?"

Blake's prankster fairy subordinate Albert was rather confused at hearing this. The mortal plane was going to have a famine? Or could it be that...?

"We fairies will meet with a famine?"

"Yeah. As long as those foolish veterans start their so-called Holy War, the mortal plane's overall population will decrease by a lot. This will also decrease the amount of food energy our species can obtain. Based on records from the past, our population will also decrease at the same proportion as the mortal plane."

From a certain standpoint, the fairies' population was directly proportional to the mortal plane's population. X amount of humans would be required to sustain each fairy's required recognition energy. If the mortal plane's population decreased, the fairies would naturally decrease by the same proportion.

"Equal proportion?"

"In the previous great famine, only three point seven percent of our entire fairy species survived. And late in the previous great famine, we even started raising a large number of humans to supply us with food energy. This meant that probably less than three percent of all humans managed to survive the previous major Holy War."

As one of the incredibly few old fairies who had survived the previous great famine, Blake had long since lost track of how many fairy children had split off from his body. However, just his memories of how bones covered the ground everywhere made him instinctively afraid.

It was only natural for a war which could change which species ruled the world to be catastrophic.

"SO YOU'RE SAYING THAT ONLY THREE PERCENT OF US WILL SURVIVE THIS TIME AS WELL!!"

Boom!

Albert reacted with a terrified shout, causing the other fairies to look in his direction. As a result, old Blake directly fired his gnome rifle at Albert without saying even a word.

Albert inhaled a cold breath as he felt the bullet scratch his cheek. He immediately calmed down and kneeled on the ground in surrender.

Only now did he recall that his boss's greatest pet peeve was meaninglessly shouting out loud. The previous giant pixie servant who had shouted like that had his true body directly sent to the mortal plane. It was unknown what exactly had happened to him, but he had definitely died.

Blake spat on the ground when he saw that he missed. However, he didn't fire his gun again. He was rather superstitious and believed that since his subordinate was lucky enough to avoid the bullet, there was no longer any need to shoot him. This would be wasting the other person's excellent luck.

"'Lucky brat, I hope you're a three this time.' Now you know the origins of this saying among our species which means wishing luck upon others. Don't have such a bitter expression. This time, all of us old ones won't be stupid enough to just sit back and watch. At the very least, we'll try our best to think of ideas to have more humans survive. Tell every single department manager to come here. We need to think of something. The main priority is to tell the humans just how serious things are. Armageddon is right before them."

"But... what are we supposed to do...? Even if we tell humans about it, they won't believe us, right...?"

"I think I really do need a new vice general manager. You're such

an idiot!"

Old Blake pointedly stared at the fairy reporters and editors who were now busying themselves with work again. Only then did Albert have a sudden realization.

"You're saying we should publish a special edition? So that we can tell the humans that they're in big trouble?"

"Yep. This will be our information analysis. After so many years, we have a great mastery over the humans' news and information industry. Just letting this mastery sit back and do nothing would be a waste. Tell all my employee fairies that I'll pay them three times their normal salary for overtime tonight. We must absolutely have a report finished about the humans' troubles by tomorrow morning. We're going to rush a special edition!"

Chapter 425: List of Threats

It was possible that nobody expected the species most sensitive to the Holy War to be the seemingly unrelated fairies.

They didn't have any conflict of interests with other species, but they would be one of the biggest losers the moment a Holy War broke out. Perhaps this was why they saw everything the clearest from the sidelines. They were the first to warn humans.

They quickly published an emergency report, which was sold for a far lower price than its cost of publication. Information that many countries' spy networks were unable to obtain instantly became available for cheap prices. A lot of information was given to everyone.

In this special report, the fairies showed off their incomparable information gathering, verification and analytical skills. Not only did they explain how the mortal plane was under a threat the likes of which it had never seen before, but they even categorized the different types of main threats. They effectively consolidated and utilized rumors which had been scattered all over.

The fairies categorized three major threats.

The first major category was the return of ancient immemorial species.

Actually, this type of trouble would happen in every Holy War. After all, the Holy War represented the flourishment or decline of every species. The final victor of an eternal Holy War would rule. The humans had only started ruling the world from a few Holy Wars ago, and the losers obviously weren't willing to bow out of history so easily.

The first major species to return would, quite naturally, be the elves—it was just like how a worm would keep wriggling even after being cut into pieces. As the species which previously ruled the

world, they had lost the position of ruler despite having been on the winning side in the Holy War. Of course they wouldn't want to idly sit by—they desired to return to their former glory.

With the Elven Gods' protection plus many, many years of accumulation, the elves' natural talents and subordinate species, it would be a major incident if the elves started any trouble. The human countries had always been on guard against them, which was only natural as the elves were still the second highest candidate species for ruler of the world.

However, the prerequisite for the elves to stand up was to first determine who represented the elves. This would require internal warfare among the elves.

Silver Elves were the majority elf species in the southwest mountain Elf Kingdoms. Last year, they constructed a new united kingdom with no elf king in name. However, secretly behind them was the Silver Elf War God, Sonya. He was the number two ranked Elf God, although he never seemed to have much of a presence.

The new Saint Heen Empire saw more than twenty Elf Kingdoms declare war against it right when it was established, but a similar number of Elf Kingdoms also declared themselves subordinate to this new empire. Its ruler, Moonlight Elf Queen Afina, had a status that was self-explanatory. Although it wasn't yet publicized, anyone in the know would understand that the Elven Main God Anslo was behind Saint Heen.

Quite obviously, the Moonlight Elves and Silver Elves, along with the respective Elven Gods backing them, were going to use force to determine who was going to be the leader of all elves.

Silver Elves were a warrior species among the Royal Elves, courageous and skilled at fighting. Moonlight Elves were more skilled at Divine Arts and magic, with countless mystical secrets passed down in their tribe. Plus, Anslo was obviously stronger than Sonya, so everyone felt that the Moonlight Elves were more likely

to be victorious.

Of course, there was also the possibility that this was all fake news that wanted to hide a secret alliance already arranged between the two species. However, judging by the combat reports of how brutal their infighting was, the likelihood of that was incredibly small.

That's right—a full-blown internal war among the elves was now raging, and it was happening in an incredibly brutal fashion. Both sides unhesitatingly used ancient magical weapons and highest-level magic. Every day, more than ten thousand elves and more than thirty thousand subordinate species' members would die in battle. Although the elves' neighboring human countries were unaffected for the time being, every human country bordering them was on the highest level of alert.

Meanwhile, the fairies' assessment placed the Tark Republic undead as the second greatest threat out of all the returning species. Thanks to a special report I sent to the fairies, these undead's past lives were now revealed for all to know about. Their overall power was frightening to behold with how many Undead Emperors they had.

Due to the dimensional laws, the undead were currently not a threat to anyone other than the Bardi Empire. However, the fairies unhesitatingly assessed the undead as the second most dangerous threat amongst the top-level threats.

Of course, this special report had very detailed descriptions of the undead as they were considered a top-level threat. But I didn't have to read this as I was naturally familiar with all this information.

The third returned species was the great demons. These demons had once been the rulers of the mortal plane too, and they'd once coexisted with the elves. The great demons also had a rather complex relationship with the Tark Republic.

Large numbers of Snow, Cliff, Forest and other great demon

species appeared in San Antonio's Safron District. It was evident that these great demon tribes had banded together rather than acting independently. Perhaps ancient great demon royalty or priest bloodlines still existed within these tribes. Far away from this location, in the Amu Mountains, Flame Demons had started appearing. Flame Demons were half demon and half elemental, an abnormal combination that made them incredibly difficult to deal with.

Originally, great demons weren't viewed by anyone as a threat. In fact, many were even delighted at San Antonio's troubles. However, the fairies' reports indeed helped raise the human countries' vigilance.

"These great demons aren't the simple human-eating beasts as described in legends. They actually treated the human citizens quite well in the cities they conquered. The great demons are even providing the humans in those cities with food. They're steadily creating their own power base. And nobody knows just how they arrived. It can be predicted that they're not working independently of each other, and it's highly likely that there's a God supporting them in the shadows."

However, the great demons were dealing with major problems of their own. Although it was unknown why they established their base in San Antonio's mountains, this mega empire definitely wouldn't be dealt with easily.

The fourth-ranked threat was the Sea Tribe. The Sea Tribe were quite powerful and also had a True God backing them up, but they could only survive in the sea or very close to the seaside, so their area of influence was limited. That was why they ranked only fourth out of all the threats. Besides, Auland was also keeping them busy.

Of course, the fairies' list of threats was incomplete. Some of the most ancient species that had only a few individuals appear so far weren't on the list. And obviously the fairies missed the most

important species of all—the Titans' return and the giants regaining their lost Intelligence. However, the Titans and giants were currently being kept busy by the dragons and the Bardi Empire.

Still, just these listed ancient species were more than enough to cause havoc everywhere in the mortal plane. All the major human countries were dealing with their own troubles. Any one that collapsed would cause a huge chain reaction.

These returning ancient species were classified by the fairies as the humans' main enemies because these ancient species had once ruled the world at one point in time. They would be the most aggressive and proactive in invading. It would be impossible to negotiate with any of them without dealing them serious losses and countless defeats first.

"Negotiate? Giving us only a tiny piece of land to live on? Why should we accept? All of this belonged to us in the first place."

The secondary threats on the fairies' report were much easier to deal with.

The most attention-grabbing threat were the giant worms that appeared near the North Sea. However, that location's average temperature was negative ten degrees Celsius. Only some very primitive human tribes and sea lions would need to be on guard against them.

The fairies were still trying to obtain more information on these giant worms, but it was impossible to communicate with the worms. Any that approached their territories would come under attack. It was also impossible to understand the giant worms' communication with each other, making it very difficult to obtain information on them—it wouldn't happen anytime soon.

Next were the "octopi aliens" that caused me to shout "Are you kidding me? Aren't they the wrong style for this story?" These strange creatures had highly advanced scientific technology and

had tamed many local species. The octopi even began constructing strangely-shaped buildings and seemed intent on playing the role of scientific alien invaders fighting against a local magic-based society.

However, the octopi population wasn't very high, so they hadn't attracted much attention—yet.

Of course, not all of the new visitors came with bad intentions. Out of all the strange "guests" that arrived in the mortal plane, the beast-eared SemiBeastmen were cute, gentle and incredibly popular. They called themselves the Kamil Tribe, but the humans called them 'tiny beastmen.' The nearby countries were already communicating and making contact with them.

One's outer appearance was truly important. For instance, the octopi were treated as invading monsters from the very beginning while the tiny beastmen were extremely popular.

Of course, the fairies wouldn't forget about the new species known as the wood spirits. However, they also had cute appearances and a well-known clean background, so the world accepted them from the very beginning.

These secondary threats were considered threats not because of their high threat level but because more and more new visitors would be arriving in the mortal plane as the Holy War continued. These visitors would bring about more variety to this world, but along with that they would bring more danger.

The tertiary threat the fairies listed was actually what I viewed as the main threat to this world: the wars between the human countries.

It was common—incredibly common for the humans to war among themselves. If I had to dab points of red on a map on every location that humans were currently warring against each other, I might end up with nothing more than a rag fully drenched in red.

Small human countries declared war against other small human countries. Large human countries declared war against both other large human countries and small human countries. Human mega empires continuously declared war against each other. Of all generations, this was the best of all for those with ambitions.

Warriors desired to become heroes in the Holy War. Powerful individuals desired even more strength and to become undying. Rulers desired to become renowned in the history books. Even the Gods themselves desired to progress in power level. In that case, there were plenty of reasons for everyone to go to war.

As for the inciters of war and those scheming to gain benefits through warfare? Even with concrete evidence, rulers that desired to expand their territories would pretend not to see anything.

The flames of the Holy War had been ignited. The Holy Church no longer had as much authority as it should have as it was embroiled in the conflict between divine and royal authority. The ambitious who desired to obtain more by force naturally started taking action.

These three major categories of threats with detailed lists were astonishing to read about.

When I finally woke up from my deep sleep and read the magazine, I could only helplessly shake my head. This was how unstoppable this damned game history was. All these countries and rulers wanted to go to war and would find any excuse to expand their territory. It would be impossible to stop the humans' internal warring unless one killed all the rulers.

Still, it wasn't meaningless for me to read this report. It helped firm my determination to carry out my grand scheme without caring about the consequences. I had no more room for hesitation.

"I don't have much time left. I need to hurry things up. It can't be helped if there are some sacrifices..."

Chapter 426: Commencing the Scheme

"So this is the Tempest Hydra?"

In my hands was a decayed piece of rock that resembled a stone sculpture. I should say that it was a gray rock shaped like a bow and even had moss growing on it. Plenty of dust had rubbed off it onto my hands, and it had zero hints of elemental energy. Others would see it as simply a useless piece of trash.

However, this was one of the four Foundational Elemental Items of Dragon World. Dragon City had finally made up their mind to cooperate with me, so they gave me this wind element God Equipment, one of the four pillars of this plane.

"This was once an incredibly powerful wind element God Equipment. It's said that zero ammunition is required for it to summon furious winds capable of piercing the clouds. Plus, its attacks sound like the angry roars of dragons, which is how the Tempest Hydra obtained its name."

The silly cat apparently had maxed out points in knowledge about ancient treasures. She even knew about such a strange God Equipment.

"By the way, I should mention that the Gold Elves were more skilled than anyone else at archery back in the day. This God Equipment probably belongs to my ancestors. Back in that generation, the Gods were all born naturally, and there weren't Divine Concepts or Gods that existed through the power of belief."

As one of the first species created in this plane, the Gold Elves had an incredibly long history. It was impossible to know about what they were like as far too much time had passed; all that had to be said was that they were from Ayer's generation. As for their recent history... the last Gold Elf was right before me. When considering that the silly cat's temper was becoming worse and worse as she heard more news about the elves' internal warring, I

felt that it would be best for me to not tread on this landmine.

"Yep, it sounds amazing. But now I bet even a museum wouldn't accept it. It's just way too ridiculously ancient."

This God Equipment sounded quite amazing. However, it was evidently no longer usable. No matter how amazing a God Equipment was, not maintaining it for several tens of thousands of years still meant it would turn into a fossil.

"Normally, it wouldn't be like this. All God Equipment have divine power within them, and one of the most basic qualities of divine power is its undying nature. Almost no God Equipment will ever naturally break. However, this God Equipment's current condition is due to the situation in this plane."

Major problems were occurring with this plane's structure as the Titans struggled to break free. As one of the four foundational pillars which created this plane, this former God Equipment had obtained the plane's dimensional rights. It had become a measure for the plane's health. It appeared as if it would decay to dust, and this represented that this plane was reaching its end.

Since the Titans had the nickname of Children of the Earth, the main element they consisted of was naturally earth. Considering that earth was the element that countered wind, I was absolutely certain that this fossilized wind element Foundational Elemental Item was the one which was damaged the most out of the four.

From a certain standpoint, when giving me this item Dragon City didn't have good intentions. Since I felt that the God Equipment of Fire would be the most difficult to obtain as it was in the Water Elemental Plane, I told the dragons that my most preferred Foundational Elemental Item was the fire element one, and that the second best would be the water element one. But obviously they didn't care about what I wanted.

Still, the wind element item was enough for me. Actually, it would save me a lot of trouble. I couldn't rely on the Wind

Elemental God Camdian, and it would be for the best that I wouldn't need to negotiate with him for the God Equipment of Wind.

I took out my little notebook and wrote down another checkmark. I had completed another one-fourth of my task.

Out of the four top-level elemental items I needed, I already possessed the God Equipment of Earth. And it wouldn't be that difficult to obtain the God Equipment of Fire. Yesterday afternoon, our measurements indicated that the Elemental Tide lost its balance yet again due to the death of another Elemental God. Judging from the elemental fluctuations, it must have been the Water Elemental Goddess. It would seem that Solo successfully convinced her to commit suicide. I would need to mark down his achievement for that. [1]

Fortunately, this imbalance helped balance the Elemental Tide in Dragon World and would help slow down its collapse.

The reason? The fact that the Emordilorcan incident affected the Elemental Tide so much wasn't actually because of the Earth Elemental God's death. It was that I had destroyed the Earth Elemental Throne. An analogy would be a governmental agency. If an agency's leader died for some reason, they would only need to be replaced. However, if the entire agency was destroyed, the consequences would be massively troublesome.

Opposing water was the fire element. There was no Fire Elemental God, and now the Water Elemental Goddess had perished. Neither element's Elemental Throne was now active, and this helped balance the two. Meanwhile, both the Wind and Earth Elemental Gods were alive and rather weak, so the four elements just happened to achieve a perfect balance.

"Aylos... it would seem that rumors are unreliable. Everyone actually believed her to be emotionless. As usual, Harloys was correct. Aylos was truly deeply in love with her husband. In that

case, I'll modify my scheme a little, since I, too, really like true. Yep, although we're the FFF group's elites, one of our traditions is to never burn true love."

I made a few modifications to my plan and labeled them as third-rank priority. I would consider doing this part if the conditions were met. Any unnecessary emotions would be too much to hope for unless I completed my "grand scheme."

Of course, this environmental condition where the four elements were in perfect balance greatly resembled the balanced Elemental Tide of the immemorial generation. This was doubtlessly a good thing for anyone who wished to make a breakthrough in power level. I could already foresee that even more of my subordinates would make breakthroughs, which would also be a great help to my scheme. I suppose that this sort of counted as me owing Aylos, so I guess I could help her out if I had the time.

"...You're trying to find an excuse to help her? Could this be the legendary concept known as tsundere? It's not fun to look at male tsunderes."

"Ridiculous! That's not it at all. I don't even know if my 'Soul Burial Ice' will be able to preserve her soul. After all, she's foundationally an elemental creature. Right, has the second piece of Soul Burial Ice been delivered?"

"Yes, we've already received a reply. That person accepted the letter and the ice."

"...That person didn't rip up my letter?"

"No."

I nodded, as this was already far better than what I'd expected. It would seem that another trouble had been resolved.

"...You're so evil. If he really acts as what you told him to do in your letter, the entire world will likely be shocked. Your 'old friend' will meet with huge amounts of trouble."

"Ha! That's exactly what I want. My third piece of Soul Burial Ice will be ready by tomorrow. Someone will be coming to take it when it's time. As for the fourth and final piece..."

"You're still keeping secrets from me?"

"No, I haven't yet decided who to give it to. No simple existences are capable of making use of Soul Burial Ice."

"If it comes to it, we can—"

"No, that's the worst possible outcome. Let me think on this some more."

I shook my head, as I knew I was being far too greedy with too many plans spread all over the place. There would be huge trouble if any single part of my plan went wrong. It was like dancing on a tightrope. One misstep would send me hurtling down into the abyss. At least, however, I seemed to be dancing quite well for the moment.

"I should be able to obtain the God Equipment of Fire soon, and I already possess top level elemental items of wind and earth. I just lack a top-level water element item. Actually, I can make do with Sidunwar's Ocean Bottle, but the prerequisite for using it is that it must be filled with the Queen of Storms' divine power over the sea. In that case, all the conditions have been met for me to commence my grand scheme. Should I notify Orloss and Ayer to begin—"

"Don't rush. You only have one chance. Make any mistakes and you'll put the enemy on guard, and this will cause us huge troubles. We should first see how the situations in Bardi and Auland turn out. But it's time to activate our two critical chess pieces."

I shut my notebook, which was already filled with countless additional taped attachments and modifications. It would seem that I was still in too much of a hurry. Well, it couldn't be helped. What I had wanted for so many years was right before me, so of course I would be in a rush.

"You're right. I only have one chance. We'll become the number one enemy of the whole world if any information leaks about my grand scheme. Let's err on the side of caution."

I never expected that the silly cat would be calmer than me at the critical moment. This was despite the fact that after reading the fairies' special report, she was so angry she didn't eat for an entire twenty-four hours ... Wait a moment—didn't she not need to eat to begin with? Then wasn't she just wasting food whenever she stole what I wanted to eat?

"Right, how does it feel to be a Legend? Since you entered Legend, I've broken through to Legend myself. The current me is more than three times more powerful than one week ago!"

The silly cat was quite proud of herself, as breaking through to Legend rank meant that her magic powers had increased by much. Many spells she had been incapable of using were now usable once again. Plus, she regained the ability to use all sorts of forbidden techniques and small-scale forbidden spells. Plus, with her current physical body's benefits, becoming three times more powerful was just something she was casually saying. That would, in actuality, be a vast underestimation.

"Me? It's already my fifth time being a Legend. What am I supposed to feel?"

Although I broke through to Legend successfully, I could only smile wryly as I sensed the incredibly unique Soul Imprint deep within my soul.

It wasn't that there was a problem with my Soul Imprint or that I didn't increase in power level as expected. It was the opposite. I improved in power level far surpassing my expectations. I had profited—definitely profited—but my "great profit" proved an inference of mine that gave me rather complex feelings.

"...I can only take things one step at a time."

Chapter 427: Two Battlefronts

Stonewood Fortress was the second largest city of Bardi Empire's Eternal Hope Province. As the final defensive barrier for the entire province, losing it would be the equivalent of losing the entire Eternal Hope Province.

And not long ago in the "Holy War," the Bardi Empire just happened to lose this important defensive barrier.

Once this flourishing, well-known province was lost, approximately two million citizens landed in the enemy's hands, along with an equivalent amount of resources and land.

Bardi's eastern front against the Holy Church lost their battle too quickly. It was so quick that the citizens behind them didn't even have the time to retreat. Even the duke of the Eternal Hope Province became the Holy Church's hostage. Meanwhile, the Holy Church also obtained its greatest glory and biggest victory in recent times.

Unlike the poorer provinces that Bardi had recently annexed, the Eternal Hope Province had a very large population and abundant production of food, medicine and crafts. It had been an important domain of Bardi ever since several centuries ago. Losing this province not only dealt a great impact to the Bardi royalty's reputation and authority but also a huge blow to Bardi's overall situation.

When the Holy Church's unexpected reinforcements, the Cloud Giants and angels, arrived, the heretical Bardi warriors and evil dragons were easily defeated. Cardinal Stephen, who had been on the verge of committing suicide, ready to take the blame for everything, felt as if the Gods themselves were on his side. He could only think of himself as the lucky one who had the favor of the God of Holy Light himself.

Actually, even the Holy Church's higher-ups weren't expecting to

win this particular battle. Even Gordon, the seventh most famous warrior on the fairies' rankings, had refused to continue leading the Holy Church's armies. And so the Holy Church sent over the controversial Cardinal Stephen to take all the blame for the "stealing the credit" incident. More importantly, the main reason was that not a single other Cardinal-level leader was willing to take up the role of commanding the Holy Church vanguard in this fight.

"Since you're already taking the blame for that, then just take the blame for this matter too."

However, as this matter shows, suddenly obtaining a leadership position wasn't always good for obtaining achievements. It was likely the leader ends up taking the blame. However, if the leader was lucky enough, taking the blame would instead be transformed into obtaining achievements.

Neither side of this battle expected the Holy Church to win. But at the critical moment, the Cloud Giants from legend suddenly appeared and located the evil dragons hidden within the Bardi camp, dealing them a great blow.

And then another "allied reinforcement" arrived, but their arrival made everything clear to the Holy Light's army.

"Angels! Holy angels! Our God of Holy Light is taking care of us!"

Through countless religious stories, humans' worship of angels had been endlessly reinforced. These creatures of Order had long since left the mortal plane but represented unmistakable divine will whenever they appeared.

Even during Emperor Yongye's long reign, the Holy Church had been able to explain things away as 'the Gods' trial for humans.' That was why everyone didn't lose hope even though the Holy Church allied armies lost back then. Such belief in the Holy Church had been formed over countless generations, and as the purest, holiest and most perfect of creatures in legend, the angels attracted the whole world's attention the moment they appeared.

Simply because these angels joined the Holy War on the side of the Holy Light army's vanguard, every day throngs of Holy Light believers would travel thousands of kilometers to join the war effort.

These angels had strange appearances. They were covered all over in strange golden armor that masked even their faces. Their explanation was that "we're still unable to get accustomed to this tainted world," which was accepted by the Holy Light believers. After all, it was considered impossible to fake the angels' white feathers which gave off a golden glow.

In fact, it should be said that the Cardinals and the great majority of priests had sunk into a mysterious religious fervor the moment they saw these existences which possessed powerful abilities over Holy Light and Order. The angels wielded longswords wreathed in Holy Light as they slew evil heretics in front of everyone.

It wasn't at all Halent's fault for losing. An entire major squadron of five hundred angels had arrived to support the Holy Light army. Every adult angel would only be slightly weaker than an adult dragon, and a fully equipped angel warrior wouldn't be any weaker than the Gold rank.

The Holy Church's entire allied army's higher-ups no longer even discussed this war although it hadn't yet ended. They didn't even consider strategies about how to use their forces. Their hearts were filled with joy at what they believed to be their imminent victory. They believed that the angels' pure swords would assist them in cleansing the filthy heretics. These heretics that were filled with so many sins would all be burned at the stake.

This type of religious fervor wasn't only spreading through the higher-ups. Even the ordinary soldiers and Holy Light job class members were filled with fervor towards the Holy Light, wanting only to slaughter their enemies.

"...Something seems wrong here."

Only very few Holy Light job class members were able to calmly analyze the situation. One such person was "Miracle Hand" Estrada, who had just recently arrived at the battlefield. He had originally refused to participate in this battle until Pope Caloma gave him a direct order he couldn't refuse. Estrada forced himself to come to the battlefield at the very end of the deadline given to him, but he didn't expect that he would see such a sight here waiting for him.

Although Estrada had never seen an angel before, he had plenty of knowledge about angels due to his contact with the angel half-blood Aivla as well as Roland. Although these five hundred angels radiated pure Holy Light, the feeling they gave off wasn't like the warm sun. They were like icy sword blades, a completely different feeling from Aivla and Roland's Holy Light.

"Even though Aivla's Holy Light is very pure, her Holy Light also contains the raging fires of her anger. This makes her Holy Light especially effective against the undead. Meanwhile, Roland's Holy Light purity is incomparable throughout all of history and can even be used as lantern lighting. However, his Holy Light isn't aggressive—it's just like the harmless sunlight. And when I last saw him in the Northlands, his Holy Light purity seemed to be even better than in the past, but its sunshine-like warmth didn't change one bit. That Holy Light wouldn't reject any life to share in its warmth."

All powerful individuals would have special quirks about their own energy. Any of that person's overflowing energy would contain the person's emotions and specialties. The Holy Light itself would be no different from any other Holy Light, but it would become different once human hearts and souls were involved. Not a single person would have identical Holy Light wavelengths to another person. Yet the five hundred angels in front of Estrada not only had exactly identical Holy Light wavelengths, but their Holy Light also seemed to lack living creatures' most basic emotions. It

seemed as if these angels were using Holy Light as nothing more than an emotionless tool.

Any others would be scared witless by the angels' astonishing amount of Holy Light, as every single one of these angels were Legend or stronger. However, the "Strongest Holy Knight" had reached the peak of understanding of Holy Light. Estrada was even capable of sensing his own disciples' talent and moral character through their Holy Light wavelengths, which was why he had been particularly fond of Aivla and Roland. It was also why he found it difficult to accept these angels that had suddenly descended to the mortal plane.

"...During battle, the pupils of their eyes reacts only instinctively. There's not a single hint of passion in their Holy Light. Their Holy Light wavelengths don't shake one bit even if one of these angels is forced to the brink. They are emotionless. Are these really the gentle and kind angels from legend? They're basically... basically..."

Estrada didn't allow his thoughts to show on his face. However, as he thought about this mystery, he was hesitating. Ever since he had come into contact with Roland and his Concept of Law in the Northlands, Estrada had been gaining new realizations and ideas although the Holy Church's higher-ups were becoming more and more on guard against him. At the very least, Estrada now had a much more moderate and reasonable viewpoint of the Holy Light.

The Strongest Holy Knight's well-honed combat senses told him the truth behind the angels' icy-cold golden armor and holy white wings: that these angels didn't seem like any normal living creatures.

"...They are like mass-produced, completely emotionless killing machines. They don't even blink when faced with a brink. They don't feel glory at sacrificing themselves. They have an utter coldness as if they see everyone around them as disposable objects. When they see other angels dying, they react as if they're merely

seeing a weapon being damaged."

Estrada didn't say these words, which would be considered heretical, out loud. And he wasn't the only person to think in such a way. Unlike the priests that were now in a mysterious religious fervor, most Holy Knights were usually busy with their work and assignments. They weren't able to enjoy a comfortable life in the church like priests and Cardinals typically could year-round. Holy Knights roamed the lands, eliminating evil wherever they saw it. Even the Holy Knights that protected a local holy sanctuary would need to come into contact with ordinary townsfolk every day. The Holy Knights were far closer to ordinary people than priests and thus had their suspicions about the angels' behavior on the battlefield.

But the next event caused the Holy Knights' suspicions to become a huge fissure.

"Cleanse? Slaughter the entire city? Slaughter the entire province? That's what the angels requested? Are they joking? That's two million people! That's two million human lives!"

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While the mega empire Bardi was stuck in a quagmire, the semi mega empire Auland seemed to receive an opportunity. Of course, the prerequisite was that they first make it past this huge wave.

After three months, the Queen of Storms noticed that she apparently wasn't being targeted by Ayer and that it had just been her own misunderstanding. She also sensed her Sea Tribe worshippers to be weakening in their faith after several successive losses, so she unhesitatingly took part in combat once again.

Countless giant ocean waves brought great disaster upon all of Auland's cities that bordered the sea. Although the Sea Tribe warriors that came along with the waves were unable to permanently stay on land, the food and wealth they plundered was more than enough to sustain these new Sea Tribe members that

entered combat. This was because they weren't as gluttonous as their counterparts that had already been fattened by staying in Rain City. The combat achievements on these other fronts also gave these Sea Tribe leaders the right to immigrate to Rain City.

Some of these unfortunate sea-bordering cities managed to withstand the onslaught, while others were destroyed by the ocean waves. Residents still in their sleep would be slaughtered. Perhaps one should even thank the Queen of Storms' kindness as she at least didn't send out her typical sea monsters to slaughter ordinary humans.

But from another standpoint her sea monsters were all being kept busy by the combat situation at Rain City. The Queen of Storms had already sent out every single sea monster under her command, with none more to spare.

If the seaside Auland residents were like cows and sheep awaiting slaughter at a butchering factory, then the Rain City's frontlines were a pure meat grinder.

The Sea Tribe and the Queen of Storms were now counterattacking with full force. The seawaters had once more begun rising, bringing with it many Sea Tribe members and sea monsters. Mountainous whale monsters were actually treated as one-time disposable siege weapon sledgehammers. Their bodies would be crushed under the broken castle walls' rubble. However, any room opened by the invaders would be slaughtered without a single survivor.

In less than two short days, the smaller bases outside the larger fortresses had all been lost, and the sea waves and giant sea monsters turned the trenches of warfare into ponds and swamps.

When Auland's elite squadrons and powerful individuals tried their best to overturn the situation, they discovered, to their astonishment, that not only were large numbers of Storm Shamans continuously summoning more sea waves but a certain

blue-skinned woman was personally commanding the tempo of the sea waves' attack.

"...She actually used an incarnation to join a battle between mortals? She's using her divine power to slaughter mortals? Just how shameless can this Goddess be?"

Since it was now the Holy War, the taboo against True Gods directly interfering in mortals' affairs had been lifted. However, the Queen of Storms remained the only example of a True God who did so. From a certain standpoint, it was like an adult becoming incredibly serious when fighting against children or a small animal. All the other Gods would probably make fun of her for this, but right now the Queen of Storms was indeed acting rather shamelessly.

However, the result of her shamelessness was obvious. With her personal assistance, the Storm Shamans extended the area of influence of the rainstorms from just Rain City. Countless numbers of Sea Tribe warriors arrived together with the rainstorms, making things difficult for the defending Auland soldiers on the battlefront.

Yet the Auland warriors fighting in the swamp suddenly witnessed a wonderful turn of events.

"...The sky is clearing?"

As the humans cheered in astonishment while the Sea Tribe stared in disbelief, the unending dark clouds started dissipating, out of the blue. Sunlight, which had since been scarce, illuminated the blue-skinned woman's face, revealing her shock, disbelief and even fear.

Chapter 428: Holy Light and a Choice

Estrada. The Miracle Hand, the Strongest Holy Knight and the Executor of Holy Light. These were only three of his numerous glorious nicknames which represented his uncountable accolades and achievements. In taverns, he was one of most popular characters sung about in epics. But if one were to choose a single nickname to describe the legendary first half of his life, "Living Myth" would be the most appropriate.

"Estrada is the most pious, most courageous, most humble and most powerful Holy Knight of all." This was Roland's understanding of him, as well as how the entire world saw him.

He was pious. For the past thousands of years, not once had he strayed from his belief in the Holy Light. Every day, every moment, he would measure his actions by justice and self-discipline. Daily he would pray piously and consume only rye bread and water to help himself stay away from all temptations. Although every pope throughout history had been deeply on guard against him, not a single person dared to doubt Estrada's piousness.

He was courageous. Through the endless wars, as long as someone asked him for help and as long as the reason agreed with the justice in his heart, Estrada would never refuse. In any battle he took part he would forever be at the very forefront. He had a body covered with scars that even the Holy Light was unable to cure. He had never once run away from any battle.

"...The Holy Light shall never refuse any request of aid from a mortal. As long as there's even a sliver of hope, I shall fight for the sake of Holy Light and Justice... until the final moment."

These simple words of his were no empty platitudes. As long as people still needed saving, even in the most despairing of situations Estrada had never run away.

He was humble. Estrada never acted like the other high-ranked Holy Church members that led lavish lifestyles. He resided in the common dormitories for Holy Knights, where anyone could easily go find him. And he had countless disciples. He loved young and brave warriors, and one of his joys in life was to raise talented students. His incredibly long list of students contained an untold number of heroes' names. Of course, one name in this list of his gave him tremendous headaches.

"...Roland, if only you could be a little more serious you'd definitely become one of the strongest Holy Knights in all of history! No—no—no—this isn't an excuse for you to cut classes! I shall assign you special extra classes that are befitting of your talent. You've already mastered Holy Light Divine Arts, so how about extra swordsmanship classes? What? You're already a Sword Saint? How about we discuss Holy Light philosophy? What? You're saying you want to have a bet if we debate Holy Light philosophy and God theories? Fine, if you lose, return your brother disciples' wallets. Ha! You think I'm going to lose? What a joke."

Even now, Estrada still recalled how, on a sunny afternoon, that youth who smiled like the sunshine managed to use baffling chicanery to win half a year's worth of Estrada's salary.

"A belief system based on personal benefits to satisfy selfish desires? You believe only in the justice of the pure Holy Light itself? Little Roland, don't ever tell anyone else about this. No, I'm not saying I completely disagree with your way of thinking. Otherwise, I wouldn't be admitting defeat to you in this debate. However, there are people out there who are even more stubborn than an old artifact like me. They'll directly kill whoever they can't defeat in a debate. It doesn't matter if it's someone like me, but you're still young. Don't draw trouble to yourself."

Perhaps what Estrada regretted most was that he hadn't probed into Roland's foundational way of thinking. He didn't attempt to change Roland's overly extreme thoughts. He figured that a young

genius like Roland simply had too many idle thoughts, thoughts which would be corrected by the severities of reality and the public's normal way of thinking. Estrada never expected Roland to have an extreme way of thinking that would go farther and farther off the normal path, reaching a point where Roland could no longer turn back.

Estrada's power and age had helped him learn that justice without power backing it up was absolutely meaningless. As he was the Strongest Holy Knight... no—he could even be called the strongest living human with nobody objecting even though he last took action more than a century ago.

"...Roland, your past hatred has caused you to sink into insanity. I created you but didn't manage to save you from your fate of despair. All of this is my fault. Roland, face me! Face your poor excuse of a teacher! Today, I shall correct my past mistake, even if I have to pay with my life!"

During the Yongye Calamity, Estrada's brilliant figure singlehandedly facing an endless legion of undead was branded into the memories of countless people. Even after the Emperor of Eternal Night destroyed the entirety of the Holy Church allied armies, Estrada still challenged him and his army. Estrada's glorious deeds had even been carved into the highest-quality of sculptures on the ceiling of the Anton Grand Cathedral.

Estrada was pious, courageous, humble and powerful. As a Holy Knight, Estrada was considered perfect. If one had to forcefully find some imperfection, then it would be that he was too perfect—too brilliant to behold.

Every pope throughout history had viewed Estrada as an excellent blade, but that was all. Since Estrada's personal reputation exceeded that of the popes, his "supporters" would constantly clash with the Holy Church's teachings and authority. It was only normal for the Holy Church's higher-ups to greatly despise him.

After so many years, Estrada had gotten accustomed to the Holy Church's higher-ups discriminating against him. His title had been promoted and demoted countless times over the years. Yet his belief had never been shaken in the slightest. With utmost severity, he would always carry out anything he was determined to accomplish.

"...Child, justice isn't actually that hard to understand. Justice is simply kindness that comes from the bottom of your heart, while belief is the process of expanding your own kindness. We believe in the Holy Light because we believe that Holy Light can protect the kindness in human hearts. Whenever you need to make a choice, simply ask your heart. You'll be able to choose for yourself."—Estrada, Spring of the Year 226.

Estrada's belief was somewhat different to that of the Holy Church's higher-ups. He would preach that "any teachings that don't guide humans to kindness are all evil," but doing so gave him countless amounts of trouble. Despite all of that, Estrada's teachings about the Holy Light's belief spread throughout the entire land. Numerous youths would choose the glorious job of Holy Knight due to his influence. Soon, Holy Knights' path of Holy Light started having subtle differences from other Holy Light job class members. "Kindness in your heart" became the catchphrase of young Holy Knights, and it also became the Strongest Holy Knight's greatest weakness that others always attacked him with.

"What choice will you make if the God of Holy Light's divine will clashes with your sense of justice?"

Someone had once asked him that in public, causing no small amounts of controversy. Others felt that Estrada had been caught in an inescapable paradoxical conundrum. However, Estrada responded with uproarious laughter as he replied in a thunderous booming tone, which echoed in the skies above the Holy Church even today.

"With the Holy Light above me bearing witness, I say this: if my

belief in the Holy Light ever clashes with basic morality and justice, what use will I still have for such a belief?"

On that day, the powerful beam of Holy Light that descended proved that this was truly how Estrada believed and acted.

And now, today, angels that represented the God Envoys of Holy Light had descended from the skies. These angels then decided to slaughter all heretics. The so-called divine will had finally clashed with Estrada's most basic sense of morality. Now that there was an absolutely unsolvable conflict between Estrada's belief and justice, just what would he choose?

Two days ago, he received a letter from his most talented disciple. It started off with the same old question that he had been asked countless times already.

"Teacher, I shall ask you one last time. If the God of Holy Light's divine will conflicts with your sense of justice born out of kindness, what will you choose?"

Estrada had been mystified as to why Roland would suddenly ask him a question to which Roland certainly knew the answer. But now he could only clutch the letter to his heart and bitterly smile.

"Is that so? You've already seen through everything since the very beginning? Then, Roland, I shall tell you that my way of thinking has never changed. If belief in the Holy Light can no longer coexist with basic kindness, then there's no more reason for me to believe in the Holy Light."

The elderly Holy Knight was clad in full combat attire. He rode atop his old horse into the path of the Holy Light's massive army and threw down his silver hammer.

It landed heavily on the ground.

Estrada shook his head. Over the many years, he had been accoladed as the living representative of Holy Light. He had never imagined that this day would come. The day he would be facing off

against the flag of Holy Light, the flag which represented justice.

However, as he faced off against the Holy Light army, Estrada's arm didn't shake one bit. His boiling combat was the best explanation.

"...The Holy Light shall never refuse any request of aid from a mortal. As long as there's even a sliver of hope, I shall fight for the sake of Holy Light and Justice... until the final moment."

With his back to the heretics' homeland, the angry roar of the elderly Holy Knight echoed throughout the battlefield. Despite the fact that the elderly knight was all by himself, the glorious Holy Light army vanguard took a step back in unison.

No—not everyone stepped backwards. Someone took a step forward and stepped out from under the glorious banner of Holy Light.

"Ken? I never expected you, one of my disciples, to be the first to face me."

Estrada felt somewhat nostalgic as well as surprised. But he didn't hesitate. After he had made his decision, this aged Holy Knight had resolved himself to face any opponent, even if his opponent was one of the students he was proudest of.

"Old artifact, you have more disciples than you can count. What's so strange about one of your disciples like me stepping out?"

Ken was also a Holy Knight, a SemiGod. Appearing middle-aged, he had rather dark skin. But when he walked in front of Estrada, Ken pulled out his longsword and suddenly turned around, shouting at the place he had just came from.

"Hey, the old artifact managed to steal the first move yet again! For just how long are you all intending to wait around? Are all of you going to be slower than someone as inadequate as me?"

As a response to this, numerous Holy Knights walked out from the massive body of the army. They unsheathed their weapons,

facing off against their previous allies. Meanwhile, their companions remained where they stood and could only watch all of this happen with embarrassed expressions.

"The Holy Light is above us..."

This time, it wasn't only Holy Knights who stepped out of the army. Previously pious Holy Light priests also made their decision, even though they knew that it would make them lose their status and glory—that this would make them be treated as dirty traitors and fallen priests.

"...If my belief in the Holy Light ever clashes with basic morality and justice..."

Some royal knights who had participated in the Holy War also walked out of the army. Their knightly virtue contained nothing about slaughtering ordinary citizens. These knights, red-faced from embarrassment, made a choice that wouldn't shame their descendants despite knowing that they would receive their domain lords' and kings' wrath from doing so.

"...Slaughtering innocent civilians? Damn it all! That's two million lives we're talking about! What do we need such a belief for!?"

Every one of them spoke out Estrada's teachings. Their shared beliefs made these people make the same decision as Estrada. In the next ten minutes, as the frontline commanders hesitatingly reported this situation to their higher-ups, numerous scattered warriors made their choices.

Although Estrada's side numbered less than one percent of the Holy Light army in the end, and even though he knew that they would all be crushed into pieces by the mighty army in the next instant, Estrada smiled in satisfaction.

Of course he would be satisfied. As a Holy Knight and teacher, what more could he ask for? His teachings were believed in by so

many people, to the point where they were all willing to sacrifice their lives. He would be satisfied even if he died the very next minute.

But then an elderly red-robed Cardinal shakily walked out of the crowd. This extremely wrinkled old man hobbled with the assistance of his walking staff and panted heavily as his servants and personal bodyguard knights hurriedly surrounded him.

"...Cardinal Stephen."

Indeed. This was the current leader of the Holy Light vanguard army, the underhanded "credit-stealing" Cardinal Stephen. Although he had finally reached the peak of his career, regardless due to his advanced age it was unlikely that he would live for much longer.

If Estrada betrayed the Holy Church, if the Holy Light army's conquering forces split up into factions, it was definite that the glory Cardinal Stephen just obtained would lose its luster. It was only natural that he would try to prevent this from happening.

"...Stephen, there's no need to say anything. I've already made my decision."

Although most people in the Holy Church looked down on Stephen's actions, Estrada felt a mysterious sense of nostalgia as he looked at the old man with half a foot in the grave. Estrada recalled how Stephen was in the past—a stubborn orphan, who never complained even when bullied by classmates but would secretly hide and cry because of being powerless to save all his believers.

As everyone watched, the elderly Cardinal, who finally had a chance to shine in the spotlight, spoke up.

"Es...trada... I... I'm not here to stop you. I know that words are meaningless after you've made up your mind. I... I... Coug—cough—cough—cough—cough..."

Violent coughing arched Stephen's back as he coughed up blood

streaks on the ground. However, he stubbornly held on to his walking staff and grit his teeth, standing up straight again.

Even Estrada couldn't bear to see this sight. He wanted to go over and help support Stephen, but the elderly Cardinal slapped away the hand that Estrada proffered.

Pa!

It took some time, but Stephen finally succeeded in standing up straight. His elderly eyes contained a fiery will that didn't seem to fit his age as his angry roars echoed throughout the entire world.

"I know that all of you look down upon me as the 'Dirty bastard who stole credit' or as the 'Blackhearted bastard who stood on his compatriots' corpses to obtain his position.' But I was also a pious believer of the Holy Light! What does sacrificing my personal reputation matter as long as I spread the Holy Light which brings us hope... All of you, tell me, as a Cardinal, as a teacher, priest and spreader of Holy Light, did I act wrongly...?"

The old Cardinal's bloodshot eyes looked all around him as he howled from the bottom of his heart. Although he had managed to increase his status over the past few days, the looks of condescension aimed at him had also increased. Even his best friends that had been through life and death together with him were now keeping their distance. Who could he possibly complain to regarding his aggrievements? And now, as everyone watched, he suddenly exploded and vented.

Some of the Holy Knights that had looked down upon him started to change their opinions. Perhaps they had been too judgmental of this old Cardinal. Still, the unbelievable scene that happened next caused everyone—not just a few—to change their opinions of Cardinal Stephen.

"But now... my belief in the Holy Light that I sacrificed everything in order to uphold can no longer even be called basic justice. Just why did I sacrifice everything in order to uphold Holy

Light? Teacher, I refuse to act as the leader of the Holy Light army for one second longer. I shall face the future together with you, even if I know it's a future where I'll certainly die and no longer be able to ascend to heaven... Cough—cough—cough."

Violent coughing once again caused Stephen to arc his back. But this time the elderly cardinal allowed his teacher to help support himself.

Now even the warriors who remained in the Holy Light army viewed this elderly Cardinal with respect.

Since the highest-ranked leader of the Holy Light army had betrayed the Holy Light, in the Holy Light army a huge commotion arose. Some warriors who had chosen to remain on the Holy Light side were now hesitating about their choices. Some naïve individuals were thinking that there wouldn't even be an internal battle in the Holy Church. They thought that this would become a critical moment in history.

But at this moment a blinding light streaked across the sky...

"...AH—"

A giant flame-wreathed sword descended from the sky. Old Stephen couldn't even complete his scream before he was impaled to the ground by this burning Holy Sword. Just like that, after making a decision that came from the bottom of his heart, the old Cardinal collapsed.

"This is what the Holy Light is truly like... I don't... regret..."

Stephen reached out towards the sky unwillingly and took one last glance at this beautiful world before he transformed into black ash right in his teacher's hands. The blood streaks he coughed up just a minute ago became the final record of his existence.

A fiery winged angel descended and hovered in midair. Achas, the leader of the angels, observed the mortals beneath him. Even now, he gave of no signs of any emotions whatsoever.

Meanwhile, the powerful angel squadron had finished gathering behind him in the air. Like their leader, these heavily armored angels simply watched down in silence. Their white wings and the holy flames on their swords were the best representation of which side they stood on.

"As commanded by the venerated God of Holy Light, those who betray the Holy Light shall be killed with no mercy."

The Strongest Holy Knight's hammer was the first to greet them.

Chapter 429: Battle Between Angels and Mortals

"This world doesn't belong to you, you emotionless monsters!"

It was ironic how the living representative of Holy Light declared battle against the glorious angels that represented holiness and Order itself. But mere irony wouldn't stop the battle hammer of fury and its blinding Holy Light.

Estrada's fervent belief manifested as fiery wings as the Strongest Holy Knight utilized his powers of flight to clash against the fiery-winged angel in midair. Against the flame-wreathed holy sword, the furious battle hammer created dazzling sparks. Angel leader Achas, who was only a second-rank angel, only managed to block the wrathful strongest human's attack for a split second.

Bam! Bam!

With a wave of Estrada's battle hammer, two clear sounds rang out in midair as the exquisitely beautiful holy sword and the angel leader's head were both smashed to tiny pieces.

The headless corpse fell below, and the Holy Light started disappearing from its white wings. Red blood splashed everywhere with the angel's golden hair, but this gruesome scene helped everyone learn that an angel's body wasn't that different from human's.

The headless corpse crashed heavily into the ground as the holy sword's tiny pieces scattered everywhere.

However, the angel army didn't make a sound or stop its advance—it was as if they didn't notice that their leader had just died. This was what they had done during the previous battle against Bardi as well. Not a single angel among them was special or irreplaceable. If their leader died, the sub-leader would take over. When that leader was devoured by a dragon, the next sub-leader became the new

leader.

Coldblooded, calm and not afraid of sacrifice—they were perfect war machines, as well as the species the Gods trusted the most: War Angels.

At this moment, an irreversible event had occurred.

Holy Light job class members would always humbly refer to themselves as the Holy Light's servants. Meanwhile, angels were the God of Holy Light's God Envoys, but now the Holy Light's servant had slain them. This was the equivalent of killing one's superior. Everything was no longer stoppable—there was no going back.

In the air, high-ranked Holy Knights capable of using flying Divine Arts fought against angel sergeants. Others that chose to either side with mortals or the God of Holy Light also commenced fighting. When the justice in human hearts clashed against the justice of Order, not a single person was able to remain uninvolved.

"Monsters! This world doesn't belong to you!"

In front of the Holy Knights who chose their heart's justice and started whirling their battle hammers, these legendary angels turned out to be not much at all. They were no stronger than some monsters with the power of flight.

On this battlefield, battle hammers and sharp swords flew everywhere. The angels showed no signs of mercy or kindness. Since they had pointed their swords at these traitors, it was only natural that the next step would be to eliminate them.

As Stephen's coughed-up blood continued bleeding into the ground, angel blood from slain angels fell down from the sky and mixed together with it. Soon, their blood could no longer be told apart.

A Holy Knight named Caso viciously swung his battle hammer at

an angel's armor. The reverberations from this impact knocked his angel opponent right into the ground. Judging from the large amounts of innards that the angel coughed up, it wasn't going to live much longer. But before Caso could find another target a Spear of Holy Light impaled him in the air.

As a Legend-ranked Holy Knight, however, Caso was unwilling to die off just like that. He pounced on the angel closest to him, and the next instant blinding Holy Light illuminated everyone's eyes. Caso had self-destructed in a flash of Holy Light, leaving behind only his purple crystal battle hammer in a large crater.

Caso wasn't the only one who met such an end. These War Angels were armed to the teeth, and ordinary Holy Knights were no match for them. While humans addressed Gold-ranked warriors as grandmasters, to the angels they were nothing more than the level of a young child. The two sides had been unequal from the very start.

In order to master "Angel Wings," "Wings of Holy Light" and other such flying magic Divine Arts a Holy Knight must be at Gold or higher. Moreover, fighting the angels in the air turned out to be one of the most foolish decisions possible.

The high-level warriors on both sides fought in the air, but mortals were the ones who fell out of the sky and perished in the great majority of cases. The angels were a well-trained military squadron, while the others were just scattered powerful individuals that had just banded together minutes ago. Even without mentioning differences in individual power levels, there was a huge difference in both sides' teamwork.

Approximately three or four hundred chose the path of the justice in their hearts. Fewer than fifty among them were at Gold and above, and there were barely ten Legends. However, they faced a total of five hundred Legendary angels—there was a tremendous difference between their overall strength.

Once the angels eliminated the high-ranked Holy Knights capable of flight, they turned to the easy targets—the remaining Holy Knights and ordinary warriors. Spears of Holy Light and thrown holy swords killed these warriors with a single blow. Helplessly, the Holy Knights on the ground were continually killed from a long distance.

Compared to these Gods' warriors, mortal warriors seemed powerless. This reckoning came far too quickly for them as they hadn't even prepared themselves for the calamity they knew they would face.

Estrada witnessed all of this from the corner of his eyes and felt like his heart was bleeding.

"Caso, you have two children to take care of. Albina, you..."

But unfortunately, even though he witnessed the deaths of many of his disciples and believers, he couldn't go and save them. He didn't even have spare time for idle thoughts. As the "lead traitor," the angels viewed him as the most important strategic objective. All the leader-level angels were currently surrounding and attacking him.

"Castle of Holy Light."

A Holy Knight tried to open up his Soul World but it ended the moment he activated it. This was a Soul World that greatly improved the powers of Holy Light. However, opening it for even a moment was the most foolish decision he could have possibly made. How could ordinary mortal Holy Knights possibly compare to heaven's angels in their control over Holy Light?

Holy Knights' typical enemies were evil villains, undead and demons. Holy Light was always highly effective against such enemies. However, they were now fighting against angels that possessed tremendous affinity for Holy Light. Bullet of Light, Holy Light Judgement and other such typical Holy Light spells that had always been effective were only absorbed by the angels' armor or

left mere light scratches.

The Holy Knights' attacking methods were easily seen through and predicted. Their Holy Light attacks weren't even as effective as simple physical attacks. On the other hand, the angels were pure slaughtering machines, and their dual-handed holy swords possessed holy flames that were absolutely merciless against the humans.

After the "Holy Church's traitors" received tremendous losses to the point where they appeared like they would lose at any moment, the ones most worried were actually the Holy Light army's "observers."

Abo Kaso was an elite warrior who swore loyalty to the God of Holy Light at a holy sanctuary. Although he didn't have any talent for Holy Light, which prevented him from becoming a Holy Knight, he had always worshiped this glorious job ever since he was a child. That was why he volunteered to join this Holy War. But now, his faith was greatly shaken.

"The justice in my heart? Or the justice of the Gods? Just what led me down this path? The Gods' guidance or the kindness in my heart?"

Those who possessed even the slightest modicum of logic and reason knew that slaughtering defenseless civilians was absolutely shameful. As for slaughtering the gigantic number of two million civilians? No matter which insane leader carried it out, that person would surely make the history books in the most humiliating fashion.

Perhaps this was why believers were never allowed to be close to the Gods. Perhaps this was why divine will always appeared so unfathomable. Those who got too close would find that the Gods weren't so mysterious. There would even be contradictions between divine will and reality.

"Why did the God of Holy Light choose to slaughter so many?

Why? Are human lives truly just like ants to the Gods? In that case, just what is this belief that we've always had?"

Those who had even the slightest conscience were asking the same question as Abo Kaso. However, none of them had any answers. Out of all the humans present, Estrada, who was currently locked in a difficult battle, was the only one who knew the answer.

This wasn't because he was the most intelligent one here. This was because Roland had already explained everything to him while predicting that there would be a tremendous slaughter of the heretics.

"...Not enough people have died in this Holy War. Do you remember what I told you before about the source of all Holy Wars? When the wheat is ripe, it's naturally time to harvest the crops. The Source of Order desires for large amounts of souls to enter the Cycle of Reincarnation during the Holy War. Due to certain reasons, far too few people are dying. And the Source of Order naturally prefers heretics to die over its own side.

"Any Order God that wants to increase in power level or just preserve their own position will be unable to go against the Source of Order's will. This is just like how any demon prince will be unable to go against the Chaos Abyss's will. The God of Holy Light that abandoned his own sense of self is an example of the easiest type of puppet to control."

However, Roland's words weren't merely to give Estrada a simple explanation.

"That's why once there's a somewhat usable excuse and concrete benefits to be had a tremendous slaughter will definitely occur. These angels that suddenly descended are the best evidence of the God of Holy Light's determination. Even if you can convince other humans against committing such a slaughter, it will still be meaningless. That's because in the current world, when the God of

Holy Light has decided on a course of action, not a single individual will be able to stop the strongest True God of the Order Faction. That's why I recommend for you to be wiser and take good care of yourself... Forget it, pretend I didn't say anything. If you were that 'wise,' you wouldn't have reached your current level."

The approaching angels made it so that Estrada didn't have any more free time to think on this any longer. Besides, he had acted foolishly plenty of times in the past. However, likely not a single previous time was as despairing as his current situation.

"Holy Light, don't you have any sympathy for the humans that worshiped you for so many years? Perhaps Roland was correct. Holy Light is Holy Light and is different from the God of Holy Light."

The elderly Estrada, who still had a young appearance, asked this question from the bottom of his heart. All he saw before him was a group of angels that covered the skies. Only now did he feel that the angel statues decorating every Holy Church branch were annoying to behold, that these more magnificent versions of Winged Tribe were disgusting.

Estrada wouldn't possibly hesitate about making a decision which would put him in a dangerous brink on the verge of death. The only part where he hesitated about was that younger lives would also accompany him in this dangerous brink.

"If Holy Light is mostly ineffective against these angels, then..."

As Estrada hovered in midair, he raised his battle hammer and concentrated a dense amount of Holy Light upon it. The next instant, this Holy Light transformed into countless meteors that crashed into countless... Holy Knights.

That's right, the Holy Knights, not the angels.

"Angel's Twelve Blessings... I never expected that I'd think this Divine Art's name was so ironic. Perhaps I should give a new name

to this Divine Art."

Body strengthening, dexterity increasing, regeneration, perception strengthening, dispelling evil, justice's protection, holy healing, Holy Light power of flight and so on. This Holy Light spell contained twelve different special effects that would buff the targets of this spell. The most important effects were the Holy Light's most basic abilities of healing and flight.

The Holy Knights, who had large gaping holes in their bodies and were bleeding to their deaths, stood back up again with incredulous looks on their faces as they covered their injuries which were now completely healed. The wings of light on their backs also gave them the power of flight.

As for those who were already dead... Unfortunately, this world wasn't a game. Even the Strongest Holy Knight Estrada didn't have any resurrection magic spells at his disposal.

Was Estrada actually able to cast the highest-level support Divine Art with so many special effects on several hundred people at once and maintain it? He once again taught everyone here just how strong the Strongest Holy Knight was, although he was indeed temporarily weakened from casting such a spell.

This scene also exceeded the angels' expectations. The angels were the Gods' favored species and were born with natural talent for Divine Arts. However, Divine Arts had also been taught in the mortal plane for countless years. This scene was beyond the angels' understanding.

Yet not a single War Angel would consider retreating in front of a powerful enemy. No War Angel understood the concepts of fear or hesitation.

Taking advantage of Estrada's momentary weakness from casting such a powerful spell, the War Angels arranged themselves in a combat formation typically used to fight against high-level demons. Holy sword-wielding War Angels stood at the forefront,

spear-wielding War Angels stood in the middle to assist from a greater distance, while Divine Art casters incanted from behind.

Just Estrada alone had succeeded in taking up the attention of several hundred angels. This was no different from him single-handedly taking on several hundred dragons.

"Holy Flame Inferno."

Not real, these holy flames were actually Holy Light pf the highest purity. In the area under this inferno, all undead and demons would be immolated. Meanwhile, the angels that thought they wouldn't be harmed found themselves mysteriously transforming into fireballs.

The elderly Holy Knight's understanding and control of Holy Light had far surpassed these low-ranked angels' understanding. Estrada was capable of using his own Holy Light to directly explode the power of Holy Light within these angels' bodies. This technique was also effective against other Holy Knights, but this would obviously be a forbidden technique.

Once the Strongest Holy Knight abandoned all his inhibitions and finally attacked with the full extent of his power, half of the sky started burning. The angels were turning into torches of holy fire. Once the elderly Holy Knight decided to guard this piece of sky, even the angels found themselves unable to pass him.

However, at this time the angel leaders uttering their long incantation from behind finished, causing a pillar of light to suddenly ascend to the sky. Yet nothing seemed to happen.

"Did it fail?"

The next instant, Estrada realized that his guess had been wrong. He found himself no longer able to sense the Holy Light.

That's right—the God of Holy Light received a report and cut off Estrada's ability to use the Holy Light. The moment that Estrada lost his powers, he began falling from the sky. His young

appearance speedily started aging at a visible speed. Without the protection of his Holy Light, his life was rapidly reaching a natural end. But what was even more fatal was the burning holy sword about to impale him.

"The ninety-seventh Holy Light forbidden spell: Holy Light Reclamation. This is a Divine Art that's specially used against fallen angels. You should be proud of yourself for being the first human to ever receive this Divine Art."

Estrada wasn't the only person on the receiving end of this forbidden spell. All the other "traitors" on the ground suddenly lost their powers of Holy Light as well. These former fervent believers in the God of Holy Light had their powers personally reclaimed by the God of Holy Light himself.

Despite the fact that he was at the brink, Estrada laughed. Of course he would have realized that when he'd made this decision, the God of Holy Light that he had believed in for so many years would betray him. However, he never felt more relieved in his entire life.

"In that case, my 'venerated and revered' God of Holy Light, let me show you the light.. the light which belongs to us mortals."

Chapter 430: Thus Fell the Holy Light

Out of the many job classes, divine jobs such as Holy Knights and priests would always progress the quickest in power level. However, these jobs also had the fewest individuals at the highest ranks.

The reason for this was simple. People in divine job classes would need to establish connections to their God and obtain the God's assistance and divine favor... in other words, they would need to be spoiled by the God. Such people would be able to rapidly grow. From a certain standpoint, divine job classes depended on your personality. The more your personality agreed with the particular God's teachings and the more your personal talent was compatible with the God's divine power, the faster you would grow.

As long as you had sufficient divine favor, it was even possible to surpass another person's lifetime's worth of effort in a single night. This was why I was called the Child of Light back in the day. I had such divine favor it seemed as if the God of Holy Light was spoiling an illegitimate child. Nobody could understand why a human who wasn't even fourteen years old could become a Legendary Holy Knight and possess such Holy Light radiance he seemed like the very sun.

Holy Knight was probably the easiest job class of all to obtain Gold. However, compared to other job classes, obtaining the next rank of Legend would be the most difficult. To this, Holy Knights would always say that they weren't pious or experienced enough, but reality was always crueler than belief.

Their inability to progress in power level had nothing to do with their piousness. The God of Holy Light's automated divine power server would never look at that to begin with. The server would only look at efficiency and benefits obtained.

"The same amount of divine power can help ten thousand Bronze

individuals enter Silver or help one hundred Silvers enter Gold. Moreover, so much divine power might not even help a single person at the peak of Gold find their own path to Legend. So the server will naturally choose to help promote as many low-level people as it can for the sake of efficiency. As for why it's so hard for Holy Knights to reach Legend on their own... that's because all Gold-ranked individuals who depended on outside divine assistance to reach their power level will have unstable foundations. Without divine power, they're nothing more than false Gold ranks. How could they possibly enter Legend?"

Still, it was much easier to enter lower power level ranks. This was appropriate for the average strongest humans who typically reached Silver or Gold and was the foundational reason why the Holy Church's combat strength was sufficient to rule all of human society. Only under the protection of military might would a belief be able to spread.

Although it was difficult to level up beyond Gold, this world would never lack geniuses and abnormal talents. Those who tempered themselves sufficiently would still be able to break through to Legend or higher. As long as there were enough people, Legend and higher-ranked individuals would naturally appear. Since Holy Knights had some of the lowest, almost non-existent requirements for entering, it became one of the most common job classes throughout all of Eich.

The Holy Knight job class was a direct inheritance from the God of Holy Light. Every Holy Light job class member would start their cultivation from directly communicating with the God of Holy Light. They would receive Holy Light powers in response to their prayers. Without discussing the religious philosophies behind this, this was what the automated divine power server determined to be the best course of action. The God of Holy Light would help any new Holy Light job class member learn and understand the Holy Light and provide divine power to assist outstanding individuals in

walking even further down this path.

However, there was an unsolvable Gordian knot here. Since the God of Holy Light was an automated divine server, what if someone one day had a different or even completely contradictory way of thinking from him? Would they be banned from using the Holy Light, just like a game developer banning a gamer's account?

"The answer is a definite yes. Don't all fallen angels and fallen Holy Knights lose their powers of Holy Light? Since all Holy Knights obtained their powers of Holy Light through the God of Holy Light, it's just as easy for the God of Holy Light to make his Holy Knights lose their power to sense the Holy Light."

But was it really true that it would be impossible to access Holy Light without the God of Holy Light...?

"I give my gratitude to the God of Holy Light. At the very least, he helped me experience how magnificent the Holy Light was."

As Estrada lost his strength and youth, his memories and energy started disappearing as well. Estrada's life flashed before his eyes as countless memories appeared in his mind.

Nobody else knew just how old he was. Even the Holy Church had no records of his real age. Only Estrada himself knew that he was 1442 years old. Such a long period of time would create far too many memories for short-lived humans to recall.

Unlike the stories told about him in legends, Estrada didn't join this path of Holy Light because the God of Holy Light summoned him. Nor was it because he wanted to seek some path of glory. Estrada chose to become the disciple of the elderly Holy Light priest in his hometown for one reason only: because he was poor. The elderly priest in his hometown was quite sickly and needed a disciple to take care of him, and the priest was also the only one in Estrada's hometown who could afford to take him in.

"Ha! I just wanted to fill my belly. I never expected that I would

walk so far down this path... is this fate?"

As Estrada's lifeforce diminished, pillars of light shot out of him. As they soared into the air, they transformed into meteors of light as everyone below him shouted in astonishment and disbelief. However, the elderly Holy Knight's memories had never been clearer than this moment.

In the end, the old Holy Light priest who took Estrada in didn't live for much longer. However, the old priest gave his job over to the young Estrada who simply wanted to make a living.

However, being a priest in a small town back in that generation was difficult. It could be said that the Holy Church had started out as one of the most ascetic organizations where people were developing the frontiers and wildlands...

Although at that time the Holy War had ended for almost two centuries with Eich entering a peaceful era, very few species expected such a weak and short-lived species like humans to successfully become the rulers of the mortal plane. This status that came too easily wasn't a stable one. There was the Sea Tribe forced to the deep sea, the beastmen that lost their empire and plains and even the elves that were on the winning side of the Holy War but became so weakened. Not a single one of these species were willing to bow down so easily.

The humans obtained the Gods' favor, large swathes of new territory and explosive growth in their population. This helped create innumerable new flourishing cities, but soon these cities started disappearing for various strange reasons. Some cities disappeared due to a certain plague which was secretly caused by an Evil God, some cities were slaughtered by the beastmen who displayed human heads on the city walls in a gory fashion and some cities were demolished by something as simple as a rampaging hoard of starving beasts. Even now, the number of people that died in the middle of the night remained a nightmare for the living.

At this point in time, Holy Light priests and Holy Knights were all one family. No—it should be said that warriors and commoners were all one family. They would all have to work hard to survive, and all of them would have to pick up their farming implements and enter battle when there was danger.

"What? Old man Martin broke his foot again? He needs my help to set his bone injury? Wait a moment, I haven't learned such a high-level Divine Art yet."

"...A new child was just born in the Aiven Family? That's wonderful news. Wait, you want me to bless and name the new child? I don't even know how to write. Is it okay if I just come up with a random name?"

"Are you all priests as well? Why are you wearing armor? Holy Knights? What's that? Wait, are you here to eliminate the undead mage hiding in this area? Wait for me to make a few preparations, I'll guide the way for all of you."

Estrada, who only joined the path of Holy Light to have something to do, discovered more and more that he loved his job. In order to be able to protect his own people in this cruel world and harsh environment, Estrada joined the new Holy Knight job class which was born in his time. In fact, Estrada had personally created many of the Holy Knight moral guidelines and standard Divine Arts, although he never told anyone about it. It was known by incredibly few that this Strongest Holy Knight was also from the very first generation of Holy Knights.

"A new job class? Aren't we just armored priests? Well, I suppose we need a new name. How about Holy Knights? We are pious, humble, strong, courageous and pure. We are the knights for our God of Holy Light. We shall take on the roles of protectors in the darkness. We are knights that will protect our church and people."

When the first Holy Knight, Yintkachi, lifted his holy hammer and created the name of this new job class, a young Estrada was

there under the podium, listening to his idol Yintkachi speak.

The first Holy Knights weren't that special. They were just warriors slightly stronger than other warriors—to put it simply, they were armored priests. They were but a group first to feel that the path of Holy Light alone was insufficient to protect their people. They carried out their own oath.

They roamed the darkness and the wilderness hunting the most dangerous of evil demons and magical beasts. They hunted down the Blood Tribe and undead mages hidden among the humans. In all sorts of despairing situations, they fought against demons and devils, all the while protecting their homes from other species' invasions.

The glorious first Holy Knight Yintkachi didn't even survive very long. He died not long after establishing the Holy Knights to an unexpected ambush. Yintkachi's younger brother, Winstka, carried on that glorious battle hammer. However, Winstka was slightly weaker than his older brother and lasted only three months. This silver battle hammer was passed down to yet another brother in arms.

"Aincaso. You died during the end of the war against the Wolfmen. You shouldn't have died. You wouldn't have died if you didn't rescue those farmers that begged you to save them. You're a true hero."

"Sati. You were a half beastman from the Samoya district. Although people wouldn't accept you at first, you persisted down this path of protecting others. You're one of our most trustworthy companions. You're a true hero."

"Findicaid. You took down the Evil God Albert together with you in order to eliminate the plague he caused in the Brighton district. You were an unrivalled genius that should have reached the realm of the undying. However, the Evil Gods tempted you into walking a path of darkness, but you finally overcame your own temptations.

You... you're a true hero as well."

"Atonlaiven. My slyest adopted son. I thought you would have been able to succeed this battle hammer from me. But why did you return it to me so quickly? Don't you know that the most painful thing in the world is an elder watching his young ones around him die before him? Still, considering that a little brat like you carried out your responsibilities, even an idiot like you who challenged a Demon Earl by yourself... you're also a true hero."

Estrada muttered the names of the long line of previous owners of this battle hammer. Back in that year, when resources were incredibly scarce, every single weapon was a priceless treasure. Unless this weapon was utterly destroyed, it would be continuously passed down among the Holy Knights. Imperceptibly, it became a Holy Knight tradition.

"Roland, you stinky brat, I thought that you could have taken over this battle hammer from me. You're just as sly as Atonlaiven. In a fuc*ed-up generation like this one, only the slyest ones will be able to lead a good life and continue upholding this overly traditional path of protection..."

Precisely because of such a tradition, the originally ordinary weapons that Holy Knights used became infused with Holy Knight souls, becoming the Holy Knights' specialty: holy swords and holy hammers.

Naturally, this silver-crafted battle hammer, which had countless Holy Knights' heroic spirits within it, ended up becoming the personal divine weapon of the Strongest Holy Knight in all of history. Perhaps this was the strongest Holy Light infused weapon of all time, so it naturally kept returning to the still living Strongest Holy Knight from the first generation of Holy Knights...

"Light Which Illuminates Despair From The Brink, the Guardian Battle Hammer of Dawn Envoys!"

This ancient and tattered battle hammer once again let out a

blinding golden blow. Although the God of Holy Light had abandoned his loyal knight, how could this divine guardian hammer, which possessed countless heroic spirits, possibly abandon a brother?

The elderly Estrada had lost the powers of Holy Light, which caused him to rapidly age to the point where his hair was snow white. Yet he stood still in the air as numerous silver souls walked out of the battle hammer and transformed into soul shields. These heroic spirits used their remaining soul shards to protect their brother.

"Brother Aincaso... Little brat Atonlaiven... Brother Sati... Teacher Yintkachi..."

Numerous familiar faces appeared before Estrada. Although he wasn't shaken even the slightest when the God of Holy Light abandoned and betrayed him, tears coursed unstoppably down his cheeks.

"I... I know what I should do... What path we should continue down..."

Estrada once again lifted his battle hammer, transforming the blinding soul light within it into fiercely raging holy flames. The entire sky was ignited as the overly "pure" angels once again burned in an inferno of holy flames, wailing in pain and disbelief.

The elderly Holy Knight stood unmoving as the already disappeared Holy Light reappeared on his body. But this time, his Holy Light didn't come from the God of Holy Light. Instead, his Holy Light came from this holy hammer that had been passed down through countless generations. Estrada's Holy Light came from deep within himself.

"...So it turns out that from ancient times to now, the Gods high up above weren't at all protecting us. We, our brothers and sisters, were the ones protecting us. We believed in the Holy Light simply because Holy Light gave us the power to protect our families and

people. I fervently believed in and sought the Holy Light, which was actually my companions' path of sacrifice and protection. Humans never needed to remember the Gods to begin with. The only ones we need to remember are all our brothers and sisters that died for us."

This realization in Estrada's soul ignited his very soulfire. His raging flames of Holy Light astonished every member of the Holy Light vanguard army and caused the Gods up above to tremble in fear. Everything had gone out of the Gods' control.

Indeed, because this was just like what Roland and his Southern Sect had done. Estrada had proved in front of everyone that Holy Light and the God of Holy Light were two completely separate entities. One only needed to recognize this Holy Light, the light which represented protection and sacrifice in one's soul. So what if he abandoned the God of Holy Light?

Estrada's powers of Holy Light were stolen from him? Ha! He would simply have to take them back.

And now, in front of countless people, the Strongest Holy Knight from the first generation of Holy Knights once again set a precedent for other Holy Knights. He became the first Holy Knight who didn't worship the God of Holy Light and instead worshiped the Pure Holy Light.

Under his gaze, the many angels ignited in flames. This Strongest Holy Knight had achieved a power level enough for him to become a God more than a millennium ago, yet he chose to remain a mortal SemiGod. Once Estrada finally cast off that heavy stone pressuring his heart, nothing remained which could stop him from displaying his powers that had far exceeded mortal standards. Just the anger he was releasing from his heart was more than enough to destroy these low-ranked angels.

What the "bystanders" below him saw was that the Strongest Holy Knight managed to steal back the powers of Holy Light that

the God of Holy Light had reclaimed. Not only that, Estrada even succeeded in slaying every single angel present. This completely destroyed the Holy Light vanguard army's worldview along with seriously shaking their faith.

"It's true that it's still possible to use Holy Light even after being abandoned by the God of Holy Light. The Southern Sect's teachings were real. The God of Holy Light is only a False God..."

But currently Estrada couldn't be happy about finally learning this. As he looked at how very few companions he still had standing, his heart hurt. If only he could have taken this step earlier, perhaps...

"Nothing will be changed. Order is the highest form of perfection. All mistakes shall be corrected."

A young-appearing white-robed priest descended before Estrada. His long hair was braided with the image of the stars themselves, and his handsome face was expressionless.

"Mortal, your fate will not be changed."

The other person who descended appeared to be quite elderly. Thorns could be seen within his eyes, and this ascetic elder had quite a sad expression.

"The Order True Gods of Cleansing and Prophecy?"

Many humans were able to recognize these two True Gods' incarnations. The True Gods of Cleansing and Prophecy were both Follower Gods under the God of Holy Light. They both could be considered slightly strong Middle Gods.

"Lamar? Pete? I never expected to see the two of you in such a circumstance..."

The elderly Holy Knight felt rather nostalgic as well as sorrowful. Both Lamar and Pete had formerly been his companions in the past. But now their icy cold eyes and tone were no different from any other Follower God belonging to the God of Holy Light.

Estrada knew that perhaps this was the foundational reason why he had always refused to ascend to Godhood.

"Order is the highest—"

"Mortal—"

The two True Gods' incarnations started muttering their extravagant sounding introduction lines again, but...

Smack! Smack!

Estrada evidently wasn't interested in hearing them finish. In front of this inherited battle hammer which represented dawn and protection, even the True Gods' incarnations were no different from the angels. As the Strongest Holy Knight swung his battle hammer, two headless divine incarnations' corpses directly fell to the ground.

A normal third-rate Follower God's incarnation was nothing in front of the current Estrada. His power level of SemiGod was a special rank which had no upper limits to begin with. Now that Estrada had stopped holding back, extremely few existences out there would be capable of stopping him.

However, Estrada could only smile bitterly.

"I don't have much time left..."

That right, because a sudden beam of Holy Light descended from the sky and transformed the entire world with brightness, as if it was midday. This was a familiar light and even a divine miracle for the pious. This phenomenon made people want to kneel at the very sight. No—in fact, some were already kneeling.

"The God of Holy Light!"

That's right. Once the God of Holy Light's plans met an obstacle, once this ancient knight became his obstacle rather than helper—to the extent where his foundational source of belief power was shaken—on top of his Follower Gods' incarnations failing to deal

with the problem, the God of Holy Light naturally descended with his own incarnation.

He was a pure amalgamation of light. It was impossible to see what he looked like. However, just seeing his appearance made Estrada feel despair from the bottom of his heart.

After the God of Holy Light appeared, the sun in the sky disappeared. The entire world fell quiet. The God of Holy Light's incarnation was powerful enough to rewrite the natural laws of the world.

The elderly Holy Knight closed his eyes as he felt the suffocating divine pressure that the strongest Main God emanated. Estrada could only smile bitterly. There was far too much of a difference between the strongest human and the strongest God. The difference was extreme to the point of despairing. The difference was such that nobody could change his fate.

"Hey, all of you. Why aren't you hurrying and running? Do you all want to die here?"

After experiencing so many things, there were only incredibly few pious believers that kneeled to greet the descent of the God of Holy Light's incarnation. If this incident, where Estrada desecrated the Holy Light and was still able to keep the powers of Holy Light, started spreading to others, then the God of Holy Light would naturally see his authority and faith greatly decline. In that case, it was only natural for the God of Holy Light to kill everyone present to keep all this a secret. He had done plenty such things in the past before.

There were plenty of smart people among the Holy Light army's vanguard. Some of the smarter ones had already begun secretly retreating, having arrived at such a conclusion beforehand. However, the great majority of the Holy Light army vanguard still possessed hope. They believed that the God they worshiped wouldn't be so merciless.

But unfortunately their God of Holy Light was just like an "automated divine server" which only calculated his personal benefits coldly like a machine. The Meteors of Holy Light which rained down from the sky was his answer to his believers.

The God of Holy Light who resided high above in the heavens had long since stopped being the legendary human hero who had established the path of Holy Light. The current him even felt that talking to mortals was a complete waste of his time.

At the Main God's command, the very stars were summoned as they crashed downwards. Everyone saw nothing but golden light before them, underneath which not a single life would possibly be able to survive.

However...

"STOP!"

Perhaps the God of Fate was an incredibly skilled jokester. Why else would Fate always result in so many scenarios that seemed incredibly ironic? The person who suddenly put up a wall of Holy Light which blocked the Meteors of Holy Light, which were Holy Light's physical personification, was the person who had just been their enemy: Estrada.

Currently, Estrada wasn't in a very good condition. His hair had gone snow-white, and each meteor hit he blocked caused him to spit up blood. And it could be seen from the raging soulfire in his eyes that he had already begun using Soul Immolation in order to obtain more power.

"Teacher Estrada! You're still capable of escaping! No need to care about us!"

Finally, the familiar voices coming from below him served to both assuage and pain his heart.

Estrada knew that it was impossible for him to retreat...

"'Estrada absolutely has to die because the Holy Light requires

your death for its salvation.' Ha! You've seen through everything already, little Roland. As your teacher, I'm quite proud of you for everything you've learned and accomplished."

Estrada could only let out another bitter smile and shake his head sadly as he continued muttering part of Roland's letter to him out loud.

But suddenly a mysterious and powerful divine will sent a message that echoed through this entire area. Every person present heard and understood this message.

"Estrada, if you are willing to become my Follower God, I shall forgive you for all your sins."

Estrada laughed out loud at this.

"Become your puppet and tool? Sure, I will agree as long as you let all these young children under me go free and also promise to never again interfere with mortal affairs."

"..."

Estrada didn't receive a response to this. Instead, more pillars of light appeared behind the God of Holy Light's incarnation, more than doubling the number of Meteors of Holy Light that were sent hurtling towards everyone. This was the God of Holy Light's answer.

"Estrada has to die because the Holy Light requires salvation."

Once again, the elderly Holy Knight muttered something that nobody understood as he then silently raised his battle hammer.

"We Holy Knights are proud of smiting evil and protecting the kind and just. We've even branched into the path of judgement and the path of holy healing. But in the bottom of my heart, the strongest path for Holy Knights has forever been..."

Estrada suddenly dropped his battle hammer, which whirled in midair before landing on the ground. At the moment of impact, a

semicircular wall of light expanded from the battle hammer and enveloped everyone.

"...We Holy Knights are a job class that were born for the sake of defensive battles. We were born for the sake of defending. Our strongest path has forever been the path of protection!"

The elderly Holy Knight's roar echoed throughout the entire skies. He used Soul Immolation on himself to the extreme limits in order to cast the strongest barrier spell in all of history. At this moment, the aura of light expanding from his battle hammer blocked everything. Even the angels—no—even the God of Holy Light himself found it impossible to penetrate this barrier of light.

Meteors of Holy Light and pillars of Holy Light crashed into this barrier, but nothing was able to break through the barrier Estrada had created at the cost of his very life.

It stood still, not even flickering from the attacks landing against it. It seemed as if even the God of Holy Light's attacks were nothing more than meaningless mosquito bites.

Meanwhile, Estrada himself carried out his oath...

"Estrada has to die because the Holy Light requires salvation."

This protective barrier had been created at the cost of the elderly Holy Knight's full amount of life essence. Estrada's physical body landed on the ground but remained standing despite the fact that he was no longer living. It seemed as if he was now a statue roaring at the skies, yet his soul was no longer present in his physical body.

"Teacher Estrada!"

"...No, this is impossible..."

"Wahhhhhhh! Teacher Estrada!"

Countless cries arose from the individuals who had encircled the elderly Holy Knight's body. Meanwhile, when the God of Holy Light's incarnation discovered that it would be impossible for him

to pierce through this powerful barrier unless he was willing to sacrifice and self-destruct his incarnation, he unhesitatingly calculated the potential costs and benefits and then made the decision to stop wasting his time here and leave.

At the exact same moment, two divine messages from the God of Holy Light were delivered directly to the Church of Holy Light's headquarters. The first divine message ordered that all of Estrada's glory and honor be stripped from him, while the other divine message ordered that the entire Holy Light army vanguard be declared as heretics so that none of them would be able to ever return home. The God of Holy Light was still the most powerful God in existence, and he would forcefully twist everything back to the starting point.

One week later, a white ice crystal which exuded Holy Light and a tattered battle hammer that was fading in color were placed in front of me.

I could only fall silent for a very long period of time as I gazed at this ice crystal and read Estrada's dying message.

After an almost unending amount of silence on that dark night, Roland, face pale, carefully picked up the ice crystal and set it within a black box. He then shut it and placed it within his Frigidwinter Earth.

Before he did, Harloys caught a glimpse of what was within the box.

There were four grooves on top. Three top-level elemental items had been placed within these grooves, making the empty fourth groove apparent.

There were also another four grooves on the bottom half of the box for Roland's ice crystals. Again, there were three crystals placed within the grooves, with one more remaining empty.

The first crystal possessed the blue light of water. The second

crystal was Estrada's crystal of Holy Light that Roland just received. The third crystal was missing, as someone had just recently arrived to take it. Meanwhile, the fourth groove had a crystal inserted which didn't have any glimmer to it at all. This ice crystal was identical to the first two before they had been delivered to Aylos and Estrada.

Currently, I was looking at the tattered battle hammer and lightly touching it. I felt incredibly fatigued and uneasy...

"'Estrada has to die because the Holy Light requires salvation...' It's all my fault... If I didn't write that letter to him—"

"Roland! This isn't your fault! Your teacher made his own choice! And he would have made the exact same choice even without your letter. He's Estrada!"

I could only helplessly nod my head and then shake my head. Harloys wasn't at all trying to console me. She was telling me the truth. Still, it was undeniable that I had given Estrada a final push at the end.

"Roland..."

The black cat—many cultures considered it a symbol of misfortune, I must say—hopped off my shoulder to the ground. She transformed into a golden-haired young elf and came up to me, apparently intent on continuing to console me. However, I shook my head again and stood up straight.

"...Relax, I'm not that weak. We don't have much time left so let's prepare for the next step. At the very least—at the very least..."

Imperceptibly, my eyes started filling with tears, my plan crafted out of cold logic suddenly thrown aside by a violent outburst of emotions. Before I could even react, I was kneeling on the ground, crying.

"Teacher... Estrada..."

At this moment, the sly 20th ranked member of the Calamity

Rankings was nowhere to be found. There was only a pained person hugging his knees and weeping, a youth who had just lost his teacher, his teacher who had been like a father to him.

It had started to rain outside, the massive downpour swiftly passing with the time.

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After temporarily losing control of my emotions, I felt much better.

When I proceeded to touch that tattered battle hammer again, it suddenly became ignited with Holy Light. It would seem that the heroic spirits within this battle hammer had recognized me as worthy of succeeding it.

I believed that as long as Holy Knights remained—no—as long as humans remained, this path of protection passed down through the generations would never be broken. My goal would never change.

"...I swear that every sacrifice will be meaningful! All evil villains will receive the just desserts they deserve! I will absolutely end this damned Holy War, forever!"

I stroked the battle hammer as I gazed out the window. The dawn sun had just peeked over the horizon, its rays breaking through the clouds.

And then, looking down, I added another person dear to me in my notebook for whom I must carry yet another responsibility on my shoulder.

At the same time, I wrote down yet another mortal enemy.

"Teacher Estrada, and the damned God of Holy Light..."

Chapter 431: Waves

Some believed crows to be the harbingers of disaster, but everyone could agree that disastrous news would appear like them, swiftly and unexpectedly.

In just a short two days, news of Estrada's death reached every major human country's spy agency. At almost the exact same time, news that the Holy Church had declared Estrada to be a heretic also arrived.

The whole world was astonished, and then... the whole world mourned.

It was easy for a person to do a good deed, but it would be very, very difficult for that person to only perform good deeds throughout their entire life. Holy Knights were popular in every country, yet Holy Light priests and Cardinals received much worse treatment. This was because one of the requirements for being a Holy Knight was to do good deeds for one's entire life. It could even be said that Holy Knights would specially pick to do good deeds that wouldn't give them payment in return. That was why Holy Knights were renowned for being able to visit any country without attracting suspicion. And Estrada was doubtlessly the greatest representative of the Holy Knights.

Humans had long since forgotten when it was that Estrada first became famous. But he had always been viewed as the living representative of the Holy Light. Estrada had led the way in defending against countless calamities. Whenever other species invaded, Estrada would be always be there at the lead of the allied armies. Whenever there was a plague calamity, Estrada would be at the forefront of coming to the aid of others. His wondrous nickname, "Miracle Hand," referred to how he was always able to create miracles even in the most despairing of situations.

The rulers of major countries would perhaps have objections to

the forceful ways of the Holy Church, but not a single person didn't respect this famous elderly Holy Knight. After all, it was likely that Estrada had saved their grandfather in the past, or that some other ancestors of theirs owed him their lives. And thanks to countless myths and legends spread about Estrada, the Strongest Holy Knight had an excellent reputation among the ordinary populace.

The rarest part of all was how Estrada was uninterested in authority and status. Not only that, he didn't care for politics. Everyone who was familiar with him knew that—no—it should be said that everyone knew that Estrada was a truly kind and easygoing old man with no ambitions whatsoever.

This elderly Holy Knight who was renowned as the living representation of Holy Light was actually declared as a heretic? Everyone could tell that something was wrong. A problem must have arisen.

"The God of Holy Light personally descended in an incarnation to kill Estrada?"

Secret channels as well as the Holy Church's official notification simultaneously confirmed this unfortunate piece of news. Head priests and roaming Holy Knights everywhere sent message after message to the Holy Church's headquarters, asking about the situation. In the end, all of them received the same reply.

"Estrada, a heretic? Someone like him would actually betray the Holy Light?"

Almost all the countless messages had the same tone of disbelief. Pope Caloma and the Holy Church's higher-ups had huge headaches over this situation. Unfortunately for them, they were unable to lie and make up a response so they could only tell everyone that Estrada was a heretic who betrayed the Holy Light. They couldn't lie because declaring Estrada to be a heretic was a direct command from the God of Holy Light himself. None of them dared to disobey the God of Holy Light's divine will.

And so this naturally brewed into a huge incident.

"Why did the God of Holy Light personally descend in an incarnation to kill Estrada? Just what could he have possibly done?"

From a certain standpoint, it was reasonable that the Holy Church's higher-ups had always been on guard against Estrada. He had remained alive due to his power level and accumulated so much good reputation over the centuries. Estrada was far too brilliant of an existence within the Holy Church. Even if he didn't have any interest in authority, just his existence alone was a problem for the organization.

"Estrada desecrated the Holy Light so the God of Holy Light's incarnation descended to kill him." This was the overly simple explanation given to everyone. But the simpler an explanation was, the more people would read into it. And the information contained within this explanation was indeed worth analyzing.

And it just so happened that Estrada had taught countless disciples, and over the years these disciples had their disciples and descendants. There were innumerable Holy Knights who had joined the Holy Church for the sole reason of idolizing Estrada. None of them were satisfied with such a simple answer. Countless Holy Knights, Holy Light priests and other Holy Church-related personnel began rushing to the Holy Church headquarters.

And at this exact time, the Southern Sect, which had suffered great losses together with Bardi's recent losses, jumped out into the public eye. The Southern Sect loudly started teaching their concept of the Pure Holy Light, calling out the so-called God of Holy Light for being nothing more than a False God who was stealing the grandness of the Pure Holy Light. The true Holy Light wouldn't require worshipping the False God of Holy Light. And Estrada had proved this fact, which was why the God of Holy Light killed him to try and keep this a secret. The Southern Sect's Pope Atadia even swore that everything he stated was nothing but the truth in front

of everyone with the powers of Holy Light. Well, some interpreted it as what he believed to be the truth.

In other situations, the Holy Church would have been at least able to counter the statements. But it just happened to be that the entire former Holy Light army vanguard witnessed everything that happened. This former Holy Light army which consisted of more than one hundred thousand people directly dispersed everywhere. Some people directly joined the Southern Sect and the Bardi Empire. Some went to their family or friends. Some returned to their home countries. And some even returned to the Holy Church.

The God of Holy Light had gone insane and intended to slaughter a tremendous number of humans. Estrada's decision, resolution and how he had managed to reobtain the Holy Light after having it stripped from him became the best evidence for the Southern Sect's teachings.

Naturally, the Holy Church would try to minimize the effects of this incident. However, it was impossible for Holy Light job class members to lie when swearing under oath in the name of the Holy Light—and this became troublesome. Since this incident was impossible to deny, its effects continued spreading as things worsened for the Holy Church. Every day, people left the Holy Church. Many even lost their powers of Holy Light after losing their belief. And a rare few among them managed to rediscover the Holy Light, which confirmed the fact that the "Pure Holy Light" existed without the God of Holy Light.

And it just happened to be that at this time, the fairies, who had forever remained neutral, suddenly stabbed the Holy Church while it was down.

Nobody knew the fairies' true method of existence. They were actually one of the few species that didn't fear the God of Holy Light and used objective reporting to detail the entire incident. They brought out countless witnesses' firsthand accounts to prove the most critical part: that Estrada had been stripped of his Holy

Light powers by the angels and the God of Holy Light himself but then managed to reobtain the Holy Light through his own efforts alone. Of course, the fairies also reported in detail on the God of Holy Light's attempts to kill everyone present to keep this a secret.

The most unbelievable part was how the fairies even reported on the secrets of the Source of Order and the True Gods themselves. The fairies told everyone about the connections between Divine Concepts, divine power, Holy Light, the Source of Order and so on. Although they didn't directly state that the God of Holy Light wasn't the only source of Holy Light, everyone would be able to conclude this from what they'd said. And so the Southern Sect's teachings about the "Pure Holy Light" received confirmation and support from this third party.

As for why the fairies were willing to suddenly antagonize the God of Holy Light?

"The God of Holy Light must have gone insane. He intends to slaughter a tremendous number of people in order to suck up to the Source of Order. Not only that, the God of Holy Light just happens to be the biggest faction and strongest Main God in the Order Faction. If the God of Holy Light continues his rule, no matter who wins the Holy War in the end, the end result will be even worse for the mortal plane than the aftermath of the previous Holy War. All of us fairies will starve to death!"

The fairies had excellent observational skills as a species which had suffered so much during the last Holy War. They'd even watched many previous Holy Wars, and while the fairies didn't care who won, they knew that the Chaos Faction was filled with insane people impossible to reason with. The Chaos Faction forever lived by the law of the jungle where only the strong survived and the weak would be preyed upon. If they won, the first thing they'd do would be to "eliminate" a weak species like the fairies. That was why the fairies usually favored the Order Faction. However, if the God of Holy Light continued being the big boss of

the Order Faction, then the fairies would be one of the biggest losers in the end no matter who won.

The situation was becoming ever more chaotic. Pope Caloma anxiously prayed to the God of Holy Light for answers but received only a rather vague divine message.

"We are enforcing the will of Order. Glorious days will soon be upon us."

At this moment, low-ranked angels descended at the Holy Church's seven largest mega-churches, including its headquarters. True Gods' incarnations even descended to three of the mega-churches.

However, the Holy Church members at each location didn't view these angels and True God incarnations with idolization like they would have in the past. Instead, the they viewed them with enmity, suspicion and coldness. Doubts were brewing in the Holy Church members' minds, bringing about plenty of internal conflict and trouble for the Holy Church. However, the even icier angels and True God incarnations only went about their own business without caring one bit about what the mortals thought of them.

"...As expected, the God of Holy Light hasn't given up on his plan. He intends to use forceful means now and personally send souls into the Cycle of Reincarnation."

"Isn't he worried about losing believers? Right now, a majority of Holy Knights refuse to listen to the Holy Church's orders. The Holy Church has already lost more than one-third of their combat strength—at least."

"The God of Holy Light plans to send a tremendous amount of souls into the Cycle of Reincarnation, which will help him earn the Source of Order's recognition. He considers it extremely profitable to sacrifice mortals in order to obtain a promotion. Why would he care about losing belief—all those mortals were destined to die anyways. He would prefer for them to die earlier, enter his Divine

Kingdom and become his nutrition. As long as he remains as the strongest Main God of Order and maintains the Source of Order's favor, he'll forever be the most powerful and unstoppable existence."

I knew exactly what the God of Holy Light wanted. I also understood that under the current situation, he was an undefeatable existence. If he forcefully started his "soul harvest" plan, it would be impossible for us to stop him.

The God of Holy Light had been accumulating more than half of all belief in the mortal plane for almost two thousand years. He had far surpassed any ordinary Main God's power level. In fact, I doubted that a single Chaos Faction Demon Lord would be stronger than the God of Holy Light.

But judging from how he was just as dense and mechanical as always, the God of Holy Light was also likely to be the stupidest Main God. If he managed to completely combine with and become a part of the Source of Order, he would strive even harder to force more souls into the Cycle of Reincarnation without regards to cost. In that case, the fairies' analysis was absolutely correct. The God of Holy Light would become an even more dangerous enemy than the entire Chaos Faction.

"How am I even supposed to play this game? Forget about having garbage teammates and garbage leaders. Our faction's biggest boss wants all of us to die. And it just happens to be impossible to fire or change this boss. How are we supposed to have fun playing!? Are we all just supposed to go die as he wants?"

And as the Holy War continued, the God of Holy Light would only become stronger and stronger, thus giving him more and more direct influence over the mortal plane. Not only would the Source of Order's favor and the unending conflicts help expand the Concept of Holy Light, the constant increase in the Elemental Tide meant that powerful existences' incarnations would also become stronger in the mortal plane. With fewer dimensional limitations

restraining them, the most powerful existences would be able to use the full might of their true powers.

And so I was stuck in a dead end.

If I didn't do anything to stop the God of Holy Light's large-scale sacrifice of souls, a tremendous number of people would die and the Goddess of Order would be revived. That would be game over.

If I gathered all my power and tried to stop the God of Holy Light's large-scale sacrifice of souls, he would crush me to death like a measly worm. And then he would simply complete his soul harvest through the Holy War and revive the Goddess of Order. Once again, it would be game over.

Just like that damned terrible game I played, all paths lead to dead ends. Which was why I decided not to choose any of these paths.

"It's impossible to stop the God of Holy Light with direct means. However, there's an excellent saying. "When a door closes, a window always opens."

"So have you found this window?"

"Nope. This damned world isn't a game, after all, and it's completely imbalanced. There were never any windows to begin with. That's why I intend on smashing the wall down."

That's right. If I tried to directly interfere with the God of Holy Light and the Source of Order's plans, I would only be wasting my time and energy. Only by leaping completely out of the bounds of their logic and rules with my attacks would I possibly have a chance of victory. That was why I spent much effort on preparing my "grand scheme," which would be used to "smash the walls." Even Estrada became a sacrifice for all this.

"...I won't allow any sacrifice to be wasted. As long as the last piece of the puzzle arrives, I'll be able to activate my 'grand scheme.'"

Chapter 432: Butterfly Effect

The Fog Mountains were located in San Antonio's Amu Mountain district, and its capital was Fenbert, a city well known for producing outstanding fragrances and gems that originated from the depths of these mountains.

This place had a rather mythical history. At first, Fenbert was but an ordinary mountain village with nothing special whatsoever. Dangerous wild beasts roamed this mountainous area, and according to legend these forever fog-filled mountains had man-eating demons hiding within.

Rumor had it that anyone who entered the Fog Mountains would never return alive. It was common for people here to suddenly disappear, and everyone would put them down as the work of demons.

However, approximately seven hundred years ago, a brave young man named Amu went into the Fog Mountains of his own volition. He bravely fought and outsmarted the demons and obtained methods to enrich his hometown, the seed for an aromatic fragrance called "Dragoneye" and gem mining and refining technologies.

Amu used his newly-obtained riches to turn Fenbert into a thriving commercial center and military fortress. Not only did Amu become the first City Lord of Fenbert, but stories of his heroic deeds were also passed down through the generations. In fact, this entire mountain district ended up being renamed in his honor.

However, these events had taken place too far in the past. Nobody from today treated these legends as real. People didn't believe in demons anymore, after all. The mysterious disappearances had stopped several centuries back. As for the adventurers that entered the Fog Mountains and never returned? Considering that the roars of plenty of vicious beasts could still be

heard in the mountains, everyone felt that there was a far more likely explanation than one with demons.

In this current day and age, the environment had long since changed from what it originally resembled. Even the famous gem mines that the Amu Mountain district relied on were mostly empty. Still, producing Dragoneye fragrance and gem refining remained the most important economical pillars of this area.

Every year, many merchant groups would cross the mountains to bring valuable unrefined gems in exchange for Dragoneye fragrance and refined gems. Here, it was very common to find magical gems that required a master craftsman's touch as Fenbert was home to some of the best gem craftsmen in the mortal plane.

However, nobody in the Amu Mountains expected that the legends would one day become real. The legends about Amu from seven hundred years ago ended up becoming a burden upon the people of today.

"Hello, we're here to claim a debt owed to us. Please pay us what Amu promised back in the day. Please pay us half of all the wealth that he's accumulated. You don't have enough money? Then pay us with your land."

Those man-eating demons? They really existed. The local hero Amu had even signed a contract with them. The wealth and technology he obtained wasn't gained for free; it belonged to the demons, and now the demons returned to public view and came to collect the debt.

Alright, after saying this much, you readers must have understood who these demons were.

"Great Demons! So many Great Demons! Forest Demons, Snow Demons, Flame Demons and..."

When these hideous demons walked out of the Fog Mountains, they brought along Amu's ancient contract.

Although the contract was well maintained, it was difficult to make out the wording on the paper that had long since yellowed after several centuries. The real reason the contract hadn't become a piece of useless scrap paper was that a shocking number of two hundred thousand Great Demons, a tremendous army, came out of the mountains.

By now, it was easy to infer what must have occurred. As one of the losers of the previous Holy War, the Great Demons had escaped into the depths of these mountains, which was why there were so many rumors in the past of demons living here. But several centuries had passed without a single new rumor of demons—plenty of evidence for just how patient the Great Demons were in waiting for their chance.

Based on historical records, Great Demons were skilled at witchcraft and shamanism. There were many records of them using potions and magical gems in their religious and magical ceremonies. They sought to understand the source of the soul. They were far more skilled than the elves from their generation at understanding herbal medicines. Knowledge was wealth and power, and it would be simple for them to give out a little bit of their special knowledge to help a remote mountain village to become a flourishing metropolis.

As for why they chose to sign a contract with Amu that they obviously wouldn't be able to collect on...

"...Amu was a brave warrior who overcame countless dangers to reach the deepest part of the mountains. He was able to survive after dueling against our own warriors. Why not give him a few presents? We are no barbarians. We respect the brave and the powerful. After so many years, plenty of people other than Amu have signed the 'return half' contract with us. However, he was the only one who kept his promise. Amu is truly a real hero."

Nobody knew if the demons' words were real. But at least the unfamiliar new "neighbors'" words made people feel better. Amu

was their hero, after all. They felt that they had gained face as these outsiders had respected their hero.

Of course, the true reason why these "debt collectors" could stay so easily was due to their overwhelming military might. The most famous warrior in the Amu Mountains was sliced in half by a demon squadron leader. The local militia, which numbered less than three thousand, was entirely eradicated in a short three hours. Since there was no way to defeat the Great Demons, and no way to resist, the people here could only choose to believe what the Great Demons said.

The Amu Mountain District was a remote and sparsely populated district far away from potential enemies. The only military might they had were the few local soldiers and village militias. The local soldiers would only be sufficient for dealing with villagers that acted out of hand, while the village militias were only equipped for dealing with some wild beasts. As for organizing a rescue army? That would require the neighboring domain lords to act in unison, something that would take a significant amount of time.

The Holy Church and Holy Knights would have originally responded to this almost immediately. Unfortunately, they had their own problems to deal with, so it would be impossible to rely on them. And so, in just a short two days, all the residents of the Amu Mountain district were cut off from human society. They became the subordinates of the Great Demons.

Communication in the mountains was no longer as difficult as it had been several centuries ago. Visiting merchants brought along the current generation's common sense and culture. However, the Great Demons had a rather bad reputation. The mountain villagers were terrified of how Great Demons were rumored to eat other intelligent species as their main food. Although the Great Demons claimed to have gotten rid of this habit of theirs, everyone remained afraid of the Great Demons' bone necklaces and sharp fangs.

Still, the Great Demons patiently used concrete actions to change people's view of them. They voluntarily handed out free food to everyone, sent out relatively better-looking female Great Demons to play with children and had their experienced hunters teach the human hunters about how to survive in the mountains.

Of course, the Great Demons also took the mountain villagers' sensitive pride into consideration. They made sure to praise the mountain villagers' unique culture and legendary heroes.

They brought out a new delicious food called "breadfruit" which soon became one of the most popular foods around here. And the highest-ranked gem craftsmen, herbalists and alchemists also received a large number of new formulas and precious materials. "Future gem capital," "City of Merchants and Artisans" and other such promises helped fan human ambitions.

The Great Demons indeed did an excellent job. Their strategy was far more effective than forcefully invading. Someone capable at planning and strategizing had to be behind the scenes.

As an unfamiliar species that the entire plane was "familiar" with, their first appearance in centuries and the first impression given was critically important. If they started off by eating humans, just like in the legends, every single human would likely fight to the bitter end against them. But if they instead showed off a more moderate image, such as of a friendly species that wished to assimilate into this world, then their days would be far less troublesome.

Of course, there were some among the mountain villagers that pointed out how the demons were probably just faking, but the result was that these "smart individuals" mysteriously disappeared.

Large amounts of resources were suddenly "given for free" to everyone. Free food and gold gave all the mountain villagers benefits. The Great Demons hadn't cared about cost and almost completed their tactical objective. In fact, even the fairies

observing while hidden in the shadows had finished preparing their special edition report.

That's right—almost. The problem wasn't that some hero or demon slayer suddenly appeared. San Antonio had many troubles of its own, and this remote mountainous district wasn't valuable to them. The problem was with the Great Demons themselves.

"Kill them all. Bring their heads to the altar."

On a certain day, the Great Demons, who had acted so friendly just yesterday, suddenly transformed into the most vicious of villains. Their warriors, who previously had furrowed their eyebrows while doing their best to smile, now had bloodthirsty auras about them as they tossed out life-ending spears.

The slaughter began and ended quite suddenly. The 200,000 Great Demons even started a slaughtering contest between themselves to see who could slaughter the most. In less than twelve hours, the 170,000 population of the Amu Mountain district was completely butchered, only a few thousand spared by the demons. Even fewer managed to survive and escape. On the human heads piled on the Great Demons' bone altar, many had looks of confusion. Even at their point of death, they didn't understand why this had happened. Everything had been just fine yesterday, so why did the Great Demons start a slaughter today?

The entire city of Fenbert was filled with the stench of blood. The few remaining survivors that the demons spared were "lucky" enough to see what happened next when the bloodthirsty demons returned from their hunt.

Those who were spared were either young, courageous and resolute warriors, or the wise and experienced elders. This was because they would be the best sacrifices of all for the demons' ritual.

All the altars lit up in unison, and a red pillar appeared to stain the clouds in the sky red with blood. Even though it was the middle

of the day, the sun disappeared. Darkness and a blood moon descended, causing the fresh blood on the altars to begin bubbling.

The blood started moving by itself and finally combined to form a crimson blood pool.

As Great Demon witch doctors and shamans incanted, the human blood pool and the blood moon in the sky mysteriously connected. Blood-red light cast down upon the pool, making it almost seem to come alive. The blood pool expanded more and more as the blood congealed. Finally, when it expanded to more than ten times its original size, it devoured the remaining living human sacrifices saved for last.

When the first blood-red goat-horned demon walked out of the bubbling blood pool, Arch Witch Doctor Halait sighed a breath of relief. The Great Demons had given up on their original plan all for the sake of this current scene. If they had failed, Halait knew that it would be impossible for him to be allowed to live even though he was the leader of the Poisonspear Tribe.

Numerous goat-horned demons walked out of the blood pool. They weren't particularly tall, and their triangular shaped goat faces even seemed rather comical. They were also hoofed, just Half-Goatmen. However, Half-Goatmen would have purely human upper body halves, unlike these goat-horned demons.

Panen, the leader of the goat-horned demons, was gray and much larger than the others. The moment he stepped out he shook off the blood from his body and stuffed some bloody meat remaining from the human sacrifices into his mouth. After he hurriedly filled his stomach, Panen ran back to the blood pull and roughly pushed aside a Great Demon mage. Standing next to the blood pool, he cut his own arm and let out a large amount of blood, continuously chanting as he attempted to enlarge this Dimensional Door.

These goat-horned demons were known as Sickle Goathorn Demons. Rumors had it that they were a special demonized form of

fallen Half-Goatmen and taurens. One of the most skilled species among demons at using magic, having them be the first to arrive was a clear indication of the demons' plans.

With the Goathorn Demons' assistance, the blood pool expanded even further. Panen ordered the Goathorn Demons that ran out of mana to be tossed into the blood pool as additional nourishment. These Goathorn Demons wailed in pain as they became nothing more than blood themselves, transforming into the Dimensional Door's nutrition. After witnessing this scene, the other Goathorn Demons could only focus even more on casting magic to expand the blood pool. Some even began cutting off their body parts to sacrifice to the blood pool, hoping the Dimensional Door spell would stabilize.

Finally, twentyish minutes after Goathorn Demons stopped arriving out of the blood pool, a giant red demon claw reached out from the pool and accidentally brushed up against Fenbert's town wall. It randomly grabbed what was closest to it—a few Great Demons and Goathorn Demons—and tossed them all into the blood pool.

As these unlucky demons howled at their impending deaths, the blood pool started receding at a great speed. It seemed as if the Dimensional Door was about to collapse. However, Panen revealed a smile that appeared even uglier than someone crying and hurriedly retreated. As he did, he whistled loudly to the skies, appearing... delighted?

"Ahhh!"

Before the final unlucky demons that the claw had grabbed dropped into the blood pool, a massive maw appeared and swallowed half of the entire blood pool along with these demons. The final shrieks could be heard from between the cracks in the maw's teeth.

The bloody sacrifice continued. The maw of this Chaos Abyss

Lord had already arrived in the mortal plane. The only part of its body that had currently entered was its tremendous mouth that had a diameter of more than thirty meters.

"Blood, more blood! Delicious... I want more... Devour... Evolve!"

This was an existence that would be at minimum a Demon Earl. However, it seemed it wasn't very intelligent. It wasn't even capable of forming complete sentences.

"Inferno Devourer Bethulus? Why is he the one summoned?"

Arch Witch Doctor Halait recognized this venerated evil existence but began secretly retreating at the same time. He instantly canceled his original plan to negotiate with the summoned Demon Lord. He would already be considered lucky if he was able to keep his life in front of this particular Demon Lord. Halait had no death wish.

Inferno Devourer Bethulus was one of the oldest Demon Lords. Although he was also one of the most powerful Demon Earls, he was the worst possible Demon Lord to have as a reinforcement. He viewed eating as more important than anything, and Halait knew full well that his entire Great Demon army might not even be a snack for Bethulus.

Currently, it seemed that Bethulus was stuck in the Dimensional Door. He roared angrily as Goathorn Demons ran around busily in an attempt to save their leader, Panen.

Quite obviously, the current amount of sacrifices were still insufficient to summon such a powerful Demon Lord to the mortal plane. And Bethulus was an impatient individual who wasn't accustomed to waiting. Goathorn Demon leader Panen spent a great deal of time convincing and explaining to Bethulus before the latter finally withdrew slightly, at least returning some of the blood pool space. However, Bethulus' eight bloody eyes were filled with the will to slaughter and devour and exposed his desires for all to see.

And so demons started jumping out of the blood pool again. This time, it wasn't a "weak species" like the Goathorn Demons.

Instead, Berserk Demons, Dragontail Demons, Devourer Demons and other such vicious demons specialized in slaughtering arrived. Tall and physically strong, just one punch from them would easily be able to shatter a giant's head. Some even had toxic spikes on their bodies. They started searching for new prey as they took to the skies.

Demons, who excelled at devouring and evolving, were technically classified under the overarching species of "demon." However, every individual demon would have their own unique and wondrous evolution. There would often be tremendous power level differences even between two demons of the same species. It could be said that there were no two identical demons in the world. If one had to forcefully find a common point, then it would be that the more ugly a demon was, the stronger and more vicious it would be. In every single dimension, demons would forever be the most unwelcome visitors. They would never bring anything with them other than death and destruction.

Demon commanders wielded their whips in midair but it wasn't necessary. The Demon Lord's desire of devouring and slaughtering would be far more effective at motivating them than any minor demon commander. With great efficiency, the demons organized themselves into squadrons and immediately set out to attack the outside world. They intended to bring a sufficient number of sacrifices to their Demon Lord master. A new round of slaughtering had now arrived, earlier than scheduled.

"It's finally complete."

Halait, who was currently hiding in a corner, heaved another sigh of relief. The Demon Lord and his subordinates had now arrived, and Halait and his tribe had successfully stayed safe. No—it should be said that Halait and his tribe still needed to leave as quickly as possible. Otherwise, they might all become nothing

more than a snack for the Demon Lord Bethulus.

Agreements? Plans? Allies? The most powerful demons would never think about such things. Their brains were filled with muscular instincts and reactions. Fulfilling their desires was the only important thing to them. Something like a plan? A high-level demon would carry it out if they remembered or simply forget about it entirely.

What about the boss's punishment for losses incurred from not carrying out the plan, you say? Firstly, demons would rarely think about overall situations or strategies in the first place. Secondly, any Demon Lords powerful enough to rule an entire plane in the endless Chaos Abyss would all have personalities where they thought they were the best who ever lived. The so-called concept of them having a boss wasn't even in their minds. Rather than calling the Demon Lords "companions that allied for a common cause," they were more like "a group of bastards that hurried to partake in a big dinner because someone in the mortal plane summoned them to enjoy a slaughter and a feast."

Not only that, this incredibly simple way of thinking also gave them their most appropriate path of evolution. Demons would forever be able to grow more powerful through slaughtering. When considering the total combat strength of an entire species, the demons that received an endless amount of power from the River Styx could definitely be ranked as the number one most powerful species overall throughout every single dimension.

What about losses to the overall plan due to eating one's allies? A hungry Demon Lord would only consider such a question after filling their stomach. But that would be too late for the eaten Great Demons if that occurred.

"Damn it, I clearly supported the original plan. Why was I the one chosen to..."

Indeed, the Great Demons that lost everything in the Holy War

had long since chosen the Chaos Evil Gods and Chaos Abyss as their new master. Many inferno-lized Great Demons even got accustomed to staying and living in the lower planes. It would be impossible for them to return to the mortal plane with a normal method.

The Great Demons' original plan wasn't to use such a major blood sacrifice. They had wanted to obtain the human society's recognition no matter what it took. At the very least, the Great Demons didn't want to be treated as a high-level threat. They would then slowly take over nearby surrounding territories and cities, secretly becoming a major power base for the demon armies before a full-scale invasion. They didn't want to start things with such a simple-minded slaughter.

However, sometimes plans would change faster than one expected. The foundational reason for the sudden change in the Great Demons' strategy was actually mostly because of Roland.

Although there were no official rules to the Holy War, there were plenty of unwritten rules. The mortal species would fight other mortal species, while the Order Gods would fight the Chaos Evil Gods. Ordinary soldiers would fight against each other, while generals did the same. Only by killing the enemy general first would a general start slaughtering ordinary soldiers.

This unwritten rule was because of the current situation and the power level on both the Order and Chaos sides. The Elemental Tide was currently far away from reaching a peak. Sending top-level combat strength to the mortal plane would come at a tremendous cost, and it wouldn't be beneficial, especially to the demons. This was why the battles happening now were only supposed to be precursors, with mortals acting as the representatives of the Gods.

But now this unwritten rule and taboo had been broken by the Order Main God, the God of Holy Light. Not only did he personally descend in an incarnation, he also sent down a large number of low-ranked angels and Follower God incarnations all for the

purpose of fighting. Without a doubt, this broke the power balance between the two sides and sped up the development of the Holy War. And so the Chaos Abyss responded in turn by sending out their own vicious generals and demon army. Under this butterfly effect, higher-level combat strength like the angels and demons arrived far earlier than they originally should have.

Fortunately, the Elemental Tide was still relatively low, which limited the demons' power levels. Sacrificing an entire mountain district's worth of humans only managed to successfully summon the Demon Earl Bethulus's mouth and half a demon army. Although the demons succeeded in coming to the mortal plane, it would still be difficult for them to expand their army and obtain results due to logistical difficulties.

If the Holy Church could organize an army to deal with the demons, it would be possible to eliminate this problem before it got any bigger. Unfortunately, that would be impossible with the Holy Church's current situation.

As this butterfly effect made the mortal plane's troubles worse and worse, bringing calamity ever closer, I was doing something that could be considered as evil as summoning demons: I was summoning... the devils!

Chapter 433: Summoning

"Dimensional rules? They're actually not that difficult to understand. A well-developed dimension is like a mansion with an owner. The creator is the owner of the mansion, and the Gods with their Divine Concepts are the managers of various areas. Some are in charge of watering (Rain), some are in charge of personnel and changing out the workers (Cycle of Reincarnation), and so on. If you can create a new job and a new task that can make this mansion operate more efficiently, and the owner recognizes your existence, you'll be able to become a God too. As long as your room still exists, you'll naturally become undying."– Quote from "Games of Time and Space, Volume 3: Guesses about the World's Unsolvable Riddles" by Selis Solomon.

Archmage Selis was renowned as the greatest space magic mage of all time. His understanding of Time and Space created the foundational textbooks for the Mage Country's studies into these two top-level fields. His Volume 1 on Time and Volume 2 on Space became required textbooks for mages who wanted to study Time, Space, Dimensional Summoning, Illusions and so on. However, Selis's Volume 3, "Guesses about World's Unsolvable Riddles," greatly decreased everyone's opinions of him. Selis' reputation went from that of a wise scholar to one of the most insane mages in all of history.

It was unknown whether his inferences were real or not. It was also unknown whether assassins belonging to the Gods' Churches succeeded in assassinating Selis, who was one of the strongest mages in the world. Regardless, Selis hadn't made any appearances in more than three hundred years. His Volume 3 could only be found in the possession of the older mages.

Selis had explained the Gods' secrets in a way that was far too common and easy to understand. Belief and idolization would require a sufficient sense of distance. Who would fervently

worship the person next to you who ate, burped, slept and farted like a normal person, even if that person was indeed a God? Perhaps it could be said that those who idolized others were farthest away from the truth.

Although mages typically lacked belief in the Gods, they still knew what they could and couldn't tread upon. Knowledge was power. But some things should only be known by themselves. There was no need to create a huge break in their relationship with the Gods unless it became necessary. And so only archmages knew top-level knowledge about dimensions, Time, Space, Divine Concepts and so on.

Archmage Selis actually had an even more direct explanation regarding dimensional rules in that now forbidden Volume 3 of his.

"Under normal circumstances, it's impossible for the Gods' true bodies to personally enter the world of Eich. The Gods can only perform a God's Descent upon one of their own believers or send down an incarnation. This is akin to directing from afar. This is because the homeowner hasn't given permission for these guys to enter, afraid that these powerful and clumsy existences will break the furniture or abuse the servants. But in a certain special type of situation, the Gods will be able to directly interfere with our world. And in that special timeframe, all limits will be removed, with outsiders being allowed to easily enter this mansion. Even the 'managers' will be able to act as they please. That's right, I'm referring to the Holy War."

"Based on research data we've accumulated over many years, the rise and fall of the Elemental Tide is something beyond any mortal or God's control. The Elemental Tide is like an exchange mechanism for the mortal plane of Eich and the Four Elemental Planes. Whenever the Elemental Tide is in high tide, perhaps the entire world is renewing or exchanging something out. Perhaps this is the world's own natural exchange mechanism for renewal.

Yes, I know that I have no evidence for this whatsoever. All of this is only my inference. Still, all the new species, new mines, new plants and new animals that appear after every Holy War provide circumstantial evidence for my theory."

"In every Holy War, the previous ruler of the world is very likely to be defeated. Or that species will die off in such large numbers that they'll no longer be able to rule the world. The survivors of that species will also mysteriously find their fertility lowering drastically. Also, approximately ninety-five percent of intelligent beings will die off in every Holy War. After the Holy War's end, the new ruling species will have fertility like never before, and the empty land left behind by other species will become their territory. It's almost as if all of this has been planned beforehand, as a prize to be given to the victor. The best evidence for my theory isn't only the birthing boom after us humans won the previous Holy War. It's that the elves had a tremendous population increase after winning the Holy War from two wars ago. Elves are very famous for their low birthrates, and after the previous Holy War, their birthrate became even lower."

"...If you look back at the Holy Wars from history, it's almost as if the Holy War itself has become a necessary method for this world to mature and grow. We humans are nothing more than a sacrificial byproduct. We aren't the masters of this house (or world). We're nothing more than temporary renters that have to give the key over to the next renter. No, if my theory is correct, even the Gods who are supposedly so high above us are nothing more than higher-level sacrifices, or perhaps I should call them consumables."

"...All of us lifeforms are a part of and serve this world. As long as the River Styx continues to flow, demons and devils will forever be produced. As long as Heaven's Pillar continues to exist, the general populace will continue to believe in the Gods, desiring a good place to go after death. The Order Gods will also have an endless amount

of belief power. However, when compared to the Chaos Evil Gods, their strength has too many limitations because they'll be controlled by the Source of Order."

When I read this back in the day, my first reaction wasn't "Oh, he's absolutely correct!" Instead, my reaction was "Unbelievable! He actually didn't disappear for knowing too much?" But then I asked around and learned that Archmage Selis had indeed gone missing several hundred years ago. And so I nodded and said "That's right—that's how it should be. That's what happens to those who know too much and say it out loud."

Several hundred years ago, when Archmage Selis came up with his theories, everyone treated them as way too radical. Plus, he himself said in his Volume 3 that they were "guesses" with no concrete evidence to back them up, so of course very few people believed him. Of course, the main reason why his theories never spread was because it was impossible for anyone to obtain any power or knowledge from this volume which contained nothing but guesses.

But, if this volume was completely useless, Selis' Volume 3 would have been left to gather dust in everyone's warehouses. Although Selis was a traditionalist mage uninterested in studying Demonology or Summoning, he had managed to obtain many byproducts from his Time and Space research that helped him accomplish incredible achievements in demon summoning, dimensional traveling and so on.

"...In that case, it's easy to explain why demons and devils require blood sacrifices to come to our world. These bloody sacrifices always have many requirements, but one thing in common about all of them is that the more frightened and worse of a death that the sacrifice undergoes, the better. Based on my research on these blood sacrifice rituals, the sacrifices' souls weren't consumed but instead vanished. The demons have a saying that 'Souls are the only currency in the lower planes.' In that case, just where exactly

did this 'currency' obtained in the blood sacrifice go to? I personally believe it was paid to the Chaos Abyss or even the world of Eich itself as the 'toll' and 'rental fee' to allow demons to stay in the mortal plane. I've done a series of experiments on this subject and obtained some results..."

Selis invented simple items to assist in blood sacrifice rituals, the unit for measurement for souls and methods for communicating with residents of the lower planes. His new theories came up with new demon-restraining summoning formations that were basically the equivalent of summoning through the dimensions by abusing loopholes. Selis' accomplishments in this field made countless SemiGod Demon Warlocks and Summoners feel ashamed of themselves. The greatest achievements in their own topic of research were done by an archmage from another specialty entirely.

"The best evidence of my inference is that the low-ranked demons have incredibly weak abilities when in the mortal plane. In fact, they're even weaker than ordinary wild beasts. There's no reason whatsoever for them to be under dimensional limitations. However, summoning even the low-ranked demons still requires a blood sacrifice, even if it's just the mage's own blood. This goes against the mainstream 'Elemental Tide Limitations Theory.' According to that theory, these low-ranked demons shouldn't be under any limitations whatsoever. Also, while the undead are also unwelcome in the mortal plane, summoning undead from the Undead Planes doesn't require a blood sacrifice. And it just happens to be that it's not anywhere near so troublesome for these lower plane residents to visit other dimensions. Perhaps the blood sacrifice itself isn't even that important. It may be nothing more than a request to enter the 'mansion;' it may be just a method to obtain the world's recognition. In that case, I have yet another guess..."

If that was the extent of Selis' research, it would have still been

fine. But I continued to read his book and could only exclaim that "Archmage Selis had nobody but himself to blame for his own disappearance. Forget about just playing around with such research results on his own—he actually dared to write all this and publish it as a book?"

What else did he write about? He wrote about... the truth behind the Holy War!

"In that case, what does it mean when in the later stages of the Holy War, demons don't even need to pay a 'toll' anymore to come to our world? Does this mean that the homeowner personally invited the demons? In that case, we should carefully consider why the current 'homeowner', the Source of Order and the Order True Gods, would invite the demons. What motivation could the homeowner possibly have? Do they really want to win the Holy War? Or do they simply want to see countless lives dying in the Holy War, starting another cycle of destroying the world through warfare and rebirth?"

"...In that case, perhaps becoming the biggest winner of the Holy War isn't even a good thing. That's because this species will almost always become the main sacrifice for the next Holy War right after. How else will there be enough souls produced as currency? Perhaps it's not only the lower plane residents that require such a currency; perhaps the Gods themselves also require..."

Although there were many idiots in the world, there would also be many smart individuals, especially among the ancient artifacts that had lived for very long. Ancient existences' long lives helped them accumulate a huge breadth of knowledge. The old dragons that had been able to remain "neutral" throughout innumerable Holy Wars definitely knew something about the truth behind the Holy War. But forget about simply knowing—not only did Selis tell people, he even wrote about it. Evidently, he succeeded in behaving foolishly to the point of causing his own disappearance. By the way, I should mention that Selis was actually Margaret's

teacher's teacher. I also obtained his disreputable Volume 3 through Margaret.

As for the current me, having such a "foolish idiot paving the way"—cough—cough—I meant having such a respectable predecessor was a wonderful thing. This was especially because he was kind enough to write down most of his research results in this forbidden book of his, which saved me a lot of trouble. I even came up with the idea of obtaining a Foundational Elemental Item of Dragon World as the catalyst for dimensional summoning (the equivalent of a dimension sending out its invitation) thanks to Selis' theories on dimensional summoning.

"...Yep, a blood sacrifice is required to summon demons or devils to the mortal plane. But it isn't necessary to use blood sacrifices to summon demons to other planes, although the rate of success for this is low. The main reason is that other planes don't have sufficient resources and souls to pillage, and the demons are also afraid of being summoned into an enslavement trap. As for why they're not worried about enslavement traps in the mortal plane? All the blood and souls in the mortal plane mean that the demons are willing to take this risk. And if they only send their incarnations, the risk is almost non-existent ..."

Before me was a giant summoning formation with a radius of several dozen kilometers. This was a modified version of Selis' simple summoning formation. The White Dragons soaring in the skies above me had helped draw it.

I had profited so much in being able to obtain the support of the White Dragons. For a human, this summoning spell formation would be difficult to understand, but any dragon would easily understand it. Any dragon, upon seeing it, would immediately learn that the target of my summoning wasn't the undead from Eich as they were expecting but rather the most unwelcome of all lower plane residents.

"Forget about summoning the devils because that was in our

original plan to begin with. At least you can still reason and negotiate with devils. Just what are you intending to do by summoning demons?"

Supreme Immemorial White Dragon Sam silently landed next to me and transformed into his Snow Elf form.

Not far away from this tremendous summoning formation was a much smaller summoning formation. Although this formation's target was also to summon from the lower planes, I wasn't summoning from the Hell the devils resided in. Instead, I was summoning from a certain level of the Chaos Abyss.

"Heh, I'm summoning a certain individual I have connections with to help us out."

"...This formation appears to be connected to the personal territory of a Demon Lord who's at Earl rank or higher. Are you sure that a Demon Lord will reason with you rather than simply bringing disaster upon you?"

"...There's no need to ask because I trust her completely. She's a new Demon Marchioness, and you probably wouldn't know her name even if I tell you. Also, if I don't go talk to her... I would absolutely be bringing disaster on myself."

"A new Demon Marchioness? The one from the Flame Sea? She and you..."

"...Probably, I think—uh—maybe she's my girlfriend?"

"Why do you sound so doubtful? Oh, I understand. Youngsters these days are truly amazing. You actually dared to start a romantic relationship with a demon. So you're worried she'll accidentally eat you? Right, just how tall is she? Three hundred or four hundred meters tall? Since she's of the fire element, she'll probably have the Chaos Abyss flames that burn everything all over her body. She's so young, so can she really fully manipulate her flames? Can your little body take it if she accidentally lets out a

spark?"

At first, Sam was looking at me as if I was a brave warrior. But then he started looking at me like I was a suicidal fool, so I felt rather awkward and averted my eyes. But now that he reminded me, a cold sweat started breaking out on my back. I felt like I had forgotten yet another important thing.

Elisa would be coming in her true body as the Demon Marchioness rather than a temporary incarnation summoned through a blood sacrifice. Although the Demon Marchioness in her true body would be a powerful ally for upcoming combat affairs, if she decided instead to first deal with me or accidentally crushed me to death under her foot...

"Oh my, you actually have this self-realization. No, I should say that you're making progress. You've finally realized that she's going to be angry with you?"

"Silly cat, you want to rub salt into my wound? How about we modify her summoning formation or at least make it so that she arrives later? I still haven't prepared myself..."

But the black cat glanced at the spell formation which was already glowing and shook her head.

"It's too late. She's in even more of a hurry than you are. I don't know if you're prepared or not, but she's definitely fully prepared to see you again."

Chapter 434: Demons and Devils

"Demons and devils? Aren't they just synonyms?"

Most mortals didn't know the difference between demons and devils because it was far too rare for ordinary people to meet them. And if they really did come across a demon or a devil it didn't matter which was which—they'd likely end up the same either way, as a soul dragged to the lower planes.

However, demons and devils were completely different species. Their personalities and habits couldn't be more disparate, and they even viewed each other as mortal enemies. Most circumstances where the two met would end up in a life-and-death fight.

"Those sly devils? Their heads are filled with nothing but schemes and plots. Only weaklings need to rely on such things. In front of us magnificent demons, their weak bodies and useless little tricks are nothing but a joke."

"The demons? Are you talking about those morons that have muscles for brains? Those foolish creatures are nothing more than a waste of space. The only thing they can be proud about is that they're slightly more numerous than us devils. Oh, perhaps they can also be proud of their barbaric strength that's equal to how ugly they look."

From a certain standpoint, although they were both residents of the Abyss, they lived in very different locations. The demons resided in the "Endless Abyss" while the devils resided in "Hell's Abyss." And if you looked only at their numbers, the demons didn't outnumber the devils by just a little. There were at least more than ten times demons compared to devils. However, since the demons spent most of their time fighting with each other, this numerical advantage was meaningless.

"Sly like a devil." Although this phrase had a negative connotation, it was still used as praise, but regardless it clearly

indicated the devils' most obvious trait—their slyness.

"Wisdom is treated as slyness.

"Shortsightedness is treated as decisiveness.

"True courage is treated as recklessness.

"Yet cowardice is treated as calmness.

"Don't pay much mind to how ordinary mortals think." —Devil Lord Kamiltias.

Your average mortal didn't know the origin of devils. But, for ancient existences, it was no secret that the devils were fallen humans from the first generation of humans.

As a former part of the Order Faction, they maintained some habits from their time as first-generation Order creatures even after falling and joining the Chaos Abyss. The four oldest and most powerful members from the first generation of humans were still the rulers of the entire devil population, which helped even modern-day devils keep many customs and ranks from the past.

Although devils were on the side of Chaos, they valued ranks and order. Admittedly, they often warred among themselves, but they would also be able to come to each other's assistance if it was necessary for the whole species. And for devils, it was natural to them that those with the highest abilities should stand at the top. If one's abilities weren't equal to one's status, then a single successful scheme would be viewed as a great glory. After all, in devil society, if a weaker devil managed to overthrow a stronger devil then they would be judged at a higher level than before.

I felt that the devils' society was similar to private companies from my original world. Every single person appeared to be working for the company, but they were only working for themselves. Everyone tried their hardest to scheme ways to get promoted. The easiest method would be to have the boss make a big mistake and report on others' faults. Although devil society

didn't appear to be as bloody as demon society on the surface, it was tiring to be in and incredibly cruel. Not only that, the devils even enjoyed this type of "battle of brains."

It should be mentioned that also like the top-level private companies from my original world, the higher-ups were mostly stable. Unlike how Demon Lords and Nobles would constantly change, the nine Devil Lords had rarely been replaced. Many of the nine Devil Lords were even ancient existences from the first generation of humans.

Any Devil Lords would be an existence that would give any emperor or even True God a headache. They crafted countless schemes that destroyed an uncountable number of kingdoms and True Gods. Many people didn't understand what these devils wanted to gain. But perhaps this was all simply because the veteran devils were just too bored. All they wanted to obtain was delight and pleasure from watching their schemes come to fruition.

And now these ancient Devil Lords that gave even the Gods headaches had all arrived before me. The bowed in unison and lowered their heads to me, despite having never given any God such respect.

"Little Roland, as according to the will of 'that existence,' from now on we shall listen to your commands. Please rest assured in using us as your tools. As long as you can grant our species' wish, we shall venerate you as—"

"Cough—I understand."

I stopped Kamiltias, the "Lord of Lies," halfway through his words. This was because the White Dragons were still next to us, especially the Supreme Immemorial White Dragon Sam. He was currently observing us with great interest. However, his seemingly pure eyes had unconcealed astonishment.

Kamiltias was the oldest of the nine Devil Lords. Because of this,

he also had the title of "Devil King" in addition to "Lord of Lies." And such an existence was affectionately referred to by Ayer as Little Tias.

If you only judged by physical appearance, nobody would think that this polite middle-aged gentleman was actually a devil. He had a handlebar mustache, a monocle and a gentlemanly hat. He even held a book between his arm and his body. His expression appeared slightly cautious yet sincere. Anyone looking at him would assume him to be a noble scholar, a pure academic.

However, if one made a list of all the heroes, commoners, nobles and kings he had fooled before, it would end up being thicker than a dictionary. The most ridiculous part was that it was impossible to find out just how powerful he was or what he excelled in. Basically, there were no records in the mortal plane of Kamiltias personally taking action. This meant that either everyone who witnessed his true strength was dead or that he didn't even need to fight to kill anyone he wanted. The first part was understandable if that was the case, but if it was the second, then that would make him even more difficult to deal with. And, with the information I happened to obtain from Ayer, it seemed far more likely that Kamiltias was the type who didn't need to personally take action.

"Mortal, your plan has moved me. Even if you fail, I shall keep a position for you by my side. However, I hope it won't be necessary."

Marshan, the "Lord of Rebellion," was another male Devil Lord. But unlike the Lord of Lies who preferred human form Marshan remained in his devil form. His favorite hobby was to incite others to rebel and overthrow whoever ruled them.

As for what he looked like? Even while cranking my neck, I could only see up to his knees. A dark mist made it impossible to see his appearance and body shape. He was just like a dark monster hidden within a tornado, but I could see his emerald green eyes shining with an evil gleam. His booming voice echoed throughout

the entire canyon, giving me an earache with the reverberations. He indeed seemed like an emperor type.

"Don't be so coarse, Marshan. It's rude to scare the newcomer. My dear Roland, could you please tell Sister Yiyi about your past stories? Although I heard some stories from 'him,' I'd like to hear more from you... personally."

Ilmisya, the "Lord of Temptations," Queen of Allure Devils. Perhaps Allure Devils weren't very famous despite being highly skilled at tempting and scamming others. However, this wasn't due to their lack of abilities. This was because whenever Allure Devils acted in the mortal plane they blamed whatever they did on the succubi, who greatly resembled Allure Devils.

Her voice sounded as if she was my best friend. Although Ilmisya appeared to be a gentle and cute woman, she was probably the most troublesome Devil Lord of all when I thought about how she was capable of making people think about sex with her voice alone. Did I mention that she had several hundred lovers? After all, the other Devil Lords wouldn't intentionally give me any trouble at this critical point in time with our agreement. But if Ilmisya got even the slightest bit close to me, an endless amount of trouble would be in store for me.

This famed queen was slightly more than three meters tall. With perfect curves and proportions with no unnecessary fat whatsoever, without a doubt her alluring body made for the best foundation with which to tempt others. Her seemingly pure face made her appear angelic, a perfect example of the phrase "angelic face, devilish body."

I could sense an alluring fragrance right in front of me. I nodded but directly took two steps back, expressing in the most direct fashion that I wanted to keep my distance.

This wasn't because I had a distaste for her fragrance or anything like that. I stepped back because the glare from the maid behind

me was giving me a huge headache.

That's right, maid. She was still a maid.

I had tried to imagine what Elisa in her demon form would become as she abandoned everything else for the sake of power. My most conservative estimate inferred that she would be a tremendous demon over one hundred meters tall.

This wasn't because of any racial prejudice I had against the demons. It was that demons, as pure creatures of chaos, were chaotic to the very core. Unlike demons, devils had a pyramid-like societal structure where lower ranked devils could use their "hard work" to make achievements that obtained their bosses' recognition and "promotions," even if the process sometimes took several centuries.

But there were only two methods for demons to obtain a higher status and more power: killing and eating.

Demons would kill everything they saw that moved, transforming their combat experience into actual improved power. This part was understandable. However, the truly troublesome part was how demons would even devour their own kind. Every single demon possessed the ability to devour those weaker or those it defeated. The devoured demons would become nutrition, with their strengths absorbed by the devourer. The devourer would constantly get stronger and stronger by repeating this cycle.

This natural racial talent of demons appeared to be quite strong. And I must say that it was, indeed, strong. However, this trait of theirs made it so that the demons had never stopped their internal wars for even one moment in history. In fact, most demons viewed their own kind as their biggest mortal enemies. Ninety percent of every demon's life was spent fighting against other demons.

However, precisely because of this racial talent of evolving through devouring the demons became the overall strongest species throughout the myriad planes. Demons also had it easiest

amongst powerful species at mass-producing themselves. Demon Lords would automatically be produced as long as there was enough fighting and devouring between the high-level demons. And as long as there were enough mid-level demons, there would be plenty of high-level demons produced.

This type of growth process that all demons underwent was filled with unpredictable mutations and unexpected situations. Not a single demon would have powers or a body identical to another. Not even the demons themselves would be able to explain how they "ate" to their current level. By the way, I should mention that Elisa's Soul Imprint of Devouring was intricately connected to her identity as a child of the Abyss and her Demon Bloodline.

Due to the demons' racial talent that naturally made them follow the law of the jungle where only the strong survived, all demons would start fighting from the moment of their birth. They would constantly fight from the level of the weakest tiny demon to a Demon Lord. Demons were very skilled at fighting and loved to fight, and those at the standard power levels of Gold, Legend and so on would almost always be superior to other species at the same rank.

There was a joke in Eich that went like this: if one put an angel, demon and a devil with the same power level together where only the winner would be able to leave, then the demon would definitely win the fight and the devil would be the final survivor. As for the angel... how about asking the demon and devil if they liked that chicken wing meal?

Actually, when this boring joke started spreading in Eich, some Devil Lords that were super bored actually performed some experiments on this topic by capturing angels, demons and devils of the same power level and forcing them into three-way fights. But the end result after a hundred experiments was that the demon would win more than seventy percent of the time and that the angel would win more than twenty percent of the time. A devil's

so-called intelligence against the completely unreasonable demons would be the equivalent of a scholar meeting a brute of a soldier. The demon would typically go kill the devil first before fighting the angel. There was quite a high chance that the demon would be capable of killing both the devil and angel by itself. However, even if the devil managed to somehow barely defeat the demon, the devil would usually end up dying to the angel.

Cough—getting back on topic, demons had the innate ability to devour others in order to evolve and become stronger. And so their evolutions always went in the direction of becoming as strong, as vicious, and as muscular as possible. Although they achieved what they wanted in obtaining physical bodies capable of withstanding their abilities and requirements, this almost always ended up with the negative side effect of becoming uglier the more powerful the demon was. Apart from unique demon species like the succubi which had better appearances, most Demon Lords looked like the most horrifying monsters one could imagine. It was also impossible to know what strange abilities they possessed. By the time one learned, they'd likely be dead.

I imagined the Demon Marchioness's true form to be more than one hundred meters tall, with four or six legs, green inferno flames all over her body and a voice like booming thunder. She would cause earthquakes upon moving, summon volcanos as she walked and create a canyon if she accidentally tripped...

"I never expected she'd still have such an appearance."

The current Elisa had gold-rimmed eyeglasses. Under her familiar silver hair was a pair of elven sharp ears. Her black and white maid attire was the same as it was in the past. However, it seemed that the skirt I designed for her was now slightly longer... Cough—compared to the past, my maid now appeared even more humanlike now that she no longer had the inferno-lizard traits of her tail and claws. At the very least, it was impossible for me to find any hints of her being a demon at all from her physical

appearance.

Of course, this meant that she had definitely evolved her physical body... But I was no idiot who would ask her about that out loud.

The moment she walked out of the Dimensional Door, I didn't even get a chance to greet her when she silently started standing behind me in that form of hers. Although her friendliness on the surface gave me a great amount of a face, her demon subordinates that came with her looked to be in complete chaos when they saw how their master treated me. One Berserk Demon even viciously swiped at his own face, losing one eye because of it.

I also felt slightly proud when I saw how the Devil Lords had expressions filled with vigilance and caution when they saw Elisa. But judging from the familiar look in her eyes that grew icier by the second, I felt like I had unknowingly angered her yet again.

"...I'm so sorry I'm not one hundred meters tall with four legs. It's truly regrettable that I'm unable to accidentally step on you to death. I do know a Volcano Lord who fits your requirements. It's said that he weighs more than two thousand tons, he's more than three hundred meters tall and every step he takes leaves magma behind. Would you like me to introduce him to you? Hmph! As expected of brothers. Your interests are becoming more like Beifeng's every day."

Ah, that familiar venomous tongue of hers sure did bring back memories. But I needed to seriously state that I had no relationship to Beifeng. One man like him was more than enough for the world. Another of him wouldn't even fit into the Calamity Rankings. I was clearly a normal person!

"Hmph! A tree (Amelia), a Slime cat and your half-demon relative (Reyne). Your tastes are even heavier than Beifeng's."

"You—you—are you... saying I have even heavier tastes than Beifeng...?"

This gave me such a heavy impact I had to arch my back and begin doubting my very life. But considering that many important guests were before me, and that this wasn't a time where I could act ridiculously, I didn't allow the serious expression on my face to change one bit.

"Where's the Lord of Despair?"

"His incarnation is currently out on another task. He'll probably be late. You know what task he's on."

I nodded in agreement. Four of the Devil Lords had allied with me, and three of them had come. They came in their true bodies, which showed their utmost sincerity. The fourth was also acting as planned, carrying out a task that was agreed upon beforehand. It would seem that we could now enter the next step of the grand scheme.

"Notify Orloss and Ayer. It's time to activate our grand—"

I didn't get a chance to finish talking as the skies suddenly darkened. A colossal Black Dragon appeared in the skies and blew away the clouds with his scorching dragonbreath. Dragons—a huge horde of them—descended from the skies. It seemed they had finally noticed that the situation wasn't what they expected, so they were here to question me.

"...Well, I guess I have to first deal with this small trouble before me."

Chapter 435: Fool

In contrast to the Dragon World, which fell into heated difficulties, the ancient Bardi Empire right next door fell into a deep silence. Perhaps it should be said that this was a manmade silence.

After Bardi lost on the eastern front, the royal knights became extremely active unlike the past periods of enforced silence. The capital was placed under severe martial law. Any princes who tried to take advantage of the situation to create chaos were executed in public as an example to others. The "poison scorpion emperor" Orloss the Thirteenth who had appeared to have turned into a kind old man showed the world once again just how vicious he could be.

"Halent will succeed the throne."

Even after Bardi lost the eastern front and much controversy stirred in the country, Emperor Orloss withstood all the pressure and heavily emphasized that his chosen successor, Halent, would be the one to inherit the throne.

Those who opposed him to the face? Executed.

Those who whispered about opposing him behind his back? Executed.

Princes who tried to ally with domain lords against this? Executed.

Nobles who simply complained in the privacy of their own mansions to servants, friends or family? Executed.

The old emperor, who had always smiled in such a friendly fashion, who always appeared so kind and friendly even during assassination attempts, now remained in his study, sipping his tea and smiling while announcing an endless amount of executions. The royal knights silently carried out his seemingly insane orders to slaughter all opposition, even to the point of hanging to death

children less than ten years old on the castle walls, despite the fact that this would trample all over their knightly honor and spirit.

"Any that have doubts about Halent's succession, no matter their status, age or previous accomplishments, will be executed."

This was the will of the old emperor, and the royal knights silently carried out his will even if the people of Bardi couldn't comprehend the old emperor's sudden insanity. Nobody was able to stomach this unexpected sudden slaughter. Almost all of the major domain lords' sons who were hostages in the capital had been executed for the domain lords' conspiracies with the princes. This caused the border domain lords to become absolutely furious.

Looking at the current situation, the Bardi Empire would be embroiled in bitter internal warfare before the Holy Church's allied armies or the Tark Republic would attack them. Just what exactly was the always wise emperor doing? Was he destroying the empire that he spent his entire life to create?

Even Halent's own faction, the typically neutral dragon knights, were unable to comprehend the old emperor's sudden lunacy. But due to the first and foremost code of their knightly chivalry—absolute loyalty to their ruler—none of them were able to stop this. However, they all knew that this wasn't normal and couldn't last.

At this rate, even if Halent inherited the throne, the moment old Emperor Orloss died there would be a huge rebellion from the repressed nobles due to this slaughter, leading to a bitter fight for everyone.

Meanwhile, after Miracle Hand Estrada passed away, the world was astonished, mourned and felt helpless. Yet this was a great help to Halent and Bardi.

The Holy Church vanguard army, which had been a tremendous threat to Bardi, had now been declared as heretics and dispersed. The God of Holy Light's unstoppable will had slowed down. Even though this was only temporary, Estrada had sacrificed himself to

obtain a victory for mortals. Bardi was also no longer in immediate danger.

"...This should help the old emperor calm down."

That was what everyone expected, but things didn't happen as they thought. Not only did Orloss not stop, but he actually became even more severe.

Those who took advantage of the situation to raise prices or stockpile goods and refuse to sell? Executed.

Those who had overly close relationships or familial ties with major domain lords? Executed.

Those who didn't even do anything, but had too much power and might be able to influence Halent being able to succeed the throne? Executed.

The old emperor, who smiled in such a seemingly kind manner as he watched his adopted princes scheme and kill each other for the past twenty years, smiled as he always did as he declared so many executions. Rivers of blood poured out of the capital city.

In fact, the other main character of this incident, Halent, even personally met with the emperor and argued with him about this. Still, Orloss didn't change his ways. The only end result was that Halent ended up shutting himself inside and refusing to go out.

"...Halent is the only candidate who can be allowed to succeed the throne if the future Bardi Empire is to survive. As for how he obtained the position? That's not important in the least. As for I myself...? Hehehe—just watch and see."

In the whole country, only an incredibly few number of people would be able to enter Orloss's study and listen to him slowly speak his thoughts.

Currently, the old emperor was listening to reports from his head of spies and knight captain.

"...Judging by the information our spies obtained, Duke Kafe and Earl Bolan have both temporarily stopped organizing their private armies. They're unsure of your goal and are afraid that they'll be made an example of if they're the first to act. But things are still the same as what we expected. As long as you...'leave,' they'll definitely be the first to rebel. They're just temporarily holding back."

"Ha! Those old fogeys. Forget them. How's the trade situation within our country? Are prices still inflated to double of what they originally were?"

"The trade situation is much better than before. After executing a large number of wicked merchants, the prices have greatly improved. At the peak, prices were at twenty-five times what they should have been, but now prices are only thirty percent higher than original. Plus, with your high-pressure policies and His Highness Halent's personal signed promise, most of them have already secretly sworn loyalty to His Highness. As long as you pull their teeth and claws, the merchants that didn't have much status to begin with won't be able to do anything. There won't be any problems with them at least for the time being."

"How about my useless adopted princes?"

"Those who might be a threat have been executed. The remaining ones have been declared to have no more relationship with the Bardi royalty. And the surviving princes are under constant surveillance. They're no problem, but your reputation... people are beginning to call you the White Dragon."

"White Dragon?"

"...Child-cannibalizing White Dragon."

Orloss nodded but didn't ask more. He didn't even look at the report; he simply sipped his tea. Since he had already abandoned everything, what did he care about this small degree of slander? What he intended to do next would be even more ridiculous.

Perhaps the history books would later call him the number one tyrant and idiotic ruler in all of Bardi's history. But everything was for the sake of the 'grand scheme.' He didn't care if others didn't understand and insulted him.

He slowly closed his eyes and didn't ask anything else. The head of spies and knight leader both wisely retreated, knowing that this conversation was over. Once the study fell silent, three people walked out from a secret room attached to the study. From a certain standpoint, these three people were the core higher-ups under Orloss in all of Bardi.

The first was Pope Amoya the First of the Southern Sect. Formerly the head steward of the Bardi royal palace, he had been through numerous life-and-death situations together with Orloss. Orloss viewed Amoya as a brother and trusted Amoya more than anyone. Amoya currently possessed the entire Southern Sect and all of Bardi's religious believers.

"...You've worked hard."

"Hehe, it's already better than expected. I still have to trouble you to work hard for your church, after Miracle Hand's sacrifice."

Currently, the elderly Pope Amoya had a fatigued expression. The Southern Sect had sent a large amount of combat strength to the eastern front, hoping to obtain a glorious victory in their first battle. However, they ended up suffering a great amount of losses instead due to the appearance of the angels and the Cloud Giants. If it wasn't for Estrada's sacrifice that greatly shook people's belief in the Holy Church, the Southern Sect would have met with serious trouble.

The second person was an old mage who wore a purple cape. His title within Bardi was the "Fool." The head of the Bardi mage association, he typically kept a very low profile. Very few had ever seen his real appearance. Now, though, he had revealed his real appearance—a silver-haired old man with nothing unique about

his appearance whatsoever. But if the heretic hunters of the Holy Church saw him, there would likely be a huge hunt organized for him with insane fervor.

And if Roland was here to see him, they would probably have much to talk about. That's because this person was Selis. The "insane archmage" Selis, the fool of an archmage who had told everyone the truth.

"I'll probably have to trouble you a bit more to deal with the Bardi mage association and to communicate with the Mage Country. I caused you to break your oath to never take part in worldly affairs again, and—"

"I know. There's no need to say anything. Some things are fated to be. Since all of you are gambling everything on this, how could I possibly retreat? It's just... such a pity. Back when Estrada defeated me and forced me to swear an oath to become a hermit in exchange for sparing my life, he probably never expected that such a day would arrive."

The archmage who was treated as insane by the world had sleek and shiny silver hair. His extravagant mage robe was also clean and tidy, a rare sight among mages. But now Selis could only shake his head with a sorrowful expression as he thought about how his old acquaintance had met such an end.

"It's a pity. Such a pity. Truly a pity."

In the end, Selis could only make such a comment about Estrada's death.

"Teacher, you have my condolences. All of us are on the same side. From a certain standpoint, Estrada was simply the first to go. This should be something we should be happy about..."

Something that almost nobody knew was that the young Orloss had once studied in the Cloud Tower. In fact, with the assistance of others, he had even become the disciple of the famed archmage

Selis, who was now a hermit.

"...Your Majesty Orloss."

The third person who walked out of the secret room wasn't even a citizen of Bardi. She was...

"It's time."

The luster of the green gem on Lilith Milan's arm was beginning to disappear. Large cracks had begun to expand rapidly on it. Soon, this precious twin emerald worth several tens of thousands of gold coins would become nothing more than worthless rubble.

Twin emeralds were a special type of magical gem enhanced through magical gem craftsmanship. When one was destroyed, the other twin emerald would be destroyed too. Their karmic connection would be capable of breaking through any seal in existence. They were a tremendously rare and precious type of communication gem. Creating a pair of twin emeralds would require a mountain of gold coins sufficient enough to create half a knight order. And using such a valuable one-time communication device was the best indicator of how serious the situation was.

When the twin emerald that Lilith held became rubble, it would only mean one thing: Roland, who was in Dragon World, had crushed the other. That would be the signal for Orloss to activate the entirety of their 'grand scheme.'

Currently, Lilith Milan wasn't only Roland's and the Church of Law's representative. The familiar royal attire and royal emblem she wore indicated something else—she had officially returned to her status as a member of the Bardi royalty!

"Aunt—er—Sister Lilith, I'll be troubling you. Please, as one of the only two pure Bardi royalty bloodline members alive, guide and make decisions for Halent as his regent until he's truly mature."

Lilith Milan—no—she should be called First Princess Regent

Lilith with her current status within Bardi. Lilith nodded. If at all possible, she didn't want to take on this troublesome affair. However, the people before her used their convictions and sacrifices to convince her. At this point of time, if she didn't do anything, she wouldn't do right towards her past friends and relatives that had died.

The old emperor looked all around him and gave a deep sigh. He knew that this was probably the last day he would be able to see his beloved study and treasured friends.

"...I never thought that after patiently waiting for my entire life, at the end I still need to wait. All of you, tell me. Am I really qualified to be emperor?"

"Of course you are, Your Majesty. There wouldn't be the current Bardi without you. Perhaps there will still be darkness before us. Perhaps rabid dogs will appear to tear apart your body. But it's impossible for dark clouds to forever block out the sunlight. In the end, stories of your wisdom shall once again spread across this land."

The old pope and former head steward bowed towards his emperor. Tears could be seen through his closed eyes

"Orloss, why trouble yourself over the opinions of fools? I've forever been proud of you."

Selis, who wasn't skilled with words, paused for a moment before nodding and speaking after Pope Amoya in an affirmative tone.

"I know you don't mind something as vague and useless as reputation, either. But I indeed feel that you're incredible. You're more amazing than I am."

The old emperor smiled, reassured after receiving recognition from his teacher Selis and old friend Amoya. Perhaps ordinary people would never understand his decisions, but there was a saying that said 'a person only needed one true friend in their life.'

He already had two people so close to him—what more did he have to ask for?

"...Alright. For the sake of creating a world belonging to only mortals, I shall now destroy all the Dimensional Doors leading to Dragon World."

Orloss was going to destroy all the Dimensional Doors leading to Dragon World? If all the Dimensional Doors leading to another plane were destroyed, then this plane would become untraceable by any existence in the mortal plane. And destroying all Dimensional Doors leading to Dragon World also meant that the dragons would lose one of their three biggest gathering grounds and that the entire mortal plane would no longer be connected to it.

Destroying all Dimensional Doors leading to another plane wouldn't be achievable in a normal situation because it would be impossible to know just how many scattered Dimensional Doors were out there. However, it just so happened to be that the dragons only set up three Dimensional Doors, all within Bardi, in order to better keep control over Dragon World! And the dragon knights were the guardians for these three Dimensional Doors... That's right—Evelyn was one of the guardians, and she was also the strongest guardian. The dragons had quite obviously chosen the wrong individual to be a guardian.

Newly creating a Dimensional Door connecting to another plane required a large amount of time. It would typically require more than two or three years. Plus, the Titans were right about to revive, so this would cut off all potential reinforcements to Dragon World. It would be the equivalent of forcing the dragons to fight with their backs against a cliff. The dragons in Dragon World would never expect something like that to befall them. It was certain that the dragons would be furious. And choosing Halent as the next emperor was for a far simpler reason than the people of Bardi could have guessed. It was all because Halent was a half-

blood dragon descendant, so he was the only possible choice the dragons would accept, allowing the Bardi Empire to be preserved in the face of their wrath.

Naturally, the dragons would take their revenge after such an incomprehensible crime was committed upon them. The Northlands would be angry with Bardi because "Roland and the Absolute Gentlemen Alliance mercenary group" all got lost within Dragon World. Still, the dragons' fury after being betrayed would be the most dangerous. If they weren't willing to be satisfied after only venting upon Orloss, then it was possible that all of Bardi would be destroyed by the dragons.

Bardi and Orloss wouldn't obtain any benefits from committing such an act that risked their destruction. Instead, their former best allies, the dragons, would become a mortal enemy. The Northlands who were also allied with them would also become a "mortal enemy," at least on the surface. In that case, just what did Orloss want from all this? Was it only to isolate Dragon World and make it into the Titans' hunting grounds so that Bardi could escape from this ticking time bomb? Just how foolish and shortsighted could this be? Orloss would likely become reviled as the most foolish Bardi Emperor in all of history.

"Fool? Heh! Your title fits me so well, Teacher Selis. Perhaps I'll be remembered as the 'Foolish King.'"

"No. While others believe me to be wise, I gave myself the title of 'Fool' because I wanted to remind myself that I'm nothing more than an idiot who thought that he was smart. But you're someone who sees too much of the big picture, too far into the future. That's why fools view you as foolish, but this is the best evidence of your wisdom."

Perhaps, for certain skilled schemers, having a foolish scheme fail for all to see with the end result of the schemer being executed would be nothing more than to conceal an even better hidden scheme.

"A world belonging to mortals? It's a pity I won't be able to see it."

As he muttered to himself, Orloss couldn't help but recall what he had discussed with Roland during their previous meeting.

"Roland, I actually love your saying in the Southern Sect: 'This world belongs to mortals, and those Gods high up above are nothing more than hypocritical maniacs...'"

After Orloss had made his standpoint clear and opened his heart to me, discussion between us became much easier. Even I was astonished at Orloss's true power and final overall goal. I immediately made a blood-sworn oath together with him as ironclad allies.

After a night of secret discussions, Orloss handed over his scheme that he had prepared for over several decades to me. I added modifications to further flesh it out, and in the end it became our 'grand scheme'.

"Grand scheme? As expected of the most skilled schemer in all of Bardi's history. He's truly daring. But if this scheme actually succeeds, he could be called the wisest emperor in all of Bardi's history."

That was the assessment I gave of Orloss at the time. And currently it was unknown if he would later be assessed by history as the wisest ruler in Bardi's history. But Orloss was in the process of ruining his own reputation and heading towards his death. Yet he wasn't hesitant, and he didn't regret it in the least. As he headed towards his impending doom, he had no fear.

"...Everything is for the sake of a world belonging to mortals. Everything is for the sake of creating a true heaven and hell!"

Chapter 436: Coconspirators

"I'm different from everyone else."

If there was one thing that everyone had in common it would be that they'd either faintly or directly feel that they were different from others. That they were special and unique.

Indeed, not a single person would be identical in talent, education and environment. But while differences helped make the world varied and colorful, it wasn't always a good thing.

When people too stubbornly focused only on themselves, they'd be unable to see the truth for what they really were, blind to other people.

"I'm different. I was born above others. Commoners' lives don't have any value compared to mine. They should dedicate their lives to me."

Nobles, royalty and religious leaders would usually think this way to either a minor or great extent. Perhaps thinking this way to a minor extent would help them carry out their responsibilities better, but too much of it and they wouldn't even treat other humans as humans. They would think themselves as forever justified, no matter how villainous their actions.

"I'm blessed by the God of Fate. The next round, I'll absolutely make everything back!"

Gamblers had the same mentality as the ambitious. They would feel as if they could overturn everything in one go, never satisfied with what they currently had. They would continuously take risks and gamble, with the end result either losing everything they owned, including their very life, or winning everything.

Everyone had this type of "self-aware blindness." This was part of human nature, and nothing was right or wrong about it. It could even help humans grow. But as age and experience increased, cruel

reality would wear down this type of "self-aware blindness."

"I... so I'm nothing more than an ordinary person. I'm just one among the crowd, and nothing's special about me."

Ordinary people would learn their limits and give up on the fantasies from their youth. Abilities, talent and status—seemingly coarse concepts—would always determine the limits a person could strive for. But some people just happened to know from the very start what position they were supposed to have and remained unsatisfied with their difficult lives.

As a young child, Orloss Milan was known as "Jinxer" by his own friends and relatives. And not long after he was born Orloss had understood his position and fate—he was nothing but a puppet.

Orloss was the seventeenth child born to the Bardi royalty. This didn't mean that he was unlikely to inherit the throne. In fact, things were the opposite. He had an uncle who was an archduke, so his chances of inheriting the throne were in the top three.

When Orloss was young, his mother took him to meet his uncle, who, when looking at the boy, would show an icy expression, distant and cold. It was nothing like how a first meeting between relatives should go at all. His archduke uncle looked at him as if he were an object, as if he were just a tool to be used. And his uncle's first words in their first meeting were so coarse as to prove his way of thinking. His younger sister's child was only someone to be taken advantage of.

"Remember this well. You'll lead a good life if you obey me. I'm capable of both giving you the throne and taking it away from you."

Orloss was simply a child back then. All he desired was a good family relationship since he barely ever got to see his busy father. He had always heard his mother talking about how great his uncle was, but this was how their first meeting turned out. Naturally, he received quite an impact from this, but he soon adapted.

"...At any rate, he's just treating me as a tool and puppet. That's not different from anyone else, so who cares? As long as I properly act out my part and satisfy everyone, Orloss is a good child."

The ironic part was that Orloss's uncle was overly arrogant and tyrannical, which enraged everyone and caused his uncle to be one of the first to be executed during the fight for the throne. Orloss himself lost out in the vicious fighting between his brothers and laid there dying in the street.

Just as Orloss was on the verge of death, Undead Emperor Aso reached out to him and saved his life. Unfortunately, saving Orloss's life had come at a price. From that moment on, Orloss learned for the first time that his own country had been secretly infiltrated by the undead that had been targeting Bardi for the past several centuries.

And Orloss's reaction was...

"What can I even do? I'll just continue being a puppet. I've simply changed masters."

From a certain standpoint, Orloss was quite open-minded about it all—open-minded to the point where others thought he was a fool. To use his future mage teacher Selis's way of describing him, it was because Orloss saw things far too clearly. Precisely since Orloss saw things far too clearly he knew that he wouldn't be able to change things no matter what he did. Naturally, others saw Orloss as the most wooden and dense emperor in Bardi's history at the beginning of his reign.

"Is there a single person in this world who isn't a disposable chess piece under someone else?"

When Orloss first became emperor, he was called the most wooden emperor in Bardi's history because he didn't do anything on his own. He would do what his retainers told him to do. He would accede to all requests from domain lords that had sufficient factional strength. It was as if Orloss was nothing more than a

rubber stamper who didn't care about politics whatsoever.

But Orloss was quietly observing this world and its residents, observing the chess board and the pieces without them realizing it.

Orloss's favorite hobby was to hide his identity and take vacations in his private house in the capital. He would have fun chatting with his commoner neighbors who didn't know his real identity. Orloss felt that these ordinary people were more "alive" than he was.

"The farmers actually have an easier time in times of disaster. That's because even the severest of tax collectors under a domain lord will still leave enough for the farmers to survive. And also during times of disaster, the Gods' churches' priests will stop coming around to collect their required donations so that the farmers' souls won't fall into the River Styx after death and instead join a Divine Kingdom."

"For ordinary mercenaries and rangers, although the priests' lifesaving healing Divine Arts are 'free,' if they don't donate sufficient money speedily enough, they'll find that the next time they need healing they'll die on the streets right in front of the Holy Church branch without a single priest of Holy Light coming to help them. And instead of the Holy Church's healing, ordinary people find that alchemists and herbalists' potions are the most reliable for their injuries. The most basic potions have very low costs of production and are more than sufficient to heal normal injuries. However, the Holy Church will often turn individuals from these job professions that 'steal business' from them into 'heretical wizards and witches.' For this reason, most herbalists will no longer sell potions to ordinary people as it's both unprofitable and ridiculously dangerous and bad for reputation. Herbalists will only sell buff potions to adventurers and body-strengthening and lifesaving potions to major personages because that's where the money's at."

"In fact, many of my citizens don't even know who the current

emperor is. They're only concerned about if a calamity will suddenly descend upon them, if the nobles' tax collectors will leave enough money for them to live on, and if their secret money stashes will be sufficient to satisfy the priests to give them a blessing so that their souls can enter Divine Kingdoms or be reincarnated into a better life."

Those who held the real authority in Bardi were more than happy to allow the puppet emperor to "relax and have fun" as he pleased without paying attention to politics. But what they didn't realize was that Orloss had obtained plenty of wisdom and knowledge as he lived among the commoners in disguise. In fact, he had even established a faction loyal only to him by recruiting from the poorest districts.

Once Orloss had a sufficient amount of power, he started feeling embarrassed when facing the commoners, who worked so hard to live every day. Since he had managed to obtain the position of emperor, he felt that he should do something for them.

"Perhaps I won't be able to change everything, but I can at least help improve everyone's lives."

And so the puppet emperor chose to make a trade. He didn't only trade with the undead hidden in the shadows; he even traded with the mighty dragons and dragon knights. Of course, what he traded were promises to be even more obedient as a useful puppet. For him, this didn't cost anything. They were only verbal promises.

The secret assistance from the two powerful hidden factions of undead and dragons were very effective. Powerful individuals from these two factions joined his side, concealing their identities, which helped slowly reestablish royal authority. Orloss then obtained a total victory after a bloody battle against his own domain lords and gradually increased royal authority to the point where he now held actual authority as the emperor and the domain lords started to pay him respect—at least on the surface.

But...

"How our days are going, you ask? Isn't everything still the same? Oh, I think I heard that we have a new domain lord now, some handsome young fellow. I even heard that he's the emperor's personal knight. Hmph! He immediately doubled the taxes the moment he became the domain lord. I bet that bastard wants to decorate his new castle. Hey, old man, don't get so angry that you harm your body. Haven't nobles been the same throughout the centuries? It's a pity that none of us were born with such a good life."

The furious Orloss rushed back to his palace after hearing this, wanting to execute whichever domain lord he assumed was faking to be his knight in order to ruin Orloss's own reputation. But he didn't expect that...

"What! That domain lord they're talking about is my knight, Caso? Isn't Caso the knight I trust most?"

Orloss's officials informed him that domain lords were basically complete masters over their domains. What Caso did was completely legal in Bardi, and he could even be considered one of the kind ones. Orloss's other loyal knights that became domain lords to replace the ones he executed raised taxes even more because...

"Apart from the fact that they all need to move in to their new homes, they're accumulating funds to prepare a grand celebration party for your victory. And with their loyalty to you, they'll definitely donate more funds to the royal treasury than their predecessors... What's the matter, Your Majesty?"

"Was all of this my fault? Did I cause all of this?"

Right before he fainted, Orloss wondered if he would have been better as simply a puppet, a puppet who didn't need to do anything.

"I've come back to the starting point and made things even worse for the commoners because I tried to change the world. Perhaps I shouldn't have done anything, after all? Maybe the status quo is for the best? No—no—I can't be depressed over this. There must be a way."

Orloss then tried to declare war on the neighboring countries, using victorious combat loot to appease his greedy new domain lords. However, this only brought about an even more vicious cycle. His greedy domain lords conscripted the commoners as free sacrificial cannon fodder in order to obtain this so-called glory and combat achievements. At this moment, Orloss truly felt that he had made a mistake somewhere.

For the first time ever, he started deeply wondering. Was something wrong with the entire world? Why was it that no matter what he tried to change, everything would always return to the starting point?

Orloss wondered if the wise mages would have an answer, so he used a shadow substitute to act the part of Emperor Orloss while he hid his identity and started studying at the Cloud Tower. He was fortunate enough to meet archmage Selis who was deeply researching the same topic, and became Selis's disciple.

For the first time, Orloss learned that the feudal domain lord society wasn't the only social structure in the world. Elves, dwarves and other species all had their own social structures suitable for them. But in this ridiculous and dangerous world, a feudal domain lord society was the most suitable one for humans.

The strong would protect the weak, while the weak would give everything of theirs to the strong. This would also make the weak desire to become strong, helping give birth to countless strong individuals.

Only here did Orloss learn that commoners in the powerful Bardi Empire already led excellent lives compared to commoners in

other countries. In remote mountainous districts that faced powerful enemies, domain lords there would demand even more from their citizens. And the commoners who wanted to survive could only tolerate it.

"So it wasn't us that chose this societal system. It was the world itself that chose it for us."

This wasn't a problem that could be easily dealt with, but Orloss just happened to find a way... That's right—it was how he centralized all authority on himself and forced all powerful individuals to register with and belong to Bardi. At the very least, after many years, he succeeded in establishing his way of thinking in the Bardi Empire.

Without regards to whether he was right or wrong, since this could only be proved with time, the end result of Orloss's studies in the Cloud Tower was that his frustrations increased instead of decreasing. He learned the truth from the mages, the dragons and the undead even though he found it impossible to accept.

"The Holy War? The Cycle of Reincarnation? Is this a joke!? What are we humans supposed to be? Wheat waiting to be harvested? Cows and sheep waiting to be butchered?"

From that moment onward, Orloss abandoned his belief in the Gods as well as any possibility that he would ascend to heaven. He secretly began to resent the Gods that were high up above but never did anything.

"You dare say you protect the people of the world? You claim your priests are the servants of the people? But I've only ever seen your priests demand donations. Your churches are so glorious, yet your 'servants' never work hard and only mutter your names on a daily basis, talking about how good you are. Since they are your servants, then why don't you financially support these pigs? Do you know that old John worked hard for his entire life and even donated the final residence in his name, just for the sake of having

his son receive a blessing from your priest to live the next two years without any illnesses or disaster and so that he can ascend to your so-called heaven after death!?"

"A beautiful divine kingdom in heaven? I've never seen such a thing; I can only see this hell before me! Since none of you Gods are capable of protecting the people of the world as you promised, then stop acting like overreaching parents and interfering with us. We have nothing to do with you. Or perhaps you're all nothing more than a group of scammers who only make empty promises. Or you're nothing more than shameless parasites that even leave the scamming to your so-called servants!"

Currently, all the highest-ranked individuals in the royal capital had nervously assembled in front of a tremendous door. They were all suddenly notified that this location was the Bardi Empire's secret ace of aces, a Dimensional Door leading to a world of dragons. The old emperor had summoned all of them here, saying that he had some important announcements to make.

After a long period of time, the old emperor arrived, and the moment he did he glanced over at the extravagantly-attired crowd under his podium and chuckled.

From a certain standpoint, the people of Bardi now led much better lives than before his rule. This wasn't because of the Gods high above. This was because of everything their puppet emperor fought for them, one tiny part at a time, by struggling to manipulate so many factions.

Orloss had used ten years to calm down this chaotic country. He had forced the domain lords to dismiss a large majority of their private armies and finally stopped all internal warring.

Orloss had used almost thirty years, with the assistance of the undead and the dragons, to expunge all Holy Church and other Gods' churches factions from Bardi.

Orloss had secretly helped the teachings of the Pure Holy Light

spread even though he knew this would anger the undead.

Indeed, while undead mages were able to control their undead creations, Aso's half-living curse (or blessing, depending on how you looked at it) made it so that Orloss was technically half-living and half-undead rather than fully undead. This meant that Orloss wouldn't be exposed. Although Aso would be able to kill Orloss at any time he wanted by canceling the spell, Aso wouldn't be able to control Orloss's actions or thoughts. This was also because Orloss had gained the support of a super powerful archmage that even Aso wouldn't have confidence dealing with—Selis.

The undead acted secretly in the shadows as they had terrible reputations that made them unable to act in public. This helped limit their overall influence on the Bardi Empire. Meanwhile, the dragons remained lofty and arrogant and were too lazy to do anything that wasn't directly related to their personal benefits.

In order to escape from the threat of Aso, who was able to end his life at any moment, the half-living Orloss had even secretly put on the cursed God Equipment—the Crown of Thorns.

The Crown of Thorns was a truly powerful God Equipment. It forcefully transformed the half-living Orloss back into a completely living person. But unfortunately this still technically living person lost his senses of smell, taste and pain because of it.

From then onwards, the emperor dined on the most delicious of foods but was unable to taste a single thing. He lived in the most extravagant of palaces but was unable to feel any comfort. No matter how beautiful his clothing, he was unable to feel any warmth or coldness. However, the Crown of Thorns also provided him with a limitless amount of energy which he put to use at improving his country.

From a certain standpoint, Roland forcing Aso to commit suicide was a tremendous help to Orloss. But even without Roland's appearance it would have only been a matter of time before Orloss

and Aso's relationship fell apart. And judging by what happened in the game's history, Aso didn't even "win" in the end due to getting stuck facing the Titans afterward.

As a "mortal" who understood his own limits, Orloss's greatest talents were patience, adaptability and playing everyone against each other. He was like this in the game's history, and he was like this today as well.

But unfortunately ideals couldn't be eaten. Some things still appeared impossible to change.

For instance, despite the fact that Emperor Orloss wasn't dead, the domain lords were already trying to take action. They desired war to expand their territory. They refused to accept Orloss's proposals of Bardi citizens' free movement between domains and outlawing the use of slavery. The domain lords were still local emperors in their respective domains.

Even if the Gods' churches were no longer allowed in Bardi, their believers would still travel thousands of kilometers to other countries in search of priests and scammers pretending to be priests. Such believers still exchanged their lifetime's worth of savings from hard work all for a single sentence of "Child, the Gods shall bless you."

By now, Orloss found it impossible to receive an answer from anyone, until a new religion and a booklet from the Underground attracted his attention.

"They're not going to establish any churches? They don't solicit any donations? Then how are this church's priests and divine warriors supposed to survive? Accept intermediary fees as judges? Provide business services? They don't even need to incant the name of their God? Is this really a True God's church?"

The Church of Law attracted his attention, but its teachings and divine laws allowed Orloss to see hope for the first time.

"Those who intentionally take the life of others shall be severely judged by the God of Law. Even after death, those convicted of such a crime will suffer under a constant mountain of knives and in a sea of flames. [Thirteenth Divine Law of the Church of Law.]"

"So there's finally someone who intends to do something..."

That was Orloss's first impression. But immediately afterwards he felt that something was off.

"Wait a moment! If a criminal is going to be judged and suffer even after death, won't that be going against the teachings of the Gods' churches? It's clearly possible to enter a True God's Divine Kingdom after death as long as you donate enough money and receive blessing from a priest."

Obviously, Wumianzhe's teachings far exceeded the power that he had back then as just a Weak God. In that case, he was either an insane God who didn't care about the potential consequences of claiming something so crazy or he had other intentions.

"Have all criminals enter Hell and receive the punishment they deserve? Although this can indeed strike fear into the hearts of villains, the Church of Law's teachings will basically antagonize every other True God out there. Just what is Wumianzhe's goal?"

Then, Orloss learned that the Church of Law was connected to the legendary Prince Roland. Orloss also obtained Roland's personal notes and drafts from the Church of Pure Holy Light. After Orloss finally met and talked to Roland, he decided to participate in Roland's insane plan.

"The heavens and earth are unjust. Fate is blind. The Gods only care about collecting souls and faith. They care nothing about mortals' lives. Villains and criminals can simply spend some money and praise some God and obtain what the poor can't obtain in their entire lifetimes. What need is there to worship such Gods? We mortals can only rely on ourselves..."

As Orloss shakily stood on the platform with the Dragon World Dimensional Door wide open behind him, he couldn't help but recall his discussion with Roland as he looked down at the crowd before him.

"Roland, I actually love your saying in the Southern Sect: 'This world belongs to mortals, and those Gods high up above are nothing more than hypocritical maniacs. People worship them, yet the Gods are bound by their own Divine Concepts. The natural laws of Order have bound them into becoming nothing more than slaves. That's why I'll never rely on them.'"

The old emperor paused for a moment here. He had read Roland's notes far too many times already and had long memorized this quote. What Orloss looked forward to was the aftermath—Roland's choice and way of thinking after so many years.

When I first met and discussed with Orloss, I had smiled from the bottom of my heart. I could faintly see my own image in this old emperor. People who were alike would always have the easiest time communicating.

And so I directly said what I truly thought:

"We mortals can only count on ourselves. Since in this world innate kindness and morality do not exist, let us create divine and human laws for an equal society. Since in this world villains and criminals don't receive judgement and punishment, let us create a Hell that even the most evil of individuals will fear."

"Even if this will make you into the enemy of all the Gods? Even if this will turn you into the number one enemy of the entire world?"

"Indeed, but we won't be the number one enemy of the entire world. At the very least, aren't you going to become my companion?"

"No. Since we're scheming to overturn the entire societal

structure of the world and commit a crime against the Gods, we should call ourselves coconspirators."

After Orloss chatted some with his Aunt Lilith, he understood Roland's stubbornness even more.

"Au—Sister Lilith, tell me, if we achieve our goal, creating a new Cycle of Reincarnation to replace the old one where criminals will be tortured in Hell and good people will be able to live in a beautiful heaven and truly experience a better life after death, will we be able to directly ascend to heaven as the creators of all this?"

But the surprising answer was that Lilith shook her head.

"No. Roland has already said that he has long since prepared a spot for himself in his Hell. He even remembered to save another spot for his pet cat. With his personality, and considering your actions, it's quite likely that you'll be neighbors in Hell together for a long time to come."

"Hahahahaha! That's truly an excellent piece of news—truly delightful to hear!"

Orloss still remembered how he had uproariously laughed after hearing this. He hadn't been this happy in so many decades. Perhaps this was because it was the first time he'd ever heard that a villain who'd committed countless heinous deeds would actually go down to Hell and be punished, even if this villain was himself.

"Coconspirators? Perhaps we'll be jailmates in the future."

After Orloss finished poking fun at himself, he knew that his time had come.

"Perhaps, from tomorrow onwards, people will think that I'm the most foolish person in the world. Still, it's not like there aren't people who won't know who I really am... Hehehe! Dear coconspirators, this old man shall leave first. I'll be waiting for all of you in Hell."

And finally, when he lightly removed the Crown of Thorns from

his head, the entire world was destined to change.

Chapter 437: Grand Scheme

Everything started from a conversation on the River Styx. At the time, Ayer was rowing a boat while having a seemingly casual conversation with Roland. What they were speaking about, however, was a massive scheme that involved the entire world (Chapter 66).

"By the way, Roland, didn't you mention Hell and the netherworld? And how demons resided within these places in your world? Do you know that there's also a Hell in our world? It's just that devils live there, instead. I talked about your plan with Little Tias. If you're truly capable of creating your vision of Hell and the netherworld, he's willing to give all of Hell over to you and even make the devils learn how to become Hell's prison guards."

"Okay, that's fine. However, the ruler of Hell and the highest judge must be the absolutely fair and just Wumianzhe. And just what exactly do the devils plan to obtain from participating in this scheme? Just tell me directly. Else I can't be reassured about trusting them."

"Freedom. Not freedom like what they appear to have now, but true freedom. You know that any existence that becomes a high-level devil will return to Hell even if they die in any other plane, the only consequence that they lose some power. And if they die in a lower plane, then that will be a true death."

"So they wish to break free from the Cycle of Reincarnation?"

"Yes. At first, my people joined the Chaos Goddess's side in order to not participate in that so-called Holy War. But now the result is that in every so-called Holy War the devils are nothing more than cannon fodder. And the oldest Devil Lords have long since gotten tired of the devils' wicked lives of endless deceit and warring. They wish to be truly free, but not at the cost of death. Yet the River Styx's Cycle of Reincarnation is open to all species except high-

level devils and demons. That's because they're the main fighters of the Holy War."

"How many agree to this? This isn't something that the devils would all agree to as an entire species. How many of the nine Devil Lords agree to this plan?"

"Including Little Tias, four. They're the four Devil Lords that transformed from fallen humans of the first generation. Of course, it's not that the other five Devil Lords don't agree. I didn't even tell them about our plan, nor do I intend to tell them.

And now the promise from back in the day had transformed into reality. For the sake of obtaining true freedom for the devils, the Lord of Lies, Lord of Despair, Lord of Rebellion and Lord of Temptations decided to betray the entire Chaos Faction. Countless devils under their command walked out of the Hell's Abyss and into Dragon World.

Since we were breaking the Cycle of Reincarnation, the Ayer Faction would be making an irreversible break from the Order Faction. We could only count on ourselves from now on. None of us would be able to turn back ...

"Turn back? Do you want to happily wait for Armageddon to befall you? At least now there's a slight sliver of hope."

From a certain standpoint, our strange alliance seemed far more like the antagonists when compared to the high and mighty God of Holy Light and the Order True Gods. We had the famous tyrant Emperor Orloss, the evil Devil Lords, an undead army led by an Undead Emperor who almost destroyed the world and the ancient Death God that gave the other Gods headaches. There wasn't a single ordinary antagonist among us. We would be at the level of a demon king in stories.

But perhaps only true villains were able to understand each other. It could be said that little hoodlums were those who couldn't resist temptations or had naturally evil personalities, but it would

be incredibly out of the ordinary for people like us to not have some legendary story or amazing grudge. To use a rather chuunibyou phrase: "It's all the world's fault." And it mostly probably was.

"Little Roland, as according to the will of 'that existence,' from now on we shall listen to your commands. Please rest assured in using us as your tools. As long as you can grant our species' wish, we shall venerate you as—"

The moment the Lord of Lies appeared I pretty much knew what he was going to say, but I had interrupted him as I didn't want Sam to learn anything unnecessary. Kamiltias was reconfirming the contract that Ayer and I had with him. As long as my version of Hell was successfully constructed, they would become the devil prison guards of Hell. This would help them escape from the Cycle of Reincarnation and the Holy War in exchange for their service to the new Hell.

Wars had broken out all over the mortal plane. Once the Source of Order and the Source of Chaos truly began the Holy War, it would be impossible for anyone to prevent the large number of deaths and souls entering the Cycle of Reincarnation. However, it would be possible to have these souls enter a different Cycle of Reincarnation.

"This is the only method left. There's no other Cycle of Reincarnation? Fine, we'll create one ourselves."

When we were stuck thinking for solutions, that was the answer we had forcefully come up with.

There was no more need to hide my "grand scheme." The "grand scheme" was to use the collapsing Dragon World plane as raw material to create a Hell for mortals while it was completely cut off from the mortal plane. This would break the River Styx and Heaven's Pillar's monopoly over the Cycle of Reincarnation!

Only after creating a new Cycle of Reincarnation would it be

possible to stop the Cycle of Reincarnation, River Styx and Heaven's Pillar that all led to Armageddon! Only then would all the sacrifices no longer be meaningless; only then would the damned Holy War be stoppable.

"We've finally reached this step. It's taken so long. I never expected to be able to achieve the necessary conditions."

Every single objective in my thick notebook was now checked off. But if I wrote down everything that me and my companions had done, not even ten more notebooks would be enough.

This scheme had taken a scarily long amount of time to come to fruition. I had started thinking of it back when I was Emperor Yongye. In fact, this scheme was how I had convinced Ayer not to kill me. And only once Wumianzhe ascended to Godhood and I resurrected did this plan finally become achievable. The scheme that Ayer and I agreed upon in that rowboat on the River Styx had started for real.

As long as we managed to foundationally eliminate this greatest hidden threat leading to the upcoming inevitable Armageddon, all we would have to face was the Holy War itself. Perhaps that would still be difficult, but at least whether everyone survived or not would depend on the mortals' own efforts and abilities rather than a predestined Armageddon with universal doom.

"I can't promise that this solution is workable. But at the very least it's no longer a one hundred percent chance of everyone dying in the end."

This was already plenty for us, as we had no more time left and no other paths to take.

Estrada had sacrificed himself in order to save the lives of two million innocent Bardi citizens. However, the moment the demons of the Chaos Faction arrived they sacrificed almost 170,000 humans to their blood sacrifice, and this was only the beginning.

It could be easily predicted that the entire mortal plane would face various challenges from all directions, and similar incidents would occur endlessly. To be quite honest, it would be impossible for me to deal with them all. No, let me correct myself—even if all of us worked only on this, it would be impossible to fill in every hole in this sinking ship.

"Who knows which random domain lord will be the next to fall under the control of some Chaos Evil God and open the castle gates, perform a blood sacrifice and summon a demon army? Who knows when some Dimensional Door will suddenly appear in some country's capital? Defending against unexpected and random attacks is far more difficult for us than being on the attacking side. A single misstep might cause an avalanche. No matter how we calculate things, we're still the losers in the end. The situation is even worse than in the game's history."

Indeed. While there were many improvements in the overall situation compared to the game's history, there was one missing part that was impossible for me to match—the game's players.

That's right. Don't underestimate the players. Although they all started off as the weakest beginners, there was the fact that they wouldn't permanently die and had cheat-like leveling rates with zero problems as they progressed in power level. They had ridiculous growth rates and natural talent abilities that could make any game player into the main character of any legend. That was why the players would be able to continue facing ever stronger opponents as the Elemental Tide increased. Yet even the endless amount of "undying main characters" were unable to change the pitiful ending created by the game developers.

The reason? There was an unsolvable conundrum from the very start. Once the fires of hatred stoked the bloodthirsty chains of revenge, the entire world would be wreathed in flames, as slaughter could only lead to more slaughter... Fine, I'll stop being abstruse. It was basically that the more enemies the game players

killed, the more souls the Cycle of Reincarnation would receive. Then, the Goddesses of Chaos and Order would awaken, and the game would end there.

"It's impossible to stop the Cycle of Reincarnation. No matter what we do or who we kill, the Cycle of Reincarnation will still gorge itself on the killed souls and revive the Goddesses of Chaos and Orders, bringing about the inevitable Armageddon. Nothing will be changed, unless we can create a new place for dead souls to go to."

This was what Ayer and I truly believed. And we couldn't act too slowly on this. It would be far too late if the Holy War entered its middle or late stages. The best time to take action would be right after the Holy War began. Too many conflicts would make it difficult for others, either mortal or Gods, to focus their attention on us. The God of Fate who was part of our faction would also intentionally cause all prophecy magic to no longer work. This would be the best time to secretly carry out our plan.

That's right. Everything about everything was all in order to create an opportune time to begin our scheme, which was right now, less than half a year after the Holy War had formally begun.

Obviously, doing something like creating Hell and our own Cycle of Reincarnation right in front of the Chaos and Order Factions would be tantamount to suicide. It would be absolutely impossible for us to resist if the Order and Chaos Main Gods directly descended to eliminate us.

My original secret plan with Ayer was to create our Hell out of the Hell's Abyss that the devils resided in. But now I had found the collapsing Dragon World in the Bardi Empire. As long as we cut off all the connections Dragon World had to the mortal plane, which were few to begin with, it would turn into just one of the many distant dimensions. Before Dragon World completely collapsed, we would at least have a period of time in which nobody would be able to trace us or interfere with our actions. In that case, we could use

this period of time to create a new Cycle of Reincarnation!

It would be utterly impossible for me to carry out a scheme of this scale with only my personal abilities. I had already gathered everything I had written down in my notebook that was necessary to create a new Cycle of Reincarnation. And now it was time to activate the grand scheme.

The twin emerald ring on my finger had lost its luster. Its shattered remnants were blown away as dust in the wind.

To make it so that nobody found out about our scheme—at least so that no existences interfered before the connections to Dragon Plane were completely severed—we needed an excuse to explain why Dragon Plane suddenly had all its Dimensional Doors destroyed.

This reason needed to be passable to both the Chaos and Order Factions. They needed to at least not immediately see through it, otherwise they would immediately start an insane slaughter against us. This excuse needed to stall them long enough so that they didn't care if all the Dimensional Doors to Dragon World were destroyed and that this plane was cut off from the mortal plane. Someone needed to play the role of the clown to attract attention.

"Orloss..."

That's right, the tyrant Orloss, the sly fox Orloss, the foolish emperor Orloss, and... the scapegoat Orloss.

Orloss foolishly decided to betray the dragons and angrily curse the Gods in front of everyone in order to eliminate the threat of the Titans and show off how humans didn't need other species' assistance in order to win the Holy War. Despite his subordinates' pleading, he would destroy all the Dimensional Doors to Dragon World, cutting it off from the mortal plane... This was the scheme that he had come up with, along with the excuse we would give the world.

After that, either the Gods' retribution or the furious dragons' breath would immediately come to kill him... No, according to our original plan, Orloss would use the immortality bestowed upon him by the Crown of Thorns to stall for even more time while continuing to make wild declarations. This was so that even more anger would be vented upon him, without affecting anyone else.

His previous reputation of being wise would certainly turn into that of the most foolish ruler in Bardi's history. His own people would view him as Bardi's greatest shame. Although he sacrificed everything to protect his country, his citizens would curse him, insult him and revile him. However, Orloss had long seen through everything and still resolutely chose this path because this was the path with the highest probability of success.

"...We humans—no—all of us intelligent species aren't crops that the Gods can raise and harvest! We work so hard living our own lives! Our memories and lives belong to us! Our existences aren't for the sake of providing the Gods with nutrition! Don't allow these hypocritical Gods to control our fates for any longer! Don't let our children be unable to see any hope in the future! Promise me that, Roland! Promise me!"

The memory of Orloss's raspy voice echoed in my mind. But I knew that it would be impossible to ever meet him again. Since he had used the Crown of Thorns, his very soul was destined to be destroyed.

"I promise you, coconspirator. From today onwards, the mortal plane shall truly belong to the mortals. Perhaps we'll still end up meeting death in the Armageddon, but nobody will ever be allowed to toy with our lives."

Chapter 438: Starting Point

As the dragons circled in the skies above us, the very land trembled and howling gales whirled about. All of Dragon World's connections to the mortal plane had just been severed.

However, I didn't pay too much attention to the dragons in the sky. That was because the dragons were nothing more than a small problem compared to the enemies and troubles we were going to face in the future.

"Small problem? Of course they're only a small problem. If we antagonized the dragons yesterday, perhaps they'd be a mega problem, with all of us directly being killed or chased out by the dragons. But today the situation is different."

Kamiltias, the leader of the nine Devil Lords, was one of the strongest existences of the Chaos Faction. He was on par with any Main God, and he had now descended in Dragon World with his true body, the body he hadn't used in the past tens of thousands of years.

With a friendly smile, he acted like a polite middle-aged gentleman as he placed his right hand on his hat and greeted the dragons in the sky while waving with his left. However, not a single dragon dared to land on the ground.

Out of the nine Devil Lords, three of them had power levels equivalent to that of Main Gods. And two of the four Devil Lords on our side were Main God-level existences. Although the other one, the Lord of Despair, was currently elsewhere on another task, just the Lord of Lies alone was more than enough to stifle the dragons.

The Order Faction had a total of seven Main God-level existences, which included someone as unreliable as Ayer, a "neutral" faction God. Meanwhile, the Chaos Faction had a grand total of thirteen Main God level existences... well, if you added Karwenz, then that

number was fourteen.

That's right. What everyone saw was that the Devil King before them was an equal-level existence to Death God Ayer. This also meant that he was incomprehensibly strong, just like the God of Holy Light, the Demon Prince and Elf Main God Anslo. Since some dragons recognized the Devil Lord before them for who he really was, they naturally didn't dare to come down.

Any Main God-level existence would be capable of changing dimensional rules and natural laws with their will alone. It would be impossible to calculate just how truly strong such an existence was. While it was probable that the dragons also had existences capable of rivaling Main Gods in their species, I doubted that they had any here in Dragon World. Otherwise, they would have long come out to deal with the Titans.

The Dimensional Door leading to Hell's Abyss hadn't yet been closed. Countless devils continuously walked out of the portal. Some were tall and stocky, while others appeared short and skinny. Each individual devil had obviously different physical characteristics, something incomprehensible as devils were a species with standardized power levels and species.

Devils would all evolve through fixed stages, from Tiny Devil to Warrior Inferno Devil and all the way to Devil Thane. Their power levels were just like the progression of job classes. This was their most obvious difference from the demons, which evolved in chaotic fashions.

But it was easy to understand why this was if you thought about their background.

"The People of Tall Mountain?"

In ancient history books, the People of Tall Mountain was the first ever human tribe in existence. Their average height was more than two meters, and they were all muscular and highly skilled at fighting. In that ancient ice aeon generation, they were capable of

hunting down powerful immemorial magic beasts while wearing nothing but light beastskin furs.

Current barbarian tribes loved to claim that they were the descendants of the People of Tall Mountain. But to my knowledge that was nothing more than unsubstantiated boasting. Apart from the People of Tall Mountain who became fallen and transformed into devils, every other human from the first generation had gone extinct, killed off by the Gods' retribution and judgment. The Order Faction would never be kind to traitors.

All these strange and unique-looking devils before me had to be more members of the very first generation of humans from the immemorial generation. That was the only possibility that could explain why these devils didn't adhere to the devils' typical physical, species and abilities. These devils had existed prior to the establishment of the devils' system of evolution.

And everyone knew that anything with the tag of immemorial, great immemorial and so on would become ridiculous no matter what it was. This uncountable number of devils were all immemorial devils that had experienced innumerable Holy Wars. Just calculating it slightly felt truly fearsome. The fact that the Devil Lords were able to preserve so many immemorial devils throughout so many Holy Wars was some of the best evidence that Devil Lords never truly fought with their full strength, that they were selfish and wanted to preserve as much power as possible. No wonder the Chaos Abyss favored demons. The bloodthirsty and violent demons made for excellent cannon fodder that would easily attack any target; even the slightest spark would set them off.

Of course, taking such a great risk in summoning the devils to this plane was because of my promise to Ayer, and even more because we indeed needed more combat strength right now.

No schemes in the world could be kept secret forever. The True Gods and Main Gods were no idiots. They would soon notice that something was wrong with the situation and take action. I

predicted that it was quite possible for the Gods to attack us before Dragon World managed to completely become severed off from the mortal plane. If the Gods attacked us, these immemorial devils would act in their first battle as the defenders of the new Hell.

Currently, these ancient devils didn't show any signs of slacking off or excitement as they trod upon these wide plains which resembled the environment of ancient times. Most of the devils were fully equipped with weapons, but the ones that appeared unarmed were actually more dangerous. After they arrived, they looked all around them with tense expressions, appearing somewhat doubtful of their surroundings. They then glanced vigilantly at the dragons in the sky but didn't attack.

"You understand how it is. One more person knowing means an increased chance of the plan leaking. The only orders that my devils have received is that we're going to attack a unique plane, but not a single devil will be allowed to attack on their own until I give the command."

I nodded when I heard this. I suddenly felt like the Lord of Lies was somewhat easier to approach now because we were indeed the same type of person.

"Of course I understand. I'm the same..."

That's right. Out of all my subordinates and allies, the only one who knew the entirety of my plan was Harloys, who, as my magical pet, had a soul connection with me—it was impossible to hide anything from her. I only told Estrada and Orloss a tiny portion in the letters I sent to them, and even if they died they wouldn't leak anything important. In fact, I was even worried that Elisa would leak something to the Chaos Abyss, which was why I told her absolutely nothing. If it wasn't for her demanding to have something to do, I would have just left her in the Chaos Abyss—oh, I think I understand why she was so angry with me.

Cough, getting back on topic, I made so many preparations while

I was in the Northlands so that Reyne and Glina would be capable of acting independently without me. I also gave both of them plenty of powerful backup support and improved the situation in the Northlands for them the best I could while also forming the Mist Alliance. This was all so that they would be able to deal with the ever more severe situation even without my presence.

Although I was now in a remote dimension, it was impossible to know what would happen in the future. If news about what I planned here leaked somehow, it was highly likely that existences would take revenge upon the Northlands.

If my grand scheme succeeded, it would take at least several years before I would be able to return to the mortal plane. By then, the Holy War would be at its peak. The two Northlands Queens absolutely had to be capable of handling things by themselves. And if my grand scheme failed, Reyne and Glina would bear an even heavier burden.

This was why I had made so many preparations regarding the Northlands. That was our base. Even if my grand scheme succeeded, I couldn't allow anything to happen to the Northlands.

"Reyne and Glina will probably be angry if they learn about what I planned."

"Glina will be alright. The way you tried to stuff her with as much information as possible near the end of the time you spent with her was almost as if you were preparing for your own death. She definitely has her guesses at what might be happening. As for Reyne? She'll be angry. From start to finish, she probably didn't have a clue what her 'Brother Roland' was scheming."

That's right. I didn't mention a single word of my scheme to the Northlands Queens. I at least hinted somewhat to Glina, telling her "Everything will be up to the two of you. Reyne is too rash, so please watch over her." As for Reyne, I was afraid to tell her even a single word, afraid that Karwenz would be able to guess something

from my words. My younger brother's wild instincts were quite headache-inducing for me sometimes, after all.

"I suppose I am indeed being terrible to Reyne with this."

Thinking back on things now, I had always considered the fact that Karwenz was watching through Reyne. I intentionally kept her away from any secret or important matters and even occasionally lied to her on purpose to mislead Karwenz. Luckily, I was dealing with the oblivious Reyne. If she was someone as perceptive as Elisa, I would probably end up with an endless amount of trouble.

"...I feel like her glare on my back has become even icier. I forgot that she also has incredible instincts, especially regarding whenever I'm talking bad about her."

"Be a little more serious here—a fight is about to start."

"Ha! I already said that the dragons are only a small problem. There won't be a fight... at least for the time being."

The dragons were no fools. The devil army on the ground had astonishing combat potential, and the devils' leader was a Main God-level existence. Not only that, their magical contract with me regarding my permission to summon reinforcements here was glowing. While they discovered that I had scammed them, they still held some hope that perhaps I had only scammed them about who I intended to summon and that these reinforcements were still useable.

And so at least until they confirmed that there were unnegotiable clashes of personal benefits, they wouldn't be starting a fight.

"Finally... the winds have changed."

I felt like exclaiming at the situation. When I first arrived in Dragon World, the dragons had treated me as an unnecessary existence. And frankly, for quite a long period of time, the dragons had always treated us as unimportant outsiders.

Originally, only the dragons and Titans were "fighting" over this world. The dragons treated us as some minor outside assistance that wasn't really necessary. Looking at Dragon City's standpoint, there was really nothing wrong with that as this was a world where power meant everything. But for our final goal this was something that couldn't be because, from the very start, our goal had been this world.

It would be difficult for me to explain the entirety of my plan. But in a way, when I had first thought of my grand scheme, I only had a simple outline. After I brought in my first goal, I had to take everything step by step with all the industrial requirements and design plans necessary to achieve it. However, one thing was absolutely necessary—foundational materials.

"Creating everything from scratch and modifying something that exists already are completely different. The first is far more difficult than the second. Dragon World is a place we absolutely must obtain. Since its very structure is unstable, Dragon World will become the best source of dimensional shards, creating the foundational materials necessary to create our version of Hell."

This currently collapsing world would make for the best foundational material and blueprint out of which we could create our Hell. And our next goal was to use this world as the foundational material to slowly realize each step of our plan to create a brand-new world.

Here, I probably need to explain from the beginning and discuss the foundational method to create a world.

Back in my original world, eastern Buddhist philosophers believed that the four major elements of earth, water, fire and wind were the four basic elements all living creatures and nonliving things were constructed out of. The astonishing part was that in western civilization's ancient Greece, another of humanity's earliest civilizations, which had no connections to the east at the time, also believed in the four elements of earth, water, fire and

wind.

There were indeed reasons for this astonishing similarity. These civilizations used the ancient philosophy of idealism to observe the world and arrive at such a result. The ancients of my previous world attempted to categorize existence and find each creature or thing's foundational nature and infer its basic element as a way of understanding the nature of the world.

Although observing by the philosophy of idealism had now been proved to be low-effectiveness and wrong in my original world, the philosophy of idealism just happened to work here in Eich. In this world, magic, which wasn't scientific even in the slightest, existed. Willpower and souls were both forms of concrete strength. Stubborn ways of thinking were even capable of creating Soul Worlds, another utterly unscientific concept.

The day I became a Legend, my System had given me "free knowledge," and it was the nutrition I needed most. It was more precious than any treasure. I couldn't even comprehend just where my System had obtained this knowledge.

"Experience regarding the foundational workings of how to create a world? The very first version of the Seal of the First Elements? Everything returning to... the starting point?"

Chapter 439: Goddesses of Order and Chaos

"There are no coincidences in the world. There is only the definite."

"...I feel like you're making a subtle dig at something. Why are you saying this?"

"...What I mean is that if you think that you're being favored by the God of Fate and everything you're doing is going perfectly, with so many coincidences occurring that went well for you, then you should probably take a closer look to see if you've already fallen deep into a trap. And usually it's too late to escape from the trap when you do."

"Isn't this just paranoia!? You have a serious case of paranoia because you constantly keep scheming! Don't get your nerves so tense like that. Otherwise, you'll go insane one day sooner or later."

Alright. Without commenting on the silly cat's comments, I suppose I could admit that I was indeed rather paranoid. I figured I should at least be a little more self-aware after suffering so many times. But when I saw the original version of the Seal of the Four Elements... or perhaps I should call it the four elements creating the world, I felt like something was wrong with the style.

"The four elements? So they were so simple, after all?"

My System stuffed a bunch of memories into me, a record of Creator Goddess Eich creating her world named after her.

At first, all and everything was a void. There was no color, no space and no time until a powerful existence lit up everything with the first light of the world.

Who was this existence? Why was it so powerful? Why did it exist? The answers to these questions were perhaps impossible to know. At the beginning of this existence's memories, it began

changing the surrounding environment because it was far too lonely.

That's right. This existence was only an it at the time. It didn't have the concept of a physical body. It didn't even have its own self-awareness. Perhaps it didn't even realize at this time that it would in the future become the Creator Goddess, Eich.

Perhaps this was all a coincidence, or it was all fated. Some mysterious powers out there guided this existence to choose the Four Elemental Planes as the foundational building blocks for her new world.

That's right, the real story of creation wasn't like what was told in the myths and legends here. The existence didn't intentionally choose the Four Elemental Planes. It simply felt that these Four Elemental Planes could be used to create a world, so it used them.

The first was the Earth Elemental Plane, the foundation for everything, and the most basic unit of existence. Earth itself had no concept of good or evil. It was a simple representation of existence or nonexistence.

Earth was the land... and also represented the Concept of Space!

The wind element was present everywhere. High-speed winds whipped about everywhere, connecting to the land. Wind represented air, the sky and was the concept that complemented and opposed earth... Time!

Just as the Supreme Immemorial White Dragon Sam said, the highest-level Concepts of Order were Space and Time. And creating a world would absolutely require the Concept of Time, which represented "the birth and death of all things," along with the Concept of Space, which represented the "the location of the birth and death of all things."

If the world was displayed on a graph, Time would be the X-axis and Space would be the Y-axis. Every single existence was

absolutely required to have a coordinate on both axes. Else it would be nonexistent, for without space and time how would one define existence?

It could be said that Time and Space were both the ultimate Concepts of Order as well as the most basic Concepts of Order. Everything would be nothing but the void without Time and Space.

After Time and Space were created, this void now had land and the sky. Only the wisest who sought the foundational reasons behind everything would be able to understand the faint connections between everything here.

Dimensional teleportation spells, which broke the natural laws of Space, would typically be connected to the earth element. Dimensional coordinates were the foundation of everything. Natural laws regarding Space could still be broken by mortals via space magic spells, yet time magic remained the most taboo of all magics. The fact that time magic was actually the highest-level form of wind magic was more than enough to prove certain things.

Eich created the world and used wind and earth to create the original form of Order. From then onwards, wind and earth possessed their own magic power. The ironic part was that just as the sky and the land would forever face each other without being able to make contact, the wind and earth elements naturally became each other's mortal enemies. But just this alone was far too insufficient to create the world of Eich.

Then, this newly-born world became connected to the Water Elemental Plane under Eich's gaze.

Water was the mother of all creatures. Ordinary lifeforms typically consisted of more than seventy percent water. Blood, the representative liquid of life, was as high as ninety percent water. And in the world of Eich, water's connection to life was expressed even more directly. Water magic was the only branch of magic

other than Holy Light or nature magic capable of healing and cleansing lifeforms.

In the world that Eich created, water was the representation of life, as well as the foundational element that all lifeforms' physical bodies were constructed out of.

The final element was Fire, the never-ending flame that represented evolution and the source of the soul. Fire was intricately connected to water yet also opposed it with mortal enmity. In ancient Greece's view of the four elements, all creatures were born and forever changed because of fire.

The proof of this was even simpler. Fire represented a state of being. The visible soulfire in undead skeletons' eyes could be seen by the naked eye. Their endlessly evolving spirits were connected to their physical bodies. Only with the two together would there be the possibility of evolution. And "Evolution" was the main Concept of Chaos.

The two elements of Order created the foundation of the world, while the two elements of Chaos created the foundation of all lifeforms. Everything was then allowed to naturally evolve. This was the so-called method by which the four elements created the world.

And the connection between the elements wasn't a forced one. Eich had given this connection to the elements. As long as one met the four requirements of "Time," "Space," "Life" and "Soul" one could achieve the creation of a world.

Since Eich's creation of the world was recorded in all historical records, the four elements themselves gained special meanings in the world of Eich. That was how the world's strongest magic seal, the "Seal of the Four Elements," came about. And through that, it would be possible to use the four elements to create a world to seal the Titans in.

"...It's impossible for an ordinary lifeform or True God to achieve

such high skill in controlling all four elements. There are only three possible candidates for who could have sealed the Titans away: Creator Goddess Eich, Goddess of Chaos Cynthia and Goddess of Order Astrya."

But now someone had broken the record of the Creator Goddess's unique accomplishment, achieving the originally impossible deed of creating a world.

Yep, I was talking about myself. When I had been forced to the extreme brink in the Earth Elemental Plane, my "Frigidwinter Earth" had been born. In a way, Frigidwinter Earth was only a prototype world as it was an incomplete world creation.

And now that I looked back on how I was able to accomplish this, it likely wasn't only due to the complementary and opposing natures of my Holy Light and undead magic. My powers of Law and ice were huge influences as well. And it was precisely because I was so unclear on the fundamentals that my world possessed limitless potential.

That's right. After experiencing three reincarnations and four lives, I gathered four elements that belonged to me: Holy Light, Law, Undeath and Ice. And these four elements just happened to be two of Order and two of Chaos. Although their power and quality couldn't possibly compare to that of the Creator Goddess, I indeed met the lowest requirements necessary for creating a world.

And this was precisely why I kept muttering "This has to be a pitfall; I feel like I've already jumped deep inside it." When I mysteriously obtained such memories from my System and my four Soul Imprints mysteriously combined into one, and when I woke up and found that I had mysteriously improved my power level, I would be a true fool if I didn't think that something was off about my System's real identity.

Previously, I didn't forcefully ask her identity because asking certain things would be the equivalent of flipping the table at a

negotiation. But now I had enough aces up my sleeve and was about to start my grand scheme. If I still didn't ask and confirm my doubts, it would be impossible for me to rest reassured.

"There are no coincidences in the world. There are only certainties... System, was it really such a coincidence that I managed to perfectly gather these four required elements with your assistance? And what about that mysterious precognition prophecy ability which belongs to Time and Space? And equivalent exchange, a power that clearly belongs to Order? Perhaps I should respectfully address you as the greatest prophet of all time, along with your magnificent divine name, my dear... Goddess of Order, Astrya!"

I didn't receive an answer, but I wouldn't let things go just like this. Once some things were said out loud it would be impossible to turn back.

"I also want to ask, did you attach yourself to Karolan in the same way back then, guiding him step by step to become the God of Holy Light?"

After a long, long period of time, I finally heard a sigh from my System.

[...Astrya is still in hibernation at the Source of Order. Or perhaps I should say that her corpse is in hibernation there. I am merely a remnant soul shard of Astrya.]

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As Roland finally asked his System the questions he had planned for so long, a certain Demon Prince was having fun fishing in the Black Mist Ocean of the seventy-sixty layer in the Chaos Abyss.

He forcefully tugged on his fishing pole and pulled a mountain-sized giant fish monster out of the black mist. Its gigantic body crashed into a nearby mountain and knocked off a great portion.

"Our Demon Thane!"

"Our Thane's head is bleeding! Hurry and save him! Can anyone use healing!?"

Alright, perhaps Karwenz was having great fun with his fishing, but the "fish" wasn't having fun at all. That was because this pitiful fish was actually the Demon Thane of this layer of the Abyss.

The Demon Thane's giant body was only exhaling, not able to inhale. The injury on its head wasn't much, but the red fishhook in its mouth that it couldn't get rid of was the actual dangerous part.

The demons around them had frightened expressions as they looked at the "tiny human" in front of them. But obviously their complaints would all be useless in front of the spoiled child of the Abyss who was forever unreasonable.

It would seem that Karwenz was indeed an excellent demon as he succeeded in making the forever unreasonable demons have such angry expressions but not dare to complain.

"How boring. I managed to hook you after only two hours. According to our agreement, I shall be confiscating your castle. Now, what fun game should I play next...?"

Just as Karwenz was wondering if he should go play around in Reyne's body and visit the mortal plane, he suddenly stopped due to a message that a divine will suddenly transmitted to him.

"Hunt down and kill the Devil Lords that have betrayed the Chaos Faction... Nope, I'm not going. That's too boring. Those sly fellows are sooo uninteresting. Fighting with them is like playing guessing games to find where they actually are. That's so troublesome. Aren't there others who are mortal enemies with the Lord of Lies? Why not have them go instead?"

The demons around him immediately backed off a great distance. It was already well known in the Chaos Abyss that the Demon Prince had a habit of talking out loud to himself. That wasn't something out of the ordinary because there were plenty of

demons with multiple personalities or that had gone insane. But there was another well-known fact around these parts: that any who accidentally got to close to him whenever he was talking to himself would end up being crushed to death by him.

"Oh, this is related to my brother? Fine, I'll go, but I can't promise that I'll do anything. Brother is so weak right now. It's no fun toying with him. Oh, you'll send someone else to hunt him down and I can do whatever I want? Yep, you really understand me. The most important thing in life is to have fun playing. Okay, guess I'll go then. Thank you, Mother Abyss... Mother Cynthia."

Chapter 440: Sibling Rivalry

On that very day Ayer and I boated down the River Styx, after finishing planning our grand scheme I suddenly felt like idly gossiping. (Once again, refer back to Chapter 66).

"You've met the Goddess of Order Astrya and Goddess of Chaos Cynthia before, haven't you? What are they like? Why did they start the eternal Holy War?"

Of course, how can we gossip about any random topic? I wouldn't rest reassured without at least trying to learn some more information on the final bosses.

"What are their personalities? What were they so stubborn about that they started the Holy War? What are the special characteristics of their powers? What..."

I had far too many questions I wanted answers to. Besides an overwhelming advantage in power, the most practical method to defeat an opponent would always be to target their weaknesses.

"What weaknesses do they have? Does the Goddess of Chaos have a hasty personality? Is the Goddess of Order overly conservative? Do they make mistakes? If they make mistakes, will they personally act to fix them?"

From a certain standpoint, I had obvious bad intentions when I asked these questions that weren't exactly "idle gossip." Directly telling me the answers would be the equivalent of betraying the Order Faction.

Ayer immediately understood all this, of course, which was why, after a period of silence, he sighed helplessly and started "gossiping" with me.

"The Mother Goddess (Goddess of Order) is a nice woman. She views all lifeforms as her children, but sometimes too much motherly love will limit the children's ability to develop. Astrya

wishes for all lifeforms to live the way she desires, but do you think that's possible? Meanwhile, her sister Cynthia is the extreme opposite. Cynthia has a lively and active personality, and more than anything she loves to watch duels and warfare. She admires courageous warriors who don't give up. She wants her children to be able to evolve independently. Did you know the first demons ever created weren't evil? They simply loved all sorts of competitions and sports..."

Although the Holy War's origin was clearly something fit for a myth or legend, this young-looking ancient existence told me the story as if it were simply a normal sibling fight that happened next door. Although it was clearly a bloody battle that would cause the rise and fall of countless immemorial Gods, Ayer described things as if it were an eight o'clock soap opera filled with love and revenge.

The Death God's story helped me gain a better understanding of the two Goddesses. Rather than the vague and ethereal myths, Ayer had a much better and humanlike understanding of these two most "venerated" Goddesses in Eich.

"...It's like a normal argument between sisters. Since their mother is no longer here, the serious older sister took charge of running the family's affairs. However, she was overly severe and treated her only younger sister more and more strictly as time went on. In the end, her younger sister became ever more rebellious until the two broke their relationship with each other."

But from a certain standpoint this was perhaps the most vicious fight between sisters in all of history. This "fight between sisters" had lasted for such a long period of time, affected so many lives and left such a terrible influence behind that perhaps not a single lifeform would be able to comprehend its full effects.

"You're probably the only one in the world who's capable of interpreting the Holy War as a fight between sisters."

That was Ayer's comment to me when I told him what I thought about it. Still, he didn't disagree with my opinion. And, in a way, I felt that you could even treat Earth's World Wars as human brothers disagreeing and fighting with each other...

"After the Creator Goddess Eich left, the Twin Goddesses were left behind as the administrators. What they mainly argued about was how they were to manage the lives under them. Astrya wished for all lifeforms to act according to their natural talents. Under her, farmers' children would forever be farmers, and warrior's descendants would forever remain warriors. She also wanted the same for whole species. Angels would be responsible for carrying out divine will as God Envoys, Titans were supposed to be magnificent architects and artists, and all warfare and intermarriage between species would be banned—"

"Pahahaha! Where did such a naïve young miss come from?"

At this point I couldn't help but interrupt Ayer with loud laughter. Even if people back in the immemorial generation were more honest and down-to-earth there would still be obvious problems with Astrya's way of running things. Having all farmers' children forever be farmers and government officials' children forever be government officials? This type of unfairness would continuously accumulate as societal problems before spectacularly exploding in the end. And it was even more ridiculous for Astrya to want entire species to act in the same way. Wasn't this a classic example of a racial prejudice policy? And just how did she think she was going to deal with conflicts and differences between species?

"...Don't criticize it so much. It would be ridiculous for any other existence, but Astrya truly does have the power to accomplish it. All she has to do is make it so that everyone thinks that its only natural. Just look at the current angel society... maybe you don't know, but angels are the only species allowed to enter and exit the Source of Order. As a result, their entire species has become more

and more "Order-like." Yep, they're basically nothing more than tools with no self-will.

"How ridiculous! It's impossible to have absolute fairness in such a society because there's no such thing as an absolutely fair administrator."

"...There is. Rumors say that the Goddess of Order Astrya intended to abandon her sense of self and become the purest essence of Order. However, I personally reject this course of action. Even if society still exists under such a system it's inevitable that every single individual will have lost their sense of self. If time turns back and I get the choice to choose again, I would still choose to betray... even if the ending is that my entire tribe becomes nothing more than devils."

I nodded in agreement. Indeed, if everyone was brainwashed, it would be possible to establish a fair and peaceful society. However, this would come at a cost. It would be no different from a living hell that nobody realized they were living in. In a way, I was even beginning to agree with Cynthia since at least she didn't allow her older sister to act so ridiculously.

But then I immediately regretted having sympathized with Cynthia for even one second...

"Goddess of Chaos Cynthia is the extreme opposite. She prefers a system that's far more dangerous than simply sitting back and doing nothing. She prefers 'survival of the fittest.'"

"Isn't that how society is today?"

"Ha! What she wanted wasn't something so simple. She believes that the meaning for all lifeforms to exist is to achieve the ultimate evolution and that as the administrator she should award her citizens territory for successfully evolving and provide them with motivation to compete with each other. She believes that every lifeform should fight for their own position on the food chain. Just take a look at demon society today. They are the ideal species in

her eyes."

Right after being born, demons would immediately begin devouring each other. Their brains were only filled with two thoughts: eating and killing. Although demons indeed had the best overall combat strength of every species in existence, didn't something seem wrong with such vicious and simpleminded lifeforms being treated as the perfect species and ultimate evolution?

"From a certain standpoint, the fact that the Holy War has become a stalemate is actually a good thing, at least for ordinary lifeforms. After all, no matter if all lives become angels with no self-will or demons filled with chaos and evil, neither would be an ideal life. But if either side manages to win..."

"We'll all be enjoying such a living hell?"

"No, because Order will probably recreate the world and create new species of Order. The Source of Order has long since stopped favoring the ever chaotic and messy humans. It's most likely that the Source of Order will create new species of pure Order, similar to angels. Astrya at least intends this in the later stages of the Holy War—the angels' current behavior proves this. And I don't know what will happen if the Chaos Faction wins, but regardless of what Cynthia does when she recreates the world no ordinary lifeform will survive."

As I chatted with Ayer I could only keep sighing to myself. Choosing any choice would only lead to a bad ending. This had far surpassed the so-called "Hell Difficulty" of any video game. Was this video game truly playable? But it served even more to firm my resolution to find allies to overthrow this entire system together with me.

And even back then I had started having suspicions about my personal System's real identity, especially after I learned that Time, Space, Fate and such Concepts were the ultimate powers of

Order. My suspicions only increased as I spent more time with my System.

There were just far too many points to be suspicious of.

First was my status as the "Child of Light." The mysterious way by which the Holy Light favored me might be better explained by actually calling me the "Child of Order." And even though my System's abilities were wondrously strange, they all foundationally followed the most basic rules of "equivalent exchange."

Nothing I drew through my random lottery would ever be reliable. Rather than calling this a wheel of fate, it was more like a wishing mechanism that needed to obey the basic rule of equivalent exchange. And magic spells and divine arts did exist in the world of Eich, such as "Ain's Wishing Pool," but my System's lottery was obviously at a higher level.

As time passed, I became ever more suspicious. I was already someone so paranoid I'd wonder if I was stepping into a trap if I found a wallet on the ground. How could I possibly not be suspicious of an existence like my System, which was both unscientific and unmagical?

What finally confirmed my suspicions was what Supreme Immemorial White Dragon Sam recently told me.

"You're calling me the Order Faction's major precognitor? Does this power have anything to do with Order? Isn't prophecy a neutral type of magic?"

"...Of course! It's even the ultimate ability of Order. Since Order is about rules, the highest-level dimensional rules are doubtlessly space and time. While the power of prophecy seems chaotic, it's actually calculating the future probabilities based on time and space. Being able to obtain more information than the enemy is why the Order Faction has performed better than the Chaos Faction that has better combat strength. The concept of Fate is the same way. Otherwise, why would the God of Fate be in the Order

Faction?"

After that, I was absolutely certain that my System was intimately connected with the Source of Order. The "game walkthrough" it possessed was far more detailed than any prophecy, and she even successfully caused a transmigrator like me to accept it. In that case, her so-called Fate Points were naturally another power of Order as well.

In fact, I even inferred that perhaps, in a Holy War long ago, another hot-blooded young person received such a cheat-like System and became the major precognitor of the Order Faction. He learned about the future and defeated the evil demon king in the final battle with the System's assistance. He became a hero adored by all, obtaining everything, a winner in life, and finally ascended to Godhood through his achievements... Fine, I was referring to the God of Holy Light, whose name as a human had long been forgotten by history, Karolan Loci.

But even though I had guessed my System's identity, I never stated it out loud as that would be a direct confrontation against an existence that could follow me through even my many reincarnations. But now my grand scheme was at its critical junction, and it was naturally time to confront her. After all, I was about to become a mortal enemy of the entire Order Faction!

[The past me was wrong, but this time my choice isn't wrong at all...]

After a long period of silence, my System finally spoke up with a rare, serious tone and proceeded to reveal a story unknown to history.

Chapter 441: Truth

As Roland confronted his System, the final piece of the puzzle to create his own version of "Hell" was completed in Auland's conquered capital, Rain City, the city of eternal rain.

Although this war here had started out as a battle between mortals— between the Sea Tribe and the people of Bardi—the Queen of Storms' direct interference with her incarnation made it so that this battle far exceeded a level mortals could interfere with.

"...Damned mages! Damned humans!"

The Queen of Storms' indigo-colored skin was filled with cracks. Even her previously smooth and beautiful facial features were covered with small holes. Her originally pretty face appeared quite vicious.

Well, it was only natural that the Queen of Storms was so furious. This was already her second incarnation. She had just lost an incarnation not long ago and sent a second one down immediately after, putting a great strain upon her true body. Yet the current situation wasn't going well for her in the slightest.

If she lost a second incarnation, she would suffer even more.

The Queen of Storms glared at a red-haired swordsman, who appeared carefree; he was currently digging earwax out of his ears.

"Mortal—mortal—mortal! You dare look down upon me!?"

The Queen of Storms, who wasn't exactly well-known for having a good temper, lost it. She was hysterical and enraged, yet she didn't summon storms to rampage over the land and directly slay this desecrator as she typically would.

The reason? Her first incarnation had just been slain by this seemingly ordinary mortal swordsman. This person's greatsword suddenly descended like the thunder and directly cut her incarnation in half, causing her to lose a great amount of divine

power. She had practically lost everything she had gained in the past half year in which the situation had been going wonderfully well for her.

But this wasn't even the main reason why she was so angry...

Boom!

Continuous sounds of cannons and explosions sounded near her. Floating battleships hovered above the water as they spread out in formations and slowly executed a new round of attacks against Rain City.

By now, the clouds in the sky had largely dissipated. Only small sprinkling rain showers remained, which were unable to impede the humans in the slightest. Although Rain City was covered in water, providing the Sea Tribe with their home turf and defensive barrier, the water level was decreasing, striking great fear into the Sea Tribe's hearts.

The Sea Tribe never imagined that the seemingly warm sun would again painfully beat down on them. With the threatening Bardi armies before them, the Sea Tribe now missed the icy oceans.

As the Sea Tribe became afraid and despaired, they prayed to their Goddess. But what they saw, to their greater despair, was that their venerated Goddess was slain in front of everyone.

Although the Queen of Storms immediately sent out her incarnation to help defend the Sea Tribe against Auland's new onslaught, her incarnation became stuck in a bitter battle against the red-haired Sword Saint. Meanwhile, the mages all around the red-haired swordsman had incredible power. The Sea Tribe witnessed their True God's incarnation's defeat.

"Perhaps our Goddess isn't the mightiest one... Perhaps Rain City isn't for us... Perhaps we Sea Tribe should simply stick to living in the water..."

The sunlight and the ever diminishing rain dealt a tremendous blow to the Sea Tribe's confidence of absolute victory. Bardi's cannons were the most direct threat against them, and the originally undefeatable Queen of Storms had been defeated right before them all. That was the fatal blow against their belief.

"Hurry and escape, otherwise it'll be too late..."

"Why should I fight to the death for the sake of the tribe leaders? Even if Rain City is for us Sea Tribe, I didn't receive a single good bonfire carrier or room..."

"Even our venerated Goddess has been defeated; there won't be any hope left if we don't escape..."

Devilish temptations sounded in the Sea Tribe's ears. Their faith in their Goddess had been so seriously shaken that they no longer saw any chance at victory. At this moment, some unknown individual suddenly shouted:

"Our Head Priest is running—look at his flag! He's running! Even he's running away!"

The Queen of Storms' highest-ranked priest, Head Priest Mairkan, was present at this battle. But currently, as the Sea Tribe watched on through the rain, his battle flag, which glowed with a divine blue, was indeed retreating.

With unknown individuals taking the lead, these scattered warriors, who were tribal rather than an organized military, all started escaping. The moment morale was crushed and soldiers started escaping it became impossible to stop things any longer.

"Mortal!"

The furious Queen of Storms' incarnation tried to stop this, but a thunder-enchanted greatsword blocked her path.

"Lady, it's rude to have the main character leave the party before the dance is over. Are you that displeased with my skills?"

The Queen of Storms took a deep breath and regained her calm. By now, only a total idiot wouldn't realize that she had fallen into a trap.

The flowery mortal Sword Saint before her was indeed quite powerful, but he would be unable to cause any fatal damage to her all by himself. The critical part was that he was of the lightning element, meaning he was nigh immune to her water-based attacks. And it appeared that his abilities were mostly of the defensive type, so it was impossible for her to easily get rid of him.

"Replicate: Meteor Shower!"

An icy voice incanted behind him, and a meteor storm suddenly descended from the skies and struck a fatal blow against many Sea Tribe. This incantation came from Margaret.

Numerous shiny meteors fell from the skies, and each one exploded on impact, whipping up fierce waves in the water together with numerous howls. Although this spell wasn't as powerful as the original forbidden spell version's destructive capabilities, this replicated mini version still possessed astonishing might.

And earlier, Margaret had unhesitatingly started casting a forbidden spell the moment she had entered the battlefield, which drew all of the Queen of Storms' attention. That was how her incarnation had fallen for the red-haired swordsman's ambush.

And now her second incarnation was forced to the brink. The Queen of Storms was unable to give up on Rain City and her believers. Every single chip she used to obtain her position of powerful High God was here. She didn't have many allies to begin with, so retreating wasn't an option.

Her believers were escaping. The divine miracle in the skies had mostly disappeared. She could sense that her divine powers stemming from the power of belief were overstretching their limits. She was just like a gambler who continuously put her

previously obtained chips into new gambles. Although continuous victories had helped her speedily grow in power, her foundational wealth wasn't enough for the gambles that had ever higher stakes. She became unable to lose even a single gamble.

If she lost Rain City, she would be fortunate if she merely decreased in power level as a God. The most likely outcome would be a tremendous loss of faith in her to the point where she would directly perish.

The constantly worsening situation made her anxious. However, she didn't have the power to protect her believers. Her own sea monster armies were blocked by the invading Auland armies. Although she was angry, and this mortal swordsman who acted like such a jokester was annoying, she could only admit that he indeed possessed power enough to challenge a God.

And so, under the influence of anger and embarrassment, the Queen of Storms made a decision—a decision others really wanted her to make...

Two individuals were currently having a secret discussion in a patch of shadows.

"Hehehe! No matter how many times I watch it, I never get tired of seeing mortals collapse to the point of despair."

This individual appeared to be a rather young black-haired boy with black eyes. He had a wicked smile as he watched the Sea Tribe fall into despair. This boy was actually the Lord of Lies, the Devil Lord from Hell's Abyss. And he was currently carrying out the task Roland had asked of him: to increase the speed at which the Sea Tribe's morale deteriorated.

Next to him was another youth who appeared quite similar to him. This youth was happily waving the Sea Tribe's Head Priest's flag, running away. The real Head Priest had long been killed, his last expression unyielding and his guards' corpses strewn all around him.

The air was filled with fairies of despair and discord, imperceptible by the naked eye. As one of the most powerful existences in the world, the Main God power level Lord of Despair was the very incarnation of fear and despair. He was capable of causing even the most courageous and resolute of warriors to break down with a single look in their direction. His large area of effect domain of despair would be very difficult to detect, and it would automatically enhance the fear and despair in the weak.

In this battlefield under the Lord of Despair's domain, every single mortal individual would need to face the fear in their hearts. They would begin doubting everything they believed. Their loyalty would be tested by endless hallucinations. Having any mortal army collapse on themselves and despair was nothing more than a game to the Lord of Despair. It was only natural that the Sea Tribe wouldn't be able to maintain themselves against him.

"...Heimor, it's fine to play around but don't get sidetracked from what we're really here to do."

"Boss, don't rush me like that. You also know that she's a powerful Goddess. It's not that hard to simply kill her incarnation, but it's a bit more difficult to affect her reasoning so that she'll make most foolish decision possible... Ohhh, she did it after all. It seems that the number one insane witch of the southwest seas still hasn't made any progress after so many years. As expected, she's now gambling everything when pushed to the brink at this critical moment."

The person he addressed as "Boss" was a white-robed young man, who was currently playing with a red rose.

When the white-robed young man heard the Devil Lord say this, he too looked at the skies.

The skies had begun to change again. The clouds that had started dissipating gathered once more. Countless tornados twisted together as several dozen giant tornados began forming a new

horde of windstorms. A faint dimensional opening appeared in the place with the most windstorms, and a windstorm eye was beginning to peer out of the dimensional opening.

Looking from below, it would appear that the one-eyed King of Storms was about to reach out through the clouds and begin interfering in the mortal plane.

"The big fish has finally been hooked..."

******

[Karwenz shouldn't have been in this world...]

With that rather confusing statement, my System—Astrya—began her story which was long lost to history.

[My fight with Cynthia caused both of us to enter a long, long divine hibernation...]

I knew about this from Ayer. In the first ever Holy War, the twin Goddesses had nearly equal power and abilities and unsurprisingly fought to the point where both were seriously injured, causing them to sink into a deep hibernation. But it would be underestimating the twin Goddesses far too much if one thought that they were simply sleeping.

Even if their physical bodies were unable to move, their divine souls roamed this world.

The so-called Endless Abyss, the never-ending world of Chaos that had no seeming end? It was actually all part of the Goddess of Chaos herself. It was her own domain, and inside of it she transformed into the will of the Chaos Abyss and created the leveling and evolution system of the demons. It would be impossible for any existences with inferno bloodlines to resist the summons of the Chaos Abyss.

She would attempt to beckon any "child" she took favor to in joining the Abyss. Perhaps it was that Cynthia worked harder or perhaps it was that the Chaos Faction was more suitable to fighting

than the Order Faction, but the Chaos Faction's overall combat strength forever far exceeded the Order Faction's. In every Holy War in history, the Chaos Faction was the proactive side. The unending chaos that appeared in the world was also providing Cynthia with strength, helping her get ever closer to waking up. Of course, at the same time, she became ever closer to insanity.

The Goddess of Order wasn't quite as fortunate as her younger sister. Since she was the Goddess of Order, she was naturally limited by the natural laws of Order. Pure Order didn't need self-will. It only needed an administrator that would never make mistakes. The end result was that Astrya's self-will became ever lesser and weaker. In fact, her will had lost its connection to her physical body. In the middle stages of the previous Holy War, the pure Source of Order had already rejected the Goddess of Order's involvement.

So now, even if the Goddess of Order's physical body revived, the existence that revived wouldn't be the Goddess of Order herself. Instead, what revived would be the pure physical embodiment of Order, which would then destroy the world.

[I was wrong in the past...]

Perhaps her travels and experiences had changed her. Or perhaps it was because she had unknowingly lost her status of the Goddess of Order, becoming a homeless soul, instead. Compared to her past self who was an overly idealistic and naïve princess, Astrya was far more practical than before, and much easier to communicate with.

But due to her "overly motherly" nature (a quote from Ayer), she was still unable to rest reassured about the world and its citizens. Even though she lost the ability to directly interfere with the world, she would still try to think of methods to help the relatively weaker Order Faction obtain final victory even though she knew that wouldn't solve the foundational problem in the end.

She was unable to directly interfere? That's right. While Cynthia

was the entire embodiment of the Chaos Abyss, Astrya was nothing more than a will with no physical body. The only way she could interfere in the world's affairs was to attach herself to someone, haunting them like she did with me. If you described this with glorious terms, then perhaps you could say that this was "divine guidance, a scholar's guidance or justice's guidance." But it wasn't glorious at all.

[The Child of Fate in every Holy War is the mortals' hero who has the most brilliant presence. The one with the deepest karmic connections will always be the most glorious star of the Holy War. This person's actions are the most likely to change the overall outcome of the Holy War.]

Astrya was basically creating a type of transmigrator all by herself. As she administered Time, Space and Fate, she would always locate the most glorious Child of Fate before every Holy War and give that person information about the future. She would give that individual the power of equivalent exchange and point them down the path of victory. I supposed that was the true identity of the former "great precognitors" of the Order Faction.

"For instance, the God of Holy Light back when he was a human?"

[Yes. He was a truly good person. The situation back in that year was truly terrible. The demons' power far surpassed that of the elves. Under my guidance, he was able to discover the essence of the power of Holy Light, which could cleanse all distortions, specifically targeting the demons and the undead. At least, I should say that he was a good person before he ascended to Godhood and gave up his self-will.]

"Then it's my turn this time? The future Black Warrior Emperor, the Demon Prince Roland?"

I felt somewhat bitter and depressed, feeling like I still hadn't escaped the shackles of fate. But this mysterious depression only

lasted for an instant before I shook my head and got rid of it.

No matter what the reasons were, reaching the current situation of today was all due to my own choices. Perhaps my System gave me information and assistance—useful, I must admit—but she was still unable to choose my future for me. I wasn't so weak as to blame my own missteps on others.

Besides, I never intended to support the Order or Chaos Faction to begin with. That was something that would only cause the Holy War to continue forever. It would be a foolish decision that would never solve the foundational problem, something both of us knew. And since she was unable to even stop Yongye, what she could interfere with was incredibly limited. There was no need for me to think too much into things.

What I needed to do now was to break free from the restraints of my useless seniors and completely end this Holy War once and for all.

[...Don't be too hard on your seniors. None of those Children of Fate were real transmigrators. In fact, I was truly astonished when I learned through you that there was an entire other world out there. Your information from your original world was just like a virus as it succeeded in completely changing my way of thinking, far more than all the previous countless Holy Wars combined. I also admit that I was far too extreme back in the day. ...You really should be proud of yourself. Although you started at the lowest point of all Children of Fate, you've accomplished more than any other Child of Fate in history. At the very least, you've discovered a path that never before existed. For the first time, I can see in you hope that the Holy War will end.]

"Then what did you mean when you said that Karwenz shouldn't have been in this world?"

[Exactly what it sounds like. You read the 'game walkthrough' I provided you with, right? Karwenz wasn't in that at all. That's the

future path of fate that should have been.]

"Then something abnormal occurred?"

I felt like I was now uncovering the truth, which had been shrouded in mystery.

[That's right. This time, Cynthia, who had lost so much due to my interference, was watching me. She discovered my choice for Child of Fate in this Holy War. Although she didn't have the power of precognition, the result of her fighting over the Child of Fate with me was that...]

"Was that?"

[The result was that the Child of Fate split into two halves. However, the two damaged souls were fixed and completed under our protection. The soul with the transmigrator memories was affected by the power of Order, so it was naturally inclined towards Order. Meanwhile, Karwenz was the exact opposite. He was naturally inclined towards Chaos ever since his birth. His absolutely inconceivable rate of growth has far surpassed any normal level of understanding.]

I was rendered speechless by this revelation. It would appear that it was fortunate enough already that I and my younger brother had successfully grown up. At the very least, we weren't killed off so early by the twin Goddesses' conflict.

As for the fact that we were originally the same soul? Actually, I thought about it some but decided that it didn't really matter. Since we had different memories and experiences after living in this world, we were two separate individuals now. The beginning wasn't all that important. All it meant was that we were somewhat of a type of clone.

Many thoughts passed through my mind and the clues assembled in my mind before I felt that I had now seen the truth.

"Then the true culprit behind the Mist Kingdom's destruction...

must have been Cynthia. She obtained the Child of Fate she wanted."

It was actually quite simple to find the true culprit behind a successful scheme. One simply had to look for who benefited the most. As for who would benefit from the Mist Kingdom's destruction? That could only be the Chaos Faction.

"Karwenz, who was selected by the Abyss, was tempted by Cynthia into finding the demons to search for strength to take revenge. Finally, he entered the Abyss and sunk ever deeper into it. Meanwhile, the transmigrator Roland, who was possessed by the Goddess of Order herself, went down a path of destruction, becoming Yongye and creating an unsolvable deep grudge against the Holy Church, the main power of the Order Faction. This was a perfect result for the Chaos Faction."

There was no need to guess what existence had cut off the snow mountain from the mortal plane back in the day. It would either be Cynthia herself or a Chaos Main God under her command. Either way, this grudge I had could be attributed to Cynthia.

After thinking about it some more, I could only break out into laughter. Although I learned much, nothing really changed except for the fact that Karwenz and I were even closer than I had expected. I still needed to break the Cycle of Reincarnation's monopoly over souls, and I still needed to prevent both twin Goddesses from truly waking up.

"Do you still have the power of prophecy?"

[Not anymore. Since I've now interfered with Fate, Fate's course has left my control.]

"Garbage."

[...From today onwards, all System products in your shop are now tripled in price.]

"In the end, I myself will have to decide the fate of the future."

And now, judging by the dimensional tears appearing in the sky along with the stench of sulfur, my long-awaited guests had arrived. It would seem that I had no more time for idle thoughts.

"One, two... Three Main God level existences. Whoa, the Chaos Faction truly thinks highly of us."

Although I knew that it was likely that existences would come to hunt us down before the Dimensional Doors fully closed, it was also likely that no existence here would be able to return for a long period of time after coming here. Being able to send so many Main God level existences here despite this meant that the Chaos Faction viewed us with great importance. Or perhaps I should say that the devils were just that unpopular with them.

"Roland, I'm here to have fun playing with you!"

Alright, that booming voice was all too familiar. Only my idiot younger brother would act like this. I now had an even bigger headache.

Chapter 442: Duelists

"Ha! The entire sky is burning. What a majestic sight."

Dragon World's air had never been as impure as it was now. Two moons hung in the sky, but both were blood-red. Mountains floating in the sky could be seen in the distance, their originally vicious wild beasts wailing and floating helplessly in the air.

An unfortunate Green Dragon suddenly came across a dimensional tear. In just a short instant, it went from Adult Dragon to Young Dragon to Infant Dragon to finally a Dragon Egg, a reverse evolution.

Time, Gravity, Space and all the world's basic dimensional laws were distorted. Every single law of physics went into flux as Dragon World neared a complete collapse.

In the sky, Supreme Immemorial White Dragon Sam was attempting to say something to the numerous dragons roaring at him, but it was to no avail as a few moments later several streaks of dragonbreath attempted to bake him.

He didn't attack them back. He simply landed on the ground and transformed back into his Snow Elf form with a greatly displeased expression.

"I told you—it's useless."

I had told him that trying to explain things would be meaningless.

"...Those stubborn old fools and artifacts. They deserve to be killed by the Titans! They really think that they can just keep themselves safe and not care about anything else!"

The young-appearing Snow Elf had a displeased expression but he had long known that this would be the result. Yet he had still wanted to try.

I shrugged without a word as it would be awkward of me to do so...

"What a great idea you had. You actually went up there yourself to explain. Right now, the dragons are at their angriest. Nothing that a 'traitor' like you tells them will be heard. The only reason they didn't directly kill you is because they aren't powerful enough to do so."

Alright. While I didn't say this out loud, the Devil Lord didn't have any misgivings and simply said it.

"You..."

But even the Supreme Immemorial White Dragon didn't dare to get angry enough to fight the Devil King. Sam could only look in my direction.

"Relax. I'll give the White Dragons everything I promised. The White Dragons will definitely become the strongest dragon species. I'll also give you everything I said... Yep, I definitely will."

Of course, to make the White Dragons be willing to give up Dragon World and become hated by all other dragons I promised them something sufficiently tantalizing.

Now that the situation had developed so that Dragon World was cut off from the mortal plane, the dragons would be unable to remain neutral even if they wanted to. Even if the demons that didn't give them trouble for some reason, I had arranged for a few "old friends" of theirs to meet them. And these "old friends" had an "excellent relationship" with Dragon City.

"Finally... finally... free... freedom!"

An ancient language echoed throughout the entire Dragon World. Although nobody understood this tongue-twister immemorial language, there was a magical meaning contained within that allowed all intelligent lifeforms to understand it.

Every lifeform could faintly perceive the Titans beginning to rise.

The pure power of Order shook the dimension even further as these sleeping ancient existences awakened.

The tiny Snow Elf Sam's face immediately turned pale.

"The... the Titans!"

"Yep, the Titans."

I wanted to laugh out loud after seeing how panicked the Supreme Immemorial White Dragon was. It would seem that perhaps I had overestimated him.

The dragons in the sky panicked even more at this sight. They truly didn't expect for the seal on the Titans to become completely broken at this moment. The dragons were about to be challenged by their mortal enemies, the Titans.

"...You... What have you done?"

Even an ancient and powerful existence like the White Dragon fell into a panic when he knew that he was about to face the dragons' ancient mortal enemy from myths and legends.

"Me? I didn't do anything at all. I simply followed my plan and cut off this dimension from the other planes."

Actually, with Sam's knowledge and experience, he should have been able to expect everything that happened here as long as he carefully thought about it. But unfortunately for him he was blinded by the beautiful promises I had given him, which was why he'd made such a big miscalculation.

In fact, everything I did would be easy to guess at.

The Titans were sealed in this world by the Creation Seal of the Four Elements, the strongest possible version of the Seal of the Four Elements. The plane of Dragon World was connected to the Four Elemental Planes, which constantly provided elemental energy that powered the seal on the Titans. But what would happen if the Dragon World's plane was cut off from all other

dimensions, including the Four Elemental Planes?

Of course, the seal wouldn't have any more elemental energy and would become useless—it would start collapsing. Once the Titans broke free, this entire world which was created to seal them would collapse as well. And all of this was exactly what I wanted.

Of course, mortals alone would be unable to cut off Dragon World from all other planes besides the mortal plane. Orloss was only the scapegoat taking the blame. As for a certain Death God who was secretly interfering from behind? All you readers should know who that is without me saying his name out loud.

At the very least, back when I was in the Earth Elemental Plane, a certain Death God had cut the Earth Elemental Plane off from all the other planes. Of course, Sam didn't know about this incident, which was why he wouldn't be able to think that this would happen.

"You—you—you're basically a devil!"

From a certain standpoint, Sam had fallen into my trap. Because of me, Dragon City would view him as a traitor. However, I yet again laughed out loud at this.

Did he really think that I didn't know his intentions? Sam's family was still in Dragon City. It was rather obvious that he intended to return to the dragons' side and remain neutral immediately after he finished helping me and received his payment. But after he joined my faction would I really let him go so easily? Would my faction be easy to join and leave as one pleased?

"Devil? Thank you for the compliment."

"Yes, that's a wonderful compliment. He is definitely a devil."

My response and Devil Lord Kamiltias' response reached an accord. It felt rather nice to be called a devil, and Kamiltias naturally felt that calling me a devil was a compliment to all devils.

I was beginning to like this Little Tias fellow more and more. At the very least, he was decisive. He knew when he should gamble everything. He brought his full power here to support me.

Since the devils treated me with such sincerity, I would give them the same sincerity in return. The current situation would end in either a complete victory or a complete defeat. There was no room for hesitation or retreat.

Sam was still a dragon in the end, however. While he was experienced and knowledgeable—and decisive to an extent—he was still too naïve and arrogant when it came to major decisions about the overall situation. Like all dragons, he forever believed that he would be able to sit everything out. He believed that he would be able to obtain great benefits without paying too much of a price. In fact, he didn't even want to have to personally fight.

"What makes you so special? Just because you're a dragon?"

Well, I didn't say something so insulting as that out loud to him. It was fine to simply think it in my mind. But right now the Supreme Immemorial White Dragon who had fallen into my trap was somewhat hysterical.

"Titans, and the other dragons... just how do you intend to deal with all this!"

Sam finally noticed just how insane we were. I had utterly antagonized the dragons, and the revived Titans were no friends of ours, either. Sam's question was both calling me to account as well as seeking salvation.

"Deal with them? Why? The dragons and Titans are the ones who should be begging for me to save their lives. Do you know what the most profitable business in an apocalypse is? Selling tickets to safety!"

As the entire world began collapsing, there was only one location that remained stable... that's right, the Ghostwind Plains, where

my base was located. Soon, this would become the core of a brand-new world, the only safe location in the collapsing Dragon World. Anyone who wanted to take safe harbor here would require my agreement.

As for if I would take advantage of this opportunity to extort people? Of course! That's a definite yes! Did everyone want to survive Dragon World's destruction? Sure, but they would first have to buy tickets from me! Sold for the price of their full treasuries!

[You created an apocalypse and then charge money to save others? Was there a mistake with the Child of Fate from this generation? Morality should have been part of the evaluation as well...]

"Ha! I learned all of this from you. And at least I didn't create all of this. Dragon World was destined to collapse to begin with. I'm even helping them deal with the aftermath."

Alright, Astrya didn't comment after that. Wasn't the entire Holy War her fault to begin with? It was impossible for her to clean up and deal with the consequences, so in the end I had to come in and try to fix things.

And just thinking about things made me delighted. I would profit hugely if I succeeded in obtaining all the Titans' and Dragons' treasures and forced them to work for my cause.

"...Don't be so happy just yet. The Chaos Main God existences are coming."

Of course, in order for me to obtain this huge profit, I would first have to be able to deal with the tremendous trouble before me and get rid of these hunters.

The Dragon World's plane was beginning to collapse and lose all its connections to the other planes. And as time passed it would only become more and more difficult to come here from the mortal

plane. But this dimension's collapse also opened up its other doors, making it much easier for certain existences to send over certain disgusting things.

"There are three Chaos Main God level existences? Do you recognize them?"

Naturally, the Chaos Faction had sent existences to hunt me down—they descended with their abyssal flames.

I had expected Cynthia to be able to react so quickly. I refused to believe that every single one of these devils I summoned weren't on the side of the Chaos Abyss. As long as even one devil traitor told the Chaos Faction this secret and provided dimensional coordinates, of course the Chaos Abyss would be the fastest to send existences to hunt us down.

Since we had the Main God-level existence Kamiltias on our side, the Chaos Abyss would naturally send out Main God-level Demon Lords and Chaos Evil Gods. Considering the fact that Chaos Evil Gods typically brought their own Divine Kingdoms with them while Demon Lords had the ability to summon demons and could summon entire armies, fighting even a single such existence would end up as a war against an entire army.

[There are four Main God-level existences in total.]

Not far away, a new dimensional tear opened up in the red sky. A holy aura descended together with a familiar figure and an entire squadron of angels. This God glowed with an orange-reddish light. The Order Faction had also arrived to hunt us down.

His figure of light was hazy and impossible to see clearly, but I could instinctively sense that he was looking at me and desired to tear me apart.

"The God of Holy Light... only his incarnation?"

I was first surprised, then delighted but ended up being somewhat disappointed.

[His incarnation will be able to use almost the full extent of his powers in this plane where the dimensional laws themselves are breaking down. His incarnation's power level is definitely at Main God-level here.]

Alright then. I could only exclaim how the God of Holy Light had a ridiculous amount of accumulated power. I never expected that I would be able to fight with my senior so quickly. I was so... delighted at the opportunity!

"It's a pity that it's only his incarnation instead of his true body..."

I lowered my head and retracted my angry gaze. I then loosened my clenched fists, allowing my desire for revenge to return to the bottom of my heart.

"Still, I'm going to make your incarnation stay behind here."

Although it was impossible to truly take revenge against the God of Holy Light, I could at least collect some interest he owed me. The more powerful an incarnation was, the more power it would cost to create one. Slaying such a powerful incarnation would deplete a good portion of the divine power the God of Holy Light had accumulated for so many years, a rare opportunity.

Meanwhile, Kamiltias discovered who had arrived from the Chaos Faction thanks to their familiar energy waves. Well, even if the Chaos Faction had more Main God-level existences than the Order Faction, there were still only fourteen. Considering the fact that two of the Main God-level Devil Lords were on my side, there were extremely few candidates that remained.

"Demon Earl Ladvioka, who rules over the ninth through thirteenth layers of the Chaos Abyss. Demons' real names are ridiculously long. This is already the abbreviated version of the abbreviated version. His name isn't well known in the mortal plane, so it's probably easier to remember him by his title, 'Lord of Putrefaction.'"

A rancid smoke had begun spreading at the location where the Lord of Putrefaction had crashed down onto the ground like a meteor. This tainted gas transformed the air into a vicious toxin, and within it all was a tall figure now slowly standing up.

"I've never heard of him."

Any powerful Demon Lord should have been famous throughout all the planes, but strangely even I had never heard of this Demon Lord before.

"He's incredibly low profile. He doesn't even have a single believer in the mortal plane. However, more than thirty viruses and plagues in the mortal plane are his creation. He's incredibly secretive about harvesting souls. He even considers it a form of art... I'll be a little more direct so that you can understand better. He's an ancient demon from the same generation as I am. I've fought him many times. Although I've won more than I've lost, it's been impossible for me to kill him."

This Demon Lord had been able to survive despite losing to the leader of the Devil Lords so many times? This not-at-all-famous fellow would definitely be difficult to deal with.

Next to the Lord of Putrefaction was a giant warrior. Clad in heavy armor with not a single decoration or rune inscribed upon it, his face mask, which concealed his entire face, was nothing but a pure, blank white. Yet not a single person would dare underestimate him. He wielded a two-handed greatsword crafted out of obsidian. Divine golden blood could visibly be seen on the cracks of his sword.

He simply stood there silently but radiated an aura of absolute authority, as if he were a giant who could reach the skies. But the next instant he suppressed his aura as if he were nothing more than a lifeless statue, causing others to easily forget his presence.

"The eternal victorious warrior of the demons, Chaos Evil God Donatis, the Lord of the four hundred and fifty-first layer of the

Chaos Abyss. You should definitely recognize him."

Of course I recognized him. Many thieves, robbers and bloodthirsty warriors worshipped this Chaos Evil God. He was one of the Gods most respected by the demons, who rarely showed respect to any God, all because he was famous for being "super capable at fighting." And in every Holy War he was always at the forefront of the vanguard yet managed to survive even until today. That was more than plenty of evidence for how powerful he was.

The Chaos Evil Gods were similar yet also different to the True Gods of Order. While the Chaos Evil Gods were also capable of strengthening themselves by obtaining more belief, they weren't nearly as limited by Divine Concepts or natural laws. Just like the demons, they were capable of strengthening themselves through training and actual battles. Although there were rare exceptions who obtained power purely through faith, any Chaos Evil God at the same power level of an Order God would be twice as troublesome as the Order God. You would have to face both their godly divine powers along with the existence's personal strength.

The Chaos Evil Gods' Divine Kingdoms were typically within the Chaos Abyss itself. Since demons were their neighbors, they would always have to stay on guard against "warmhearted neighbors" who wanted to pay a visit. However, while Donatis only took over a single layer of the Chaos Abyss as his Divine Kingdom, nobody had "visited" his layer for the past thousands of years—best evidence of how frighteningly powerful he was.

It could be said that his past record of accomplishments and abilities made Donatis the enemy I wanted to see the least.

"Why did he come here? Is your relationship that bad?"

"He's a loyal dog of Chaos, so what's so strange about him being one of the first to come?"

Alright, I then turned to glance at the final Chaos Main God existence. My head hurt even more when I saw how his face

remained the same even after turning gigantic. And he was actually cooking fish soup on the battlefield! The large fish struggling in the huge pot even looked rather familiar, with an incredibly ugly human face. I felt like I had seen this fish Demon Lord somewhere in some book before..."

"I believe I don't need to introduce this final one to you. He's the favored child of Chaos, your younger brother, Abyss Prince Karwenz."

"What are his combat achievements? And the special characteristics of his powers?"

"Unknown. He has too few records of personally fighting. Any who have seen his powers are dead. And if I see correctly the fish in his pot is the Demon Lord of the seventy-sixth layer of the Chaos Abyss, Blackblade Fish Emperor Antolostan. Antolostan is capable of transforming into a sea of black mist that's immune to both physical and magical attacks, an ability that's truly difficult to deal with."

Karwenz seemed to notice that we were looking at him and happily waved his hand at me in greeting.

"Roland, if you aren't dead after our fight, I'll invite you to drink some fish soup with me."

Yep, Karwenz was exactly as I thought him to be. Perhaps everyone else would think that he was joking, but I knew that he was being serious. If our fight ended with neither of us dead, he really would invite me to drink fish soup together with him. But from another standpoint he meant that he would absolutely seriously try to kill me.

"This is definitely the fault of Chaos invading his brain. How can the other half of my soul possibly be this idiotic?!"

Chapter 443: Ambushers

[Myth-ranked Main Storyline Quest: Look up at heaven from hell below... then drag heaven into hell!]

[Quest Requirements: Defeat the four Main God level existences before the 'time limit.' Every Main God's defeat will reward you with 100,000 Fate Points. Successfully slaying a Main God will award you with an extra God Equipment at the exact moment of slaying. Punishment for failure: None. It obviously won't be necessary to punish you if you fail here.]

[System Notification: I'm awarding you with God Equipment instantly each time you defeat a Main God. It will only get easier and easier the more you defeat! Don't say I'm not helping you! What? You say you can't kill even one? Well, it usually takes several millennia for a Main God to ascend, so it's only natural that you can't kill one. But do you really think that it's that easy to use my energy to refine God Equipment for you? Cough, that's just how my personality is now. Is there a rule that a Goddess like me can't be in love with commenting? Who made such a rule?]

When my System's notification rang in my ears, I could only sigh helplessly.

Originally, my biggest doubt about my System being the Goddess of Order Astrya wasn't anything to do with logic or reason. It was that my System was obviously the shameless type, completely different to the legends about the Goddess of Order's personality. Plus, even Ayer himself told me that the Goddess of Order was a loving and motherly Goddess. To be honest, even I admired her personality if not her way of thinking... But now that I had met the real her... the style seemed wrong. Could I ask for a refund?

"Ha! Actually, this is only to be expected. Any woman who's been a virgin for several decades will be hysterical. Those who are virgins for several centuries or several millennium have basically

gone insane (referring to Harloys and Amelia too). For ancient artifacts who are several tens of thousands or even several hundreds of thousands years old... Hehehe."

But sometimes it was possible to overhear insulting thoughts towards others even if it was only in one's mind.

[Previously, I acted just like what the stories about me said. The way I am now is all because of the viruses you've infected me with everything ridiculous that goes on in that head of yours. Do you dare write down everything you think about to show others?]

"Of course not! That would be far too embarrassing!"

[You see? You think I can still act ladylike after seeing nothing but such things every day? A girl's purity and kindness are only because she hasn't yet experienced the trials of life. Her soft and tender hands are only because daily household chores haven't yet given them calluses. Speaking in a ladylike fashion instead of cursing all the time is only because she hasn't yet seen all those ridiculous Korean and American TV dramas. My style was originally normal. It's your fault for tainting me with your thought pollution! You need to take responsibility!]

Cough—cough—I was rendered speechless. I suddenly felt that the Goddess's current style was quite normal—yep—quite normal! It definitely had nothing to do with me!

In a way, our souls lived together. Those who resided within the same physical body would typically discover their personalities and habits become more and more like each other's. Even the silly cat, who had only been together with me for a few years, picked up my commenting habit. After several hundred years together, I had apparently—and unintentionally, of course—raised the Goddess of Order into an utterly shameless individual with zero limits whatsoever. If only her worshippers could see her now; there would likely be many more that wanted to hunt me down.

This time, the Quest she issued me was quite obviously designed

to help me. If I managed to kill a Main God, she would immediately award me with a usable God Equipment. Killing a Main God would make the next one easier to deal with.

But killing even one was beyond my abilities. I had no way of achieving this. Any Main God level existence's ascension or death would be a tremendous event that would shake the entire world. Their true powers, slyness and secret aces up their sleeve would far exceed a mortal's imagination. And right now my grand scheme was just about to be completed. Even with such attractive rewards right before me I didn't intend on completing the Quest.

My System knew this just as well as I did, which was why she added an addendum, the real goal I should aim for.

[System Notification: If you successfully defend yourself until Dragon World is completely replaced, you will be awarded 50,000 Fate Points and the free service of stabilizing your new dimension. Ahh! I feel like I'm getting such a bad deal here.]

This was basically the equivalent of the newbie completing the work and then the veteran helping check things out afterwards. It was nice that my System would stabilize the new dimension for me, but I still had no guarantee of successfully being able to defend until the time limit.

"So I suppose this means it's time to begin the cheating? Four Main God-level existences? How troublesome. God of Holy Light, don't you always proclaim yourself to be the mortal enemy of the demons? Shouldn't you first kill off a Demon Lord as befitting of your status?"

I cracked a terrible joke that even I myself didn't laugh at. While I really did want to be as relaxed as I always was, these enemies I faced were completely out of the ordinary.

Our actions here treaded upon the most foundational benefits of both the Chaos and Order Factions, so both sides didn't hesitate to send out top-level strength capable of crushing us. Four Main God-

level existences acting in unison would be more than half of all of the Order Faction's top-level strength. When considering how the Chaos Faction was, well, chaotic, and how arrogant and unwilling to listen to orders the Demon Lords would be, this was probably all the strength the will of the Chaos Abyss was capable of throwing at us.

The demons and devils had already begun their battle. Their fighting reminded me of what would constantly go on in the Chaos Abyss. However, the current situation wasn't a good one. On our side, only the Lord of Lies was at a Main God's level. The other two Devil Lords added together might not even be as strong as a single Main God. We obviously lacked top-level combat strength. As for the lower-level combat strength...

"The demons' ability to summon more demons is truly bug-like. Could they please stop cheating like this?"

Demon Lord Ladvioka, who was wreathed in green mist, simply raised his giant battle hammer, and dimensional tears appeared in the sky as an endless horde of demons jumped out. There were top-level common demon species such as Evil Four-legged Demons, Burst Sword Inferno Demons, Abyssal Fear Demons, as well as the weakest Demon Infants and Tiny Demons. To the demons, there was no concept such as 'too little cannon fodder.'

Meanwhile, the Evil Chaos Warrior God Donatis stood in his place as still as an unmoving statue. Faint traces of war songs appeared around him as ethereal heroic spirits started materializing. Polar Vikings in horned helmets wielded war axes appeared along with twin-dagger-wielding thieves who wore shadowy cloaks. A throng of battle-lusting heroic spirits walked out to fight for their powerful lord.

In the sky Holy Light swirled everywhere amid the sounds of war horns. High-level angels' wings materialized in the sky, distorting the very air with their fierce holy flames. This squadron of angels was highly skilled in aerial battles and seemed intent on directly

attacking our core. Meanwhile, the God of Holy Light's incarnation seemed to be waiting for something.

Alright then. Judging from the overall situation, I should perhaps correct my words.

This "lower-level combat strength" wasn't at all low. Just a single high-level demon would be capable of causing calamitous destruction in the mortal plane, yet here it was reduced to nothing but cannon fodder.

Every single heroic spirit that the Chaos Warrior God possessed would have their own epic or legend to them. Many of them had even challenged the Gods themselves. Yet here they were nothing more than cannon fodder.

And the angels here were no low-level angels like the ones that appeared in the mortal plane in front of Estrada. Their burning wings proved that they were at least at the third rank of Blazing Angel, yet here they were nothing more than cannon fodder.

"Although choosing this alternate dimension as our battlefield will avoid much trouble, top-level combat strength can easily be summoned here. Could it be that I shot myself in the foot again?"

Fortunately, the immemorial devils weren't so easy to deal with, either. High-level devils summoned mid-level devils, while mid-level devils summoned low-level devils. Under this summoning chain there was so much cannon fodder present it was impossible to count them all. And the immemorial devils' strange assortment of abilities would be equally powerful. Under the command of their lords, these ancient devils brought out their most powerful combat strength, well aware that victory here would help fulfill the greatest desire of their entire species.

We had a significant number of troops with our immemorial devil army. No problems should arise with the low-level combat strength battlefield at least for the time being. However, the difference in top-level combat strength was absolutely fatal.

Although Karwenz, the Chaos Warrior God and the Lord of Putrefaction had yet to take action, their very existences remained as colossal threats to us. We needed to make preparations against their combat strength, yet this was obviously impossible from the very start.

The situation was so dire, yet I broke down laughing in satisfaction.

"...Haven't any of your teachers ever told you the number one common-sense rule for adventurers? Never pick a fight against a mage where the mage has chosen the battlefield and had time to prepare. God of Holy Light, I truly regret that you didn't come here in your true body. Otherwise, my new world would become even stronger."

That's right. Since I knew from the very start that top-level combat strength would come here to hunt me down, I of course made sufficient preparations. I had prepared a trap here capable of devouring even the Main Gods.

I lightly touched the ground, the catalyst to dispel my illusionary magic. The entire world suddenly changed around them as the temperature rapidly descended. The endless amount of snow and ice told everyone that they weren't actually in the wild and primitive Dragon World. Instead, they were in an icy tundra where even inhaling the frigid air could be fatal.

The reason why the Ghostwind Plains had maintained its stability despite the entirety of Dragon World collapsing was because the Ghostwind Plains no longer belonged to Dragon World. Instead, it had become a part of my Frigidwinter Earth. And Frigidwinter Earth was the battlefield I had chosen for myself.

On the very first day I arrived, I had opened up my Frigidwinter Earth and begun connecting the two worlds. Well, considering the fact that my incomplete world had absorbed rules and nutrition from Dragon World, it would be more accurate to describe the

relationship as a parasitic one. Since the host was at the edge of a complete collapse, there was no longer a need for the disguise. It was now time for the "parasite" to furiously consume the host and replace it.

The colorful collapsing world had one especially noticeable patch of white. As the very sky and ground started breaking down with dimensional tears, the patch of white took the opportunity to devour the land around it. More and more colors transformed into the white of Frigidwinter Earth, while my monochrome world also gained its own new colors.

"Ha! What a beautiful scene. Come, angels, demons and heroic spirits. Become the highest-quality nutrition for my new world!"

As I maniacally laughed, I dispelled the illusions and revealed this world for what it really was. After I stopped hiding the icy tundra, it was naturally time for the ambushers hiding behind the illusion to reveal themselves.

Pitch-black knights silently rode on skeleton steeds. Under the command of their Undead Emperor, these undead knights wouldn't make a single sound.

Undead knights, Death Knights, Black Knights, Bone Dragon Knights and so on were all present. This tremendous undead knight squadron would forever be the vanguard of Yongye's Army. And now they had secretly arrived on this battlefield, remaining as silent as they always did. It was just that the raging soulfire within their skeletons revealed how much they desired to slaughter and harvest souls.

And they were just the beginning. Behind the vanguard of these undead knights was an unending sea of undead. Since my Frigidwinter Earth was capable of storing an infinite number of undead, and now that I needed combat strength capable of opening up the future, the skeleton warriors from Xiluo and Sulfur Mountain City became my new Eternal Night Army.

Behind the sea of undead, a black obsidian skeletal Soul Summoning Tower slowly began rising out of the frozen ground. The skeleton eyes embedded upon it burned with cyan soulfire, giving off a pale glow, seemingly desiring the souls of the living.

Finally, as if it were crazily howling with laughter the skeletal head opened its mouth. The Soul Summoning Tower emitted a black light which transformed into a giant pillar that shot into the sky. The sky, which had been stained red, now changed colors yet again. Dark clouds and the night descended as a chilly breeze blew over the land. Lives began being devoured by their own shadows as even the trees' shadows began to whisper. A country of the undead had arrived!

But this was still only the beginning.

"Ha! For us to create a country for the undead we naturally require the undead for the opening act. I never expected that I would one day gather all seven of my Original Sins."

Chapter 444: Hell Devils

That the System insisted on giving me presents despite the risk that she would expose her identity and rouse my suspicions meant they were very important.

"The most expensive and troublesome things in the world are those that come for free—no, I'm not talking about multi-level marketing or scams. Favors, trust and so on are the biggest headaches to deal with."

But despite the fact that I hated owing favors—especially troublesome ones—I had to admit that this time I owed my System. The "free" experience about creating the world I had received was far too important and a tremendous help.

Previously, when I had created Frigidwinter Earth, my ability to create a world relied on my talent as well as the System's cheat-like assistance. Even more of world creation was simply copying. All I had to do was imitate what Eich had done back in the day.

Actually, that was how mages did things. They didn't need to understand the foundational workings behind magic or Divine Arts. They only needed to follow established processes, the advantage of which was that it was far easier to learn such spells. However, the disadvantages were that they would be unable to surpass their predecessors, and the most critical drawback was that these mages would become inflexible and rigid during practical combat. If they were targeted or fell into a trap without being able to adapt, they'd likely meet death in the face.

True archmages and archpriests would analyze the foundational workings of their spells. They would understand the true reason why everything worked. They would be capable of casting magic with a flick of their fingers and modify and strengthen existing forms of magic. And the true indication that a mage was mature was if he or she was capable of using theories and current

conditions to improve or even invent new and specialized types of magic.

Without a doubt, of all forbidden spells the Seal of the Four Elements was the first and of the highest-level. Simultaneously controlling the four elements to create such a powerful seal had demanding requirements. For one to simply copy the method one had to be an incredible archmage, so let's not mention modifying and improving the Seal of the Four Elements. It would be even more impossible when we needed the evolved form of the Seal of the Four Elements: Creation via the four elements.

Originally, even with my Creation experience from Frigidwinter Earth, my most optimistic guess put us at a forty percent chance of success. Even if I succeeded by coincidence, my new world would be an incomplete product with deficiencies...

I was gambling everything on a forty percent probability, you ask? Well, the success rates of every other path I thought of went no higher than 0.01%, and doing nothing at all was the equivalent of waiting for death. A forty percent success rate was more than enough for us to gamble everything.

However, everything changed after I received this unexpected gift of the knowledge of Creation.

Astrya's gift was her memory of the very beginning of the world's creation. This was the original form of how to Create using the four elements. Not only did I obtain the most foundational knowledge of using such a magic spell, I also gained experience and knowledge on how to actually do so. After obtaining this gift, I probably surpassed even the Goddess of Creation herself in understanding how to Create because Eich had created the world mostly through her instincts, while I needed to use techniques to reproduce and surpass everything she did...

Why? Because what we intended to create was no ordinary world for the living.

"This place... shall be a country for the dead!"

With my proclamation, a pitch-black world stole away the existence of light with the Ghostwind Plains as its core. On this patch of land, obsidian pillars rose from the ground, like smaller versions of the tremendous black tower. A seemingly maniacally laughing skeleton head was at the top of each black pillar.

"This is a country for the dead. The living should stay away."

Just by faintly observing these pillars a warning sounded in everyone's minds. This was no threat. It was simply a statement of fact.

"Take one step within, and you'll never be able to leave."

This was an instinctive warning, as if an invisible border was present, where crossing it meant one's soul would forever be destined to stay behind.

If some still decided to treat this invisible, instinctive warning as a mistaken impression, then they would be greeted with the black mist these obsidian skeletons were spitting out.

"Poison!"

"How is this possible? How can we demons succumb to poison!?"

The black mist first swept over the location where the demons and devils were battling. These demons from the Chaos Abyss had long since gotten accustomed to the most extreme of environments. Their resistance to fire, acid and poison far surpassed any other species out there. As these demons were subordinates under Ladvioka, the Lord of Putrefaction, they lived in dimensions filled with toxic mist and poisonous swamps. Those with slightly low poison resistance would have long since died off.

An eight-meter-tall Burst Sword Inferno demon walking at the forefront was right next to one of the obsidian pillars that appeared. The moment he inhaled the black mist, he collapsed. And the moment he collapsed, the eternal flames on his body

spluttered out, together with his lost life.

His massive gray body and greatsword crashed into the ground, leaving a deep pit behind. Yet there wasn't a single visible injury on his body. His vicious face still had a confused expression, as if he didn't understand why he had died.

The next instant, a silver soul walked out of his body and disappeared into the black obsidian pillar, still with that confused expression. Then, as if the skeleton head on the obsidian pillar had eaten its full, it spewed out even more black mist.

The mist had begun to spread all around. Thanks to the example of this high-level demon, both demons and devils fled in all directions to avoid this death-bringing mist.

Meanwhile, through this black mist, the undead knights were beginning to increase the force of their charge. Their bones became thicker and stronger, their weapons and armor strengthened by the black mist, their skeletal warhorses faster and more agile. Soulfire flickered in the undead knights,' living, breathing and hungry.

When their enemies were retreating in fear, how could these undead knights, accustomed to spreading death, possibly miss this opportunity? They swiftly pierced and cut with their strengthened weapons that were capable of harvesting even the demons' souls. Any demon sliced by these weapons would collapse and lose their souls.

When faced with this abnormal black mist, even the powerful Ladvioka and his army began retreating. The devils on our side were no different, however. Despite their leader's commands, they began to retreat as well. In fact, some devils were even looking over with enmity in their eyes. It appeared they felt that I was using them as cannon fodder.

"Don't run! Don't resist!"

At my request, the Lord of Lies roared at his subordinates. With his command, Devil Lord Marshan, who had been near a patch of black mist, walked into it of his own volition. As black mist swirled furiously around him, he howled in pain, and a miraculous change occurred.

The gigantic Lord of Rebellion kneeled on the ground as the black mist changed his physical appearance and body shape. As the mist around him dissipated, his giant body experienced explosive growth. By the time all the black mist had been used up, a skyscraper-tall monster had been born.

The devils' typical traits of scales and magic claws had vanished. His smooth and well-proportioned figure was quite similar to that of humans, his dark green devil eyes now black. Compared to ordinary giants, the single black horn on his forehead was rather eye-catching. That horn was gathering mystical energy, and the energy aura around his body had increased in power by thirty percent.

"...He's just as ugly as he was back in the day."

Ilmisya pinched her nose and chuckled at the sight, but faint tears of joy and delight could be seen in her eyes. Of course she would recognize this physical appearance of Marshan. This ugly and courageous warrior now had the exact same physical appearance as when he was a human of Tall Mountain—other than an extra horn.

Marshan kneeled on the ground, staring at his hands in disbelief. The vicious appearing sword scar on his face started twitching with excitement as he lifted his head and roared with astonishing anger at the skies!

"Ahhh! Damned Chaos Abyss! I, Marshan Dibor, the greatest warrior of the Yellow Dragon Tribe, have returned!"

With angels and demons as the witnesses, the first Hell Devil, the Devil General Marshan, was born.

Wielding a tremendous trident, he charged straight into the demons' formation and began slaughtering and taking revenge as he desired. After seeing his transformation, the other immemorial devils hesitantly allowed the black mist to envelop them as well.

Soon, after a wave of roiling black mist and painful howls, countless new Hell Devils were bown anew. These Hell Devils didn't have the time to digest their reobtained former memories and knowledge as they walked back out onto the battlefield. The black mist that brought death to the demons had become their ally.

"My Hades Mist has finally succeeded."

I heaved a sigh of relief as I watched everything happen from the top of the first black tower.

This black mist wasn't actually a toxin. In fact, it had no attack power of its own. It was simply something that belonged to this "Plane of the Dead" that I had created. Anywhere it spread would become part of the country of the dead.

This black mist was replenishment for the dead. Living beings that touched it would be transformed into the dead. Or, in certain special circumstances, they would be transformed into the guardians of Hell: the Hell Devils.

In my previous experiment, I had provided a sample of my Hades Mist but failed to completely transform Marshan. Instead, he gained the strange appearance of that black mist twirling around him. But now, this completed version of my Hades Mist successfully transformed the devils into Hell Devils.

Ilmisya, who stood right next to me, was rather tempted by the sight. I understood that it was only natural for a woman like her to wish to restore her former beauty. However, I stopped her from going into the black mist. My country of the dead was still incomplete, and my Hades Mist, although capable of forceful transformations, was still too weak. There wasn't enough of it yet. Transforming a single Devil Lord had consumed much of the

Hades Mist I had on hand, and I couldn't afford to waste the rest.

Meanwhile, a hammer of flames was burning within the giant skeleton head next to me. Its flames were becoming darker in color as they went from bright red to a deeper crimson-black.

This hammer was actually the God Equipment of Fire that Solo had successfully obtained from the Water Elemental Plane: the Blessing of Original Fire.

Now, it was acting as one of my four top-level elemental items to create the foundation for my new world. It would be the part that represented the "soul." Unlike the mortal plane of Eich, where fire was the representative element of the soul, I was planning on having "death" be the factor of the soul.

Death was the foundation of Hell. Death was the most basic requirement that all existences must have in order to enter it.

"Only the dead will be allowed to exist in the country of the dead."

This black tower was one of the main pillars of the new dimension I was creating. It was creating the country of the dead. However, not everyone would simply sit back and watch this happen.

As this dimension's rules gradually started to form, wings of light descended before us as the Holy Light clashed against my Hades Mist. The still immature Hades Mist was directly dispelled as a squadron of angels arrived before us.

"I've never felt this annoyed before by the blinding Holy Light. Ayer, we're under great pressure here. Could you hurry things up?"

I received a response from the skeleton head right next to me. A familiar voice spoke up in that typically unhurried tone of his.

"I'm almost done. The Queen of Storms is slightly more difficult to deal with than expected. Hold on the best you can. I shall send some power over your way."

Together with Ayer's response, the skeleton heads dissolved into laughter as the Hades Mist furiously started spreading again. The angel charging at the forefront collapsed to the ground. This time, the increased black mist suppressed the Holy Light.

That's right. While I was the main person who designed and planned this forbidden ceremony to create Hell, I wouldn't have enough power to provide the high-level death energy and power required for this plan.

"Ha! Who in the world could possibly compare to the first undead in the world, the Death God Ayer, in purity of death energy?"

Currently, inside the black tower's skeleton head was a jade white humongous skeleton which provided an endless amount of death energy. This skeleton was the true core of the obsidian tower.

That's right, this skeleton was Ayer's own bones.

Ayer was even using his own corpse in our plan. It could be said that he was also giving everything he had in order to succeed constructing Hell here.

Ayer, who was currently far away in Auland, stroked the crystal skull in his hand as he witnessed his own tribe's transformation through their eyes. He unhesitatingly increased the amount of divine power he sent over to me, delighted.

I too possessed an identical crystal skull. When I felt Ayer's resolution and the powerful waves of death energy he was sending to me, I knew I could now enter the next phase of the plan.

Chapter 445: Inevitable Confrontation

Ladvioka, Lord of Putrefaction, was one of the oldest Demon Lords and one of the most powerful existences in the Chaos Faction—no—in the entire universe. Throughout the many generations, he had steadfastly carried out the demons' most basic tasks of conquering and slaughtering more times than he could count.

As a top-level existence in the demon food chain, he rarely got chances to personally take action. Unless a dimensional will was blind, it would reject the arrival of a mega-dangerous existence like the Lord of Putrefaction. And any time he did get to personally take action, the demons' conquest of that plane would be upgraded into complete and utter destruction. The demons' slaughter of that plane's residents would become the extinction of all species and lifeforms in that plane.

Ladvioka himself no longer remembered how many of the myriad planes he had conquered and destroyed. Now, he treated his destruction of dimensions as an artform—well, an artform only demons would admire.

"Although it's fun to directly tear apart those little worms and I admit I do enjoy slaughtering and fresh blood, plagues and infectious diseases can also help us achieve our goal. The former requires an entire demon army, while the latter only requires a single small mouse infected with a virus or plague. The only regret I have is that I'll be unable to personally listen to those pathetic worms howling in despair. Hah! That's why I always take a few souls back with me and toy with them slowly, asking them how they enjoyed their slow and inevitable deaths."

This rather unknown Demon Lord was actually far more effective than his brethren at spreading death and despair. Once the dimension was near death, writhing in agony, its laws would be unable to stop Ladvioka's arrival. He would then gleefully

harvest the souls that died in utmost despair. Ladvioka even considered himself a humble farmer who had obtained a great harvest after a year's worth of hard work.

"Hey don't look at me like that. I'm just a nice demon who happened to pass by. It would be a pity to waste so many delicious souls. I'm simply a hard-working, kind farmer. You're blaming me for spreading the plague and infectious diseases? Did any of you personally witness that? I'm simply sensitive to planes nearing their dooms. Yep, not only am I a good farmer, but I'm also a hard-working janitor who loves to help clean up the dimensions."

Not a single individual would dare blame him, but Ladvioka loved to give such excuses and lie even though a powerful existence like himself had no need to. This was simply his way of having fun.

Now, however, this 'destroyer-of-countless-planes' Ladvioka was shocked—truly shocked—for the first time in millennia. With his abilities, he wouldn't think that this black mist was a mere toxic fog. Nor was this the first time that dimensional laws had viewed him with enmity and tried to get rid of him. Yet...

"...Only the dead are allowed to exist? This is the first time I've seen such an unfriendly dimensional law. The Undead Emperors' Undead Planes have environments that aren't suitable for the living, but even they don't outright reject the existence of the living. If this plane directly transforms all lives into the dead, how is the plane supposed to exist? What value does it have for existing?"

Unlike what people would assume of a Chaos Main God-level existence, Ladvioka's mind wasn't only filled with thoughts of destruction and slaughter. He was very interested in philosophies on the meaning of life. In fact, he had earned actual titles in philosophy and history in the mortal plane. His personal Divine Kingdom in the Chaos Abyss, which was rather different from other demons' territories, was his most successful experimental field.

If that was his most successful, then were there experiments that weren't successes? Of course. Demons weren't exactly known for being creators. Ladvioka's favorite hobby was to insert new dimensional laws after destroying an entire dimension's resistance and lifeforms. Some dimensional laws he inserted were stolen from other dimensions, some were from the twisted and distorted Chaos Abyss and some were even his wondrous and weird inventions. He would then allow these dimensional laws to naturally spread and evolve on their own, watching to see what types of living creatures and results would appear in the end.

The world believed he was a Chaos Main God who possessed merely four dimensions—he was an unbelievably low-profile demon for a Main God-level existence. However, he actually possessed several hundred dimensions he used for experiments. He was truly a "farmer" who worked hard every day.

"Although he's a demon, he's actually trying to act like the Goddess of Creation? Is he insane?"

"All demons are insane, and the more powerful a Demon Lord is, the more insane they'll be. You actually want to try using logic and common sense to understand their way of thinking?"

There was no way he would be a kind creator. His distorted dimensional laws only created the most distorted of creatures. They breathed toxins and ate the plague itself; even if they possessed kind hearts and beautiful appearances, they were the bringers of death.

And so the powerful Demon Earl's favorite hobby was to be a "zookeeper". Although he would usually destroy his creations and dimensions in the end, he had gained many beloved "pets" over an untold number of years' worth of accumulation. In the ninth through thirteenth layers of the Chaos Abyss where he resided, at least, distorted lifeforms could be found everywhere. Even demons wouldn't dare tread in these layers, which were considered the most dangerous in the Chaos Abyss.

At the current moment, Ladvioka was astonished to discover that this newly forming dimension had a dimensional law which only brought about death.

He thought and thought about why this new dimension had such a strange law. Why was death the most foundational building block for souls here? Could it be that this dimension only allowed the dead to exist? But could this dimension establish a stable cycle, then? And the other dimensional laws were complex as well, more so than other dimensions, why...?

"...Mine! All mine!"

Fine then. He only thought about it for two seconds before his demon nature overcame him. No matter if he understood it or not, he wanted to first obtain it for himself. And if he was truly unable to understand it, then he would just destroy it!

"Get out of the way, idiots!"

When he decided to obtain this dimension at all possible costs, he began emitting an astonishingly rancid stench. The retreating demons didn't even have time to react before they clutched at their mouths and collapsed on the ground. Even demons far away suddenly had toxins within their bodies, causing them to directly collapse as well.

"Come out and play, my children! It's time to enjoy a feast."

After casually dealing with the cannon fodder demons, which cleared some space and provided a sacrifice, several hundred Dimensional Doors opened.

Wu! Wu!

Headless war elephant monsters walked out of the Dimensional Doors. Twisted whiskers sprouted from where their heads should have been, and their bodies were as large as mountains and covered with black dragonscales. An Inferno Giant that didn't dodge in time was directly stomped to death... More than three

hundred such war elephant monsters rushed out of the Dimensional Doors.

A rotting Dimensional Door brought another angel squadron into this world. Although these angels weren't as ice-cold as their heavenly relatives, their decaying appearances, exposed internal organs and wings with hordes of magical insects biting upon them were frightening to behold. When these angels suddenly opened their eyes, it could be seen that they had compound eyes, like insects. Even their eyes and ears were filled with crawling distorted magical insects. Some of these angels directly ignored their tiny "companions," while other angels tossed magical insects into their mouths.

Through a Dimensional Door so tiny that only a gnome would be able to pass through it a seemingly pure white-haired girl emerged. Her entire body was tightly chained up, her eyelids sewn permanently shut and her bright red lips gagged. When the other distorted magical monsters witnessed her appearance, even the largest among them ran at top speed for their lives. Those who ran even slightly slow started exploding mysteriously before their corpses were enveloped by strange mushrooms and plants. Countless "honeybees" emerged from these plants and then started seeking new nutrition for their "mother".

Yet another Dimensional Door opened, with some even more fearsome magical monster appearing...

Many Dimensional Doors opened as utterly unreasonable existences walked out. A mysterious sense of fear enveloped the entire field. This was the full power of a Chaos Main God. And this was the most troublesome part about fighting against a demon—nobody would know when this guy would start going crazy and suddenly going all-out!

Such a powerful existence would naturally be capable of distorting the dimensional laws around him. Ladvioka was more than capable of resisting the still immature dimensional law of

death. Once these distorted monsters from other planes filled their entire field of vision, all lives felt as if they were gazing at their own personal Armageddon.

"...This is a Chaos Main God?"

I took a deep breath at the sight before me. I had many inferences and plans made against these highest-level existences, but only when I truly faced one did I learn that just their very existences were incomprehensible for any mortal.

"Yep. That's one of the strongest demons among demons, a Chaos Main God-level demon, an existence loathed by the countless dimensions. Although I don't know why he suddenly brought out the full extent of his true power, allow me to go have some fun with this old friend of mine."

The Lord of Lies then nodded as he took off his hat and bowed in a polite fashion. He intended to directly enter the battlefield. To him, this despairing situation was nothing more than a cup of afternoon tea. After all, he too was a Chaos Main God existence, and his power level exceeded that of the insane Lord of Putrefaction!

"Wait a moment, let me deal with the Lord of Putrefaction."

As the overall commander for our side in this battle, I overruled Kamiltias and made the decision to take this opponent for myself. I would be dealing with this demon vanguard who had suddenly gone crazy and brought out his full strength.

"...Will that really be alright?"

Kamiltias obviously doubted my capabilities to face Ladvioka, a Chaos Main God. This was understandable. No matter how you looked at it, I was only a bit over three hundred years old, yet I intended to challenge a Chaos Main God whose age could be calculated in eons. This did appear rather suicidal. But it was indeed the best choice for my overall strategy.

"Of course. I'll leave the Chaos War God up to you. He'll be even harder for me to deal with. No, I should say that he's the number one existence I don't want to face here."

Indeed. Karwenz, who had unknown powers and motives, could be set aside for the time being. The God of Holy Light also obviously intended to sit on the sidelines to reap an advantage while we fought. However, according to records of Chaos War God Donatis's previous achievements, he was an incredibly skilled warrior who excelled at singlehandedly piercing through enemy formations and directly taking the head of the overall commander. His direct confrontation strength was said to be ranked foremost throughout all the planes in existence. It would be the worst for me if I had to face him directly since I was more of a tactical commander who focused on the big picture.

I had zero intentions of personally learning just why Donatis was ranked the first. And his fallen heroic spirit army was judged to be dead by my dimensional law, so that wouldn't work against him at all. All death magic had extremely low effectiveness against heroic spirits to begin with. If Donatis and his army directly made a beeline for me or tried to destroy my ceremony to create a new dimension, I wouldn't be able to do much.

So I requested the strongest individual on our side, the Lord of Lies, to stall this troublesome opponent. Although Ladvioka, the Lord of Putrefaction, would also be inconceivably powerful, his strongest abilities were poison and plague, which would be rather ineffective against my undead armies. I was used to large-scale military battles, so I would never be afraid of an enemy who also relied on large numbers of underlings. I would have much more of an advantage in this type of battle... especially compared to fighting against Donatis. I already had more than enough of all sorts of unreasonable heroes and War Gods.

Kamiltias was more than intelligent enough to realize all this without me telling him. He also knew that this would be the best

tactical choice. However, he was still worried that Ladvioka would kill me like swatting a fly, which would ruin the entire situation. But when he saw how insistent I was, he simply nodded and disappeared into the void.

"Long time no see. I believe that the last time we met was three thousand and two hundred years ago. Is that right, my dear 'War God' who loves acting as a loyal dog?"

The Devil King blocked the Chaos War God. Angels swirled in the air, choosing the immemorial devil army as their opponents. The difference in numbers made the God of Holy Light's incarnation choose to wait and observe. On a certain corner of the battlefield, a certain younger twin of mine was happily cooking his fish soup. He ignored everything going around him and was in turn ignored by everyone as well.

And now, as the horns of death trumpeted, my armies had gathered. My undead armies were about to clash against the most venomous of magical monsters. It was time for an all-out battle between me and Ladvioka.

"Ha! A large-scale military battle? You want to see who's better at creating new species? Do you really want to know whose children are stronger? Ahahaha that's an easy question to answer."

Chapter 446: Infallible

"Is it time?"

Along with the wind came a rotten stench of stink and decay. Demons, the symbol of destruction, were fully spread out before us. Their tremendous army of demons from the myriad dimensions emanated a tremendous sense of pressure. Here, even a single demon soldier had far surpassed the average human hero.

These demons faced an endless, silent darkness. I didn't need to describe the courage and loyalty of the undead warriors of the night. No matter the time or place I wanted them to fight, they would forever attack who I commanded them to.

Who was the enemy? How powerful were they? What were our chances of victory? My undead army would never ask such questions. Whenever the war horn sounded, their choice would be clear from the sound of the skeletal warhorses' hoof steps.

And to respond to their loyalty and expectations, I was going to lead them to victory—no matter the cost.

"It's time!"

I opened the silver book in my hands, and mystical secrets transformed into mysterious runes that flitted through the sky. Pure Order's newest power and the light of this God Equipment lit up the entire world.

"Original Codex of Law! Judge all the criminals before you! Forbidden spell: Great Judgement!"

One didn't need the light of judgement to determine that these otherworldly demon and magical monsters were the most evil of villains. Now, however, they were judged for their dimensional invasion and destruction. An ethereal silver light descended upon their bodies and transformed into actual restraints. Unfortunately, this large-scale area of effect restraint wasn't so strong against

these top-level destroyers. They were all able to break free in just a short few seconds.

Yet I had achieved my objective. Under the effect of Great Judgement, my power level would forcibly be improved by an entire rank since I was a Law job class member. I went from Legend to Saint.

For other powerful individuals, an improvement from Legend to Saint wouldn't make that large of a difference. However, me being able to achieve Saint rank would make a tremendous difference to both my army and myself.

I closed my eyes and caused a familiar icy tundra to appear before me, and then the entire world changed before me as the burning city of rubble appeared right before us, close yet untouchable. No matter how powerful the enemies, my warriors had never hesitated to fight them, either back then or today.

War drums sounded as the battle flags waved. The knights didn't give up on their hope no matter how bloody the battle became.

The icy tundra continued to extend as large snowflakes began to fall. The scene from that day had reappeared before us.

"The Infallible Diffindor..."

When the charging skeleton knights passed through my icy tundra, they reobtained physical bodies similar to the living, just like heroic spirits. This restored them to their peak forms from when they were still living—no—even stronger than when they were living.

I reached out and allowed snowflakes to melt in the palm of my hand. This familiar chill helped perk up my spirits. However, this was no time for me to be nostalgic. I clenched my fist and allowed the snowflakes to spread on the wind.

"...This still isn't enough."

That's right. When facing the endless demon army of a Chaos

Main God-level existence, a full heroic spirit army at Legend and above was still insufficient.

I opened up another book instead of the God Equipment Original Codex of Law and flipped through it, a somewhat tattered notebook which recorded all the details, steps and preparations for this plan.

And when I flipped to a certain page, a line of words began to glow golden.

"Have my personal strength reach a minimum of Legend, so that I can achieve Saint with the buff effect of the God Equipment Original Codex of Law. This is all for the sake of... a new Soul World!"

That's right. I would never be able to match Eich's unreasonable amount of strength and divine power. She could control and distort the four elements as she wished to create a new world. But if I wanted to create a world, even if I knew the theories and required technology, to actually do it would be the equivalent of using bricks and a shovel to create an entire world, something both impractical and impossible.

"Even if I could do it that way, I don't have the time to do so."

But, luckily, in the world of Eich, there was a method to use one's willpower to create a world. That's right—the specialty of those of the Saint rank and above: Soul Worlds!

Soul Worlds were the ultimate manifestation of mortals' thoughts and stubbornness. A Soul World would be its creator's most desired stubborn wish and ideal. A Soul World would become a dreamlike utopia that could distort the real world. A Soul World... was the only method of saving the world.

And right now before me, the snow-white icy tundra began to distort as that familiar castle collapsed. Its heroic knight defenders transformed into bones again.

"Diffindor has still fallen..."

My charging knights stared at the scene before them blankly. They didn't know what had happened. Some even dropped their weapons and battle flags in their astonishment.

Naturally, the demon army took advantage of this opportunity to strike.

I also gazed blankly at the world's collapse before me as a mysterious pain in my heart caused me to forget to breathe. But when I saw my knights staring blankly, everything I was feeling transformed into an angry roar that reverberated through the entire battlefield.

"...Diffindor has indeed fallen! But, dear knights of mine, our battle still isn't over! We admit that we have lost a battle, but so what if we lose? We are nothing more than remnant warriors who have already lost; we have already lost those that we desire to protect..."

I knew that in this Soul World we would be undefeatable because everyone, myself included, would be gazing at that forever burning city in the distance. We would feel like our families and friends were right behind us, giving us endless amounts of motivation with the desire to protect them. But...

"It's time to wake up from this dream! The country and people that we swore to defend have long been dead!"

The now collapsing Diffindor was the most painful sight to behold. The collapsing stones stole away my knights' will to fight, and my angry roar hurt my own heart to the extreme. Hurting my own loyal knights like this made me feel like I was bleeding in my heart. Yet...

"But even if we lost, we remaining defeated warriors still haven't lost a place where we belong! Think about those in the Northlands, think about how even bastards like us have so many descendants!

Why is it that in the barren Northlands they're willing to sacrifice everything for the sake of us useless individuals and clean up the mess we made?"

The silent knights now saw the People of the Mist who had traveled thousands of kilometers to return to their homeland. They saw the newly glowing holy city of Diffindor, the newly established scenes of life in the Northlands, the families they'd established together with their adopted children, and... children who desired a beautiful future.

The knights' fists, which had become slightly loose, were clenched tightly once again. They picked up the weapons they had dropped and started waving battle flags in the air. These skeleton knights would never fear any opponent, no matter how powerful the enemy. My knights would only fear not having any family or friends behind them that needed protecting. What they needed was a target they needed to protect.

"Indeed, we have lost in the past. But this time, we shall be infallible."

Soul Imprints could surpass a single individual's limits in an area because they were the accumulation of each individual's life experience and chosen path in life. I had many lives, so of course I had many paths.

But Soul Worlds were illusionary worlds created out of an individual's most stubborn belief, stubborn enough to transform dreams into reality. And so, in order to never be defeated again in the future, the past dream...

"We won't have a future if we are lost reminiscing in the past. The battle to obtain the future is right before us. It's time to wake up.

"This time, we shall be infallible!

"We have nowhere to retreat. We shall be infallible!

"Behind us are our family and friends. We shall be infallible!

"We carry hope on our shoulders. We shall be infallible!

"We shall fight the Gods for the sake of all mortals. We shall be infallible!"

The iron will of us defeated warriors reached a state of synchronization. The stubbornness of desiring a path to the future succeeded in transforming reality. I knew that my loyal and courageous knights forever trusted me. They had given everything to me.

And now, what spread before me was a new world, a Soul World with the determination to change the future.

"This is a country for the dead. And these loyal and sincere knights will be the guardian heroic spirits. They will possess true and eternal life, even if it's just a dream crafted out of ice and snow."

The snow, that had previously stopped, started falling down again as the land began to freeze over. Meanwhile, white towers representing ice and snow rose behind me.

In this incomplete world, after death became the foundation of all souls, a new basic element was created: ice and snow, which represented life.

"In this country of the dead, the dead shall also possess physical bodies and lives that belong only to here. Ice and snow shall give them new bodies for their souls."

Snow and ice descended upon the skeletons, forming into new physical bodies. These bodies were unlike heroic spirits' which were constructed out of energy that would never feel fatigue. Although these bodies were created out of ice and snow, they didn't lack skin, muscles, internal organs or anything else. My undead knights would be able to feel real pain and joy after so long. They would finally be able to have descendants and obtain the

feeling of life. In fact, they would even be capable of progressing and evolving!

That's right. This was real "life," not a mystical illusion or a temporary spell. The boundaries between life and death had truly been broken.

In this country of the dead, the soul would be placed within a vessel of ice and snow. Sinful criminals would need to be punished for their crimes in Hell, so of course they would need to have physical bodies. These bodies of ice and snow would give criminals new lives that would only be capable of being maintained in Hell.

But right now these bodies of ice and snow helped my undead knights reobtain life.

Did this look familiar? Of course it did. I learned the secrets of ice and snow lifeforms from communicating with the Frigid Nightmares. Their very existences were the best models for how to do this. The Northlands' special soul creature, the Frigid Nightmare, would now obtain countless new members of their species within Hell. No—when considering that these bodies had an outstanding potential to evolve, this was an evolved form of a Frigid Nightmare's body.

Currently, these bodies of ice and snow allowed my revived knights to become even stronger. But that wasn't the only reason why the demons were now afraid.

"Why won't they die? Impossible! Both their bodies and souls have been destroyed, so why do they revive?"

A headless knight picked up his head that had just been cut off and continued to fight. Even though his physical body and soul were then sliced into tiny pieces, he instantly managed to reform himself.

The reason? When in Hell, how could a dead individual who wasn't yet judged and punished by Hell possibly be allowed to die?

This was the most foundational reason for this world's existence. It was a basic dimensional law that would surpass everything!

But right now this basic dimensional law became the strongest undying property throughout the myriad planes!

This new life of ice and snow gave my formerly undead knights the possibilities of growth and evolution. Losing once? Losing twice? Who cared? These knights had long since gotten used to losing and would continuously evolve from their losses, finally becoming a nightmare opponent for any enemy, even if the process required centuries, millennium or tens of thousands of years!

"We are guarding the hope of the future. We shall be absolutely infallible!"

That's right. At least, in this battle, we absolutely couldn't lose!

"...You—you're too dangerous."

This sudden declaration came from Chaos War God Donatis. He had remained silent this entire time despite being the representative for the will of Chaos, secretly assessing my threat level. He had now come to a conclusion.

"Although you aren't personally strong, your thoughts and will are too dangerous. I, Donatis, believe you to be the most dangerous existence in the world...

"...and that's why you should die."

As the most loyal warrior of Chaos, Donatis was usually quite terse with his words. Any target he made up his mind to kill would, unsurprisingly, be killed by him.

But I had no intentions of directly answering his declaration to kill me at all costs. I just lightly touched the crystal skull in my hand and said one sentence.

"Ayer, can you see this? It's time."

Chapter 447: The Past and the Present

Back at Auland's battlefield, the sunlight had once again broken through the dark clouds. As the sun shined down on the battlefield, sounds of cheering filled the battlefield.

The endless torrential rains, which had washed away the humans' hope, stopped. The floods that covered the capital dispersed. When the Evil God's priests were no longer able to hear the summons of their master, the Queen of Storms, the Sea Tribe collapsed and fled even faster than expected.

After tossing their weapons into the air, the human warriors tossed themselves down onto the muddy ground and laid there enjoying the simple feeling of having survived. Not far away on the streets of New Kagersi, elderly folk hobbled out of their homes and gazed at the sunlight they hadn't seen in several years. The joy of victory filled everyone's hearts.

Although the humans had won this battle, few among them would wonder why the clouds dispersed so quickly or why the Sea Tribe's priests had suddenly lost their powers and Divine Arts.

"Our emperor!"

"Emperor Darsos brought us this victory!"

Floating battleships marked with the royal emblem of Auland slowly passed through the skies. Damaged and burnt black from the battle, these battleships became the representation of accolades and a mythic victory.

The humans only knew that their young Emperor Darsos had led them in reclaiming their capital, making Darsos' renown, at this moment, exceed that of any other emperor in Auland's history.

In a corner of the battlefield, those who had actually made all of this possible were preparing to harvest the true goal of this battle: the victory loot, the defeated True God!

"Is it time?"

Despite the mud everywhere, Ayer's white robe remained unblemished. Collapsed on the ground next to him was a giant blue-skinned woman. Now near death, her former insanity had reduced, and her always angry and dissatisfied expression had now eased itself. She even appeared to be a wild and beautiful tsundere.

"Tsk—tsk—tsk—she really is quite beautiful as long as she shuts her mouth."

The black-haired, black-eyed Lord of Despair's most annoying habit was probably how he loved to toy with his prey. He teased the Queen of Storms, hoping she would resist some more or even self-destruct herself.

But unfortunately she had been ambushed by these two Main God-level existences, who had gone all out—she could now barely breathe. She wasn't even capable of responding anymore.

From a certain standpoint, the Queen of Storm's fate had been decided the moment Aylos chose to sacrifice herself.

It could be considered a glorious honor that the Queen of Storms, who became a powerful God simply through her gambles, ended up being schemed against by two Main God-level existences along with countless others.

An attack against Rain City was the lure to bring in her incarnation. Shaking her believers' faith to the foundation would drive her to the brink. The Lord of Despair's highest-level domain of despair would cause her to become frustrated and make the worst possible decision. She ended up descending in her true body, which Ayer and the Lord of Despair, Heimor, had been waiting for. The moment she descended in her true body, she was instantly ambushed and defeated. The Queen of Storms' meteoric rise and fall in power was destined to be a classic example for history books of the future.

Of course, even if she didn't fall for the trap, her end would still be the same. It would just be that after the Sea Tribe were defeated and ran away, Ayer and Heimor would directly attack her Divine Kingdom and defeat her there. Of course, that would have a higher associated cost to it.

That's why the Queen of Storm's death was inevitable from the moment Aylos agreed to make the trade with the Ayer Faction.

However, Ayer wasn't happy in the slightest despite being the victor in this battle between Gods. His handsome face even appeared rather melancholy and blank.

Heimor, who was quite familiar with Ayer, was rather astonished to see such an expression. What in the world could give difficulties to Ayer, who he viewed to be capable of anything?

"Boss Ayer? What's the matter? Is there some other God scheming against us right now?"

Ayer didn't intend to explain anything to him, though. He simply glanced at the sunlight peeking through the clouds and heaved a heavy sigh.

"It's time."

******

When did this storm, destined to cover the entire world, really begin?

The first scheme probably started on the River Styx with the duel between the lich and the Death God.

This duel was utterly unequal from the very start. The Death God was from the oldest generation. He had experienced countless generations and was the very symbol of what it meant to be undying. As he was the guardian of the Cycle of Reincarnation, when the order of the River Styx he guarded was disrupted, he would be capable of using his true body on the River Styx. Plus, he had the dual support and boons of both Order and Chaos, so even

three or four Main Gods allying against him would be incapable of doing anything to the Cycle of Reincarnation.

In fact, such events had indeed occurred before. Some powerful Evil Gods desired more power and came to seek for the most foundational secrets of all along this river of souls. The end result for such Evil Gods, however, was that the Death God stole away their futures.

Meanwhile, the Death God's lich opponent had achieved the peak of mortals. The undying crown, which would only appear once every several thousand years in the mortal plane, was the best evidence of his extraordinariness. But no matter how extraordinary he was, he was still within the realm of mortals. The lich's strongest powers of forbidden spells and undead armies were worthless in front of the Death God.

The difference between the newest lich king and the most ancient Death God was like the difference between an ant and a dragon. And it was precisely this incredibly unequal duel that planted the seeds which would change the world.

"...I don't know why I went easy that time."

Perhaps it was because Ayer had seen Roland's familiar face multiple times in the River Styx. Perhaps Ayer was somewhat sympathetic to his "junior's" pitiful fate. Perhaps Ayer wanted to know what Roland wanted to do at the cost of destroying the Cycle of Reincarnation. Even Ayer himself didn't understand why he went easy on Roland that time as he was more than capable of defeating Roland with a single hit. Instead, Ayer went easy and gave Roland the chance to speak.

"...I have a plan. I have a plan that can truly stop the eternal Holy War. Would you happen to be interested?"

Even now, Ayer could recall the cracks on the lich's phylactery and how the soulfire in the skull seemed like it would go out at any moment. Yet that soul, which struggled to survive, was unafraid

and didn't beg for its life. Roland simply spoke about his astonishing scheme that seemed like an impossible fantasy to realize.

"From the very foundation, the sides of Chaos and Order in this Holy War are like two polar opposite political ideologies. Even without regards to Chaos and Order's natural born will and incompatible attributes, they'll still instinctively want to destroy the other. To stabilize the world, the political system has to be changed into a system with more than two parties. There needs to be a minimum of three, and the more the better. That's right—we need a neutral party. And you are the only one capable of doing it..."

At the very beginning, Ayer had been bored and just wanted to amuse himself. He could pass some time by hearing what this sly lich would try to say in order to convince Ayer to let him go.

That's right. Ayer's first impression of Roland was a clown trying to use sophistry to save his own life.

"...We need a new True God. He doesn't need to be particularly powerful. However, he needs to make judgements that everyone will recognize as absolutely fair. We also need a new Hell, which will take the place of the current Cycle of Reincarnation...

"...The current Gods' teachings benefit only themselves. Since spending money and sucking up to the Gods and their churches can help people ascend to heaven, so-called teaching people to be kind is nothing more than a joke. And in order to further eliminate the possibility of war, we can spread new teachings that only pure kindness will be allowed into heaven, while true courageous warriors who die for the sake of justice will enter an eternal heroic spirit temple. Meanwhile, villains will wail in pain as they are tortured for their crimes in Hell..."

Next, secrets that even Main Gods wouldn't know about were revealed by this particular lich. Not only was Roland utterly

disrespectful towards the True Gods, he even understood many secrets about the Creator Goddess.

The most ridiculous part was that even though he was clearly an evil lich king—the equivalent of a demon king that all lives would hate—he talked about a world belonging to mortals and how kindness and evil should receive just desserts. It would have been fine if he was just making things up, but Ayer could sense that Roland was telling the truth, that Roland had thought long and hard about this topic.

This went against the world's common sense. There was actually a good lich worried about the people? Was the lich insane, or was the world insane?

"Interesting..."

Perhaps it was due to Ayer's curiosity that he finished listening to the lich's insane plan.

"This sounds rather amusing. But how will you get me to believe your sincerity?"

As the most ancient Death God, Ayer wasn't someone who could be convinced through words alone. No matter how beautiful Roland made his plan sound, the plan was far too insane and had too low a probability of success. Ayer viewed this all as a roundabout method to plea to him to spare Roland's life.

Yet the lich laughed upon hearing this. The soulfire in his skull shook, expressing the emotion of delight. Was he so delighted to simply state his planned scheme out loud? Was that enough of a victory for him? Ayer got even more curious after seeing this.

"...According to the rules you abide by as the guardian of the Cycle of Reincarnation, are you going to kill me?"

The lich laughed, unmistakably and loudly.

"That's right."

"Excellent."

After he finished laughing, the lich inserted his cracked sword into the ground, using a soul summoning spell on his own phylactery. Black mist twirled around his indestructible holy sword, a sign the lich's soul was collapsing.

Shing!

After a sharp sound, cracks filled the lich's phylactery. It became meaningless as it would no longer be capable of protecting the soul it was supposed to. Roland was destined to die here.

"I'll give you my very life. How's that for sincerity?"

And so Roland used his death in that life to obtain a chance: the opportunity to speak to Ayer as an equal. Although Ayer helped seal the phylactery in the end, giving Roland enough time to deal with "affairs after his death," Ayer didn't actually think much of all this back in the day.

"It's too difficult to accomplish..."

That's right. It was indeed far too difficult to accomplish. Being able to singlehandedly create a new power of Order and a brand-new Divine Concept? That was at the level of the God of Holy Light's achievements back when he was still a human. And being able to meet such requirements was merely the beginning to this grand scheme.

Ayer simply rowed his boat quietly on the River Styx and soon forgot about this plan.

But then he received news that Roland had died.

"Ha! Mortals are too weak. He was so ambitious, wanting to change the world despite his weakness?"

Ayer felt some pity as he exclaimed out loud and shook his head. But soon his pity turned into astonishment.

"Eh? What a youngster. He actually managed to pull the wool

over my eyes."

That's right. The Roland from that year had truly died. However, Roland had made his move in the River Styx and successfully fooled the Death God. He had successfully crawled out of the River Styx after falling in!

And as Ayer watched from the side with ambiguous emotions, he witnessed how Margaret and Adam arrived to hunt Roland down by the River Styx. And that was how the Undying Roland came to be sealed away in the Underground. As for whether these two heroes had actually received a hint to Roland's location from that Death God? That was unknown except to the parties involved.

Still, from a certain standpoint, the sly Roland received Ayer's recognition because of it. At the very least, after Ayer discovered that the lich was still living quite fine in the Underground, Ayer visited from time to time just to chat. Since Ayer had "few friends, and even fewer enemies (all his enemies were dead)," this was rare for him to do.

But Ayer never thought much about Roland's "grand scheme," forgetting about it entirely, until a certain day...

Chapter 448: Hell Faction

"The power of Law? Arbiters and judges? I never expected that this would turn into reality one day."

The scene from approximately seventeen hundred years ago replayed itself as a new power of Order joined the Order Faction. This time, it was Law, and once again, the forgotten loser in the Underground rose to become a popular topic of interest throughout the world.

Well, it would be an exaggeration to say 'throughout the world.' Only powerful individuals and Gods would have access to such secret information. In their eyes, the creator of Law was the same as the God of Holy Light from the past. They assumed that Roland would be able to ascend to Godhood whenever he wanted.

Considering how the Child of Nature (a currently dead Order Main God, whose two children were the Goddesses of Joy and Laughter), Earth Mother, God of Holy Light and other creators of new powers of Order had become Main Gods, this insane lich, who had acted ever so ridiculously in the Underground, became viewed as a new Main God candidate by the Gods. No—it was a definite that he'd become a Main God in the future.

There were only seven Main God-level existences in the entire Order Faction to begin with. It was an unparalleled status, the highest possible, and was right under the Creator Goddess herself. To become a Main God would be an insurmountable honor, the highest glory, and a path to eternity.

The Chaos Main Gods had to worry about dying because of their infighting, but the Order Main Gods typically didn't have such trouble as long they followed the few orders of the Source of Order. Of course, their Godhood also came with the restrictions of Order.

"...Congratulations. When do you intend to ascend to Godhood?

Perhaps we'll become future allies. Perhaps the best timing for you to ascend to Godhood will be the next Holy War..."

Ayer still didn't know why Roland understood so much about the Gods' secrets. But Roland was one of his few friends, and he visited him to offer his congratulations as well as an offer of a concrete alliance.

"What? Ascend to Godhood? Isn't that going to be on the day we begin our grand scheme?"

Only after hearing Roland place extra emphasis on the word "we" did Ayer finally recall the "grand scheme" he had long since forgotten about as it had sounded too wild and insane at the time. Only after a long silence did Ayer begin to speak again.

"Are you certain? With my assistance and the power of Law you created, you should be able to become a Main God-level existence. You're choosing between becoming an undying, eternal Order Main God and to start that almost impossible, insane plan of yours, and you're going to choose the latter over the former?"

Even if the Creator Goddess created a new world with new residents after the destruction of the world, even if all mortals perished, the Main Gods would forever be the highest of all existences. Mortals viewed the Main Gods themselves as the representation of eternity!

Any other person would view Roland as an utterly insane, crazy maniac. He was treating his obtainable immortality as nothing more than a joke and instead wanted to gamble on something with a truly pitiful chance of success?

Yet Ayer could still recall how Roland had stared at him as if he was an idiot after he asked that question.

"Main God? So what? Is there any meaning to 'eternity' as an automated zombie?"

Roland dismissed the status of a Main God and claimed that such

an eternity was meaningless, like an automated zombie—wait, what? Even Ayer paused in surprise upon hearing such an insane declaration. After some momentary confusion, Ayer became filled with rage.

Without a doubt, the lich was blaspheming against the Gods' entire meaning of existence. But as Ayer's anger boiled, he thought back to his past memories, to his tribe who had become devils in Hell's Abyss, to this joke of a Holy War that forever had no end, to the mortals that danced like puppets in the palms of the Gods, and, of course, to how souls would forever end up harvested like wheat.

"The Gods treat mortals' lives and desires as nothing more than a joke or a play to be enjoyed. Since there's something even higher controlling the Gods, wouldn't that make the arrogant Gods nothing more than puppets controlled by the Sources of Order and Chaos themselves? Even if these puppets are higher, they can't even control their own fates. Isn't their pride a joke, then? This type of eternity is worth even less than mortals' lives that fade ever so quickly."

Ayer's anger vanished after he perceived how the lich before him had seen through the truth and fate even more so than himself. After pondering for a long while, Ayer finally asked a question:

"Are you serious?"

"Hey—hey—Boss Ayer, I've always been serious. Don't tell me you want to back out at such a time? After all this time I've been working so hard for this goal!!"

The lich skull's garish smile was as hideous to behold as always. But only now did Ayer notice that concealed beneath this seemingly casual expression was someone who had seen through it all.

Roland was well aware that Ayer had always treated his plan as nothing more than a joke. Still, he had worked his hardest in secret and made the required preparations to turn this "joke plan" nobody

believed into a reality.

When the light of Law illuminated the entire world, the Order Gods waited for their new ally to ascend to Godhood. However, the fortunate individual who created the power of Law unexpectedly went silent. A long time passed without the God of Law's ascension to Main Godhood, and they couldn't help gossip among themselves.

"Just a temporarily blooming flower."

"A tattered soul is insufficient to ascend to venerated Godhood."

"Perhaps this new Divine Concept will be taken advantage of by some junior in the future. Hahaha! Could it be that this fellow is the charitable type?"

Not only the True Gods, but even the other undying individuals and Follower Gods had begun to laugh at this lich who had been unable to ascend to Godhood. Yet only Ayer was aware that the real reason Roland didn't personally ascend to Godhood was because he was unsatisfied with his newly-born power of Law.

"No—no—no—the current power of Law is still too similar to Holy Light. It would be meaningless to only represent punishment. Salvation for criminals and generosity towards the kind and innocent is what's most important. Let's add something to the Church of Law's teachings: 'Someone invisible is always watching your every action from up above. All crimes will receive the punishment they deserve. A Hell for the dead is waiting for you. Not a single person will be exempt from this.'

"Hmmm, this doesn't work too? How about we change the teachings so that different levels apply for different people, then? Divine job class members of the Church of Law and all God of Law believers will have to follow the strictest requirements of Law. All other mortals will only have to follow the most basic restrictions. Yep, in order to convince more people, let's call them Divine Laws.

"There's no Heaven or Hell, you say? Hehehehe—isn't that the next part of our plan?"

Full of patience, Roland spent most of his time locked away in Sulfur Mountain City modifying his grand scheme and the teachings of his Church of Law. The official teachings of the Church of Law had already underwent several hundred modifications. Originally, the power of Law had been too harsh and inflexible. Under the guidance of its creator, it became a lot more moderate.

"Law itself shouldn't have a will of its own. It's but a moral guideline all people should abide by. Only those who cross the line will be punished."

To the weak, Law would provide salvation and protection while to those who committed evil deeds, it would bring heartless punishment and judgement. But unlike the Holy Light, which viewed undead, demons, and other creatures of Chaos with natural enmity, this newly-born power of Order known as Law surprisingly didn't have any natural enemies whatsoever.

Later, when Law became a different power based on the people with different beliefs who wielded it, Ayer began to wonder if Roland was someone insane who had dual personalities.

But Roland's century spent on polishing the power of Law didn't go to waste. The power of Law became far gentler than its closest relative, Holy Light. Law's silver glow resembled the moonlight and exuded an aura of calmness, yet if someone broke the Law, it would instantly sharpen to resemble the glint of a guillotine blade.

"...Perhaps this newly-born power of Law and its boundaries will finally be able to stop the Chaos and Order Factions."

Perhaps it was Roland's stubbornness that finally moved him. Or perhaps the most ancient Death God had accumulated a sufficient amount of dissatisfaction. Only when Ayer witnessed the constant improvements to the power of Law did he finally make the

decision to completely support Roland's grand scheme. And at this point in time, no matter how one looked at it, Roland's grand scheme had a less than twenty percent chance at succeeding.

"Yeah, there are too many unpredictable factors. It's impossible for me to promise it will succeed. But judging from the current situation, it's worth gambling upon. Rather than doing nothing, this at least has a slight possibility."

Roland was quite honest in admitting this. He could only be honest, after all, as it was evident for anyone who wasn't an idiot. Not a single individual would be willing to board a ship destined to sink. There was no need for Roland to make empty promises about 'absolute victory.'

"At least, things aren't hopeless anymore."

Indeed. When compared to Armageddon, where all the souls in the mortal plane would be harvested in the battle between Gods that would destroy the world, this was the single path that could be found where no paths previously existed.

During Roland's long, long search for ways to improve his path, more and more companions boarded his "Roland's ark" for surviving Armageddon despite the fact that his ship seemed like it would sink at any moment.

Roland never hid from anyone just how pitifully low the chances of success for his plan would be. However, Adam and Margaret unhesitatingly joined after learning the truth from him. It was impossible for Roland to chase a single Northlands undead knight off his ship. It was also unknown when such a large group of gentlemen bastards had infiltrated the ship, and, the very beginning, the Church of Law itself had been an integral part of the ship.

The residents of Sulfur Mountain City boarded Roland's metaphorical ship. The Underground Alliance boarded his ship. The Northlands boarded his ship. The Mage Country was scammed

into boarding his ship. The wood spirits boarded his ship right from when they were born. Even the typically neutral fairies used concrete actions to show that they supported Law over Order Faction's Holy Light.

Imperceptibly, the "grand scheme" became a plan no longer single-handedly being run by Roland. More and more companions took part in his plan of their own volitions. Some had ideals of justice and kindness, some took part for their own benefit, and some simply wanted to survive this Holy War. But no matter the reason, they all boarded Roland's ship and became part of Roland's faction's strength.

As time passed, more and more individuals gathered together under Roland's faction. This almost impossible path to the future became slightly easier to walk down. Of course, compared to the factions of Chaos and Order and their total two-party system monopoly on the world, this new "neutral" faction's overall power still wasn't much.

Could it be that Chaos and Order never noticed anything? Chaos evidently had much information about them, and it was also quite obvious that Roland and Ayer's faction had a bad relationship with the God of Holy Light despite appearing to belong to the Order Faction on the surface. It wasn't that either faction didn't notice—it was that both major factions didn't care. Order and Chaos forever viewed each other as the biggest threat and mortal enemy. As for this third party trying to do something...

"Aren't there always minor powers that betray one faction or the other in every Holy War? Let us see how sinners like you will amuse us."

These scheming individuals were nothing but traitorous sinners in the view of the two major factions that ruled the world. They'd be considered evil villains who tried to overthrow the basic idea of Order, nothing more than clowns that could be casually crushed by the whims of either Order or Chaos!

But Roland's ship had managed to fix the major holes in it, and it was now time for this ship to set sail. The most powerful passenger had finally boarded—no—Ayer should be called the helmsman.

Which meant it was finally time to directly break with the two major factions.

"Coconspirators? Hah! You've chosen an excellent word, Roland."

Ayer recalled memories from the past, of how he had lived in the ancient barbaric times of wilderness all the way up until now. He had witnessed far too much change in history, the main rulers of the world constantly replaced by another species. Ancient first-generation humans, Gold Elves, humans of the immemorial generation, great demons, Royal Elves—countless cultures in their full glory that would astonish even the Gods. But in the end, no matter how majestic the culture, it would forever become nothing more than rubble together with the culture's relics in the fires of war.

Throughout the endless cycle of destruction and rebirth, had culture progressed? Regressed? Did culture stand still? Had it reached the peak? Or...?

"Perhaps, in the eyes of the Gods, mortals' culture is nothing more than a sand castle on the beach, valueless and ephemeral?"

Undead were undead because of their stubbornness; they weren't willing to accept the eternal rest of death. As the most ancient and first ever natural undead, Ayer was no exception. The long years caused Ayer to forget what he had originally been so stubborn about, but he could still remember some.

In the very first generation of Eich, the natural environment was harsh with famines and vicious beasts and dimensional invaders were common due to the still immature dimensional laws. But back then, at least, the powerful didn't view the weak as ants. Weak lives weren't in such despair. Culture wouldn't become so stratified due to manmade reasons.

The frontier state of such a dark age was difficult to survive in. Tribe leaders and scholars of that time raised their flags as Gods and SemiGods used primitive totems to protect the mortals. There was no so-called power of belief back then, yet people sincerely idolized and respected the Gods that protected them. Ayer had seen this past in his dreams many, many times.

He had crawled out of his grave as an undead. Wasn't it all because he was still worried about his own tribe? But, at the very least, the ancient Gods in that generation were trustworthy. They would personally protect and help the mortals rather than reside on some temple's throne and mutter hypocritical teachings to await the chance to harvest souls.

"Ha! Just who is the real devil who scams people's souls?"

But the Gods of the current generation had become nothing more than decorations on their Divine Thrones, bound by their so-called Divine Concepts and source of belief. The People of Tall Mountain had become devils reviled by everyone. Ayer's tribe had become nothing more than cannon fodder and puppets in the eternal Holy War. Was this the fate the first generation of humans deserved? Was this the world the Creator Goddess herself desired?

"Mother Goddess Astrya, is this the Order and teamwork you wanted to see? Sister Cynthia, is this unending destruction the penultimate evolution you sought? Since you won't give us the right to survive, why give us the ability to have hope? We are not your puppets or marionettes! It's time to end this useless war once and for all!"

Three death roses—red, black and silver—appeared in the Death God's hand before vanishing into a windstorm that enveloped everything.

The ancient undying Death God made his decision.

"Henceforth, we shall no longer belong to Order, nor shall we belong to Chaos..."

The moment he started incanting out loud, the entire world began to tremble violently. He was an existence at the peak of the myriad planes, and his declarations possessed actual power. The moment he began uttering out loud, he was joined by other Gods, who spoke the same words in their Divine Kingdoms.

"Henceforth, we shall no longer belong to Order, nor shall we belong to Chaos..."

More than ten Gods joined him, their declaration setting the sky on fire and shaking the entire world.

"Henceforth, we shall no longer belong to Order, nor shall we belong to Chaos..."

It could be said that the Source of Order's greatest mistake was that it didn't imitate the Chaos Faction and inject its will into its species at birth like Chaos would do so with newborn tiny demons. Not every former mortal who ascended to Godhood would lose their sense of self and forget who they originally were. These Gods saw real hope for the future in front of them, and they made their choice to leave the Order Faction.

"...We shall now belong to Hell!"

"...Hell!"

"We are the Hell Gods!"

Giant meteors streaked through the skies, breaking the worldview of the mortals. According to mortals, when a True God perished their Divine Kingdom would transform into a meteor and streak across the skies. What, then, did this meteor shower mean? Each meteor in this shower far surpassed the might of the meteor that had hurtled down when Lorci had died. Could it be that more than ten powerful Gods had simultaneously perished? That was impossible! How could so many powerful Gods all die at the same time!?

"They didn't die. They just betrayed the Order Faction."

Sulo, an astrology archmage at the Cloud Tower, broke out into a cold sweat. Legs trembling, he told his fellow mages his professional analysis of what had just occurred.

Indeed—these Gods hadn't perished. They had just removed their Divine Kingdoms from the Source of Order's control and entered into an unknown dimension. Obviously, this was a betrayal! The Order Faction had been betrayed by more than ten True Gods in one go!

The mortals were absolutely astonished at this scene. However, the Gods who watched their Divine Kingdoms crash and burn were rather excited; they had waited far too long for this day.

"Sigh—I won't be able to make much money for the next few years. I hope I'll be able to do good business in Hell."

Beyana was also somewhat displeased as she had to leave despite the fact that her business was booming.

"Ha! The Contract Heroes System has already become automated and will work by itself. Even if you're in Hell, your main businesses will be unaffected. We're only going to be leaving for a few years. Or do you want to stay behind and be ganged up on by those old fogeys?"

"Shut up! Stop distracting me! I need to sense the existence of that dimension. What are we going to do if we get lost in the void?"

Unlike her typical quiet self, Moonlight Goddess Patricia was thrilled and enlivened. She had waited for this day for far too long. Due to her Divine Concept of "Guidance," she had taken on the role of leading the Gods to Hell, but she was still unable to suppress the joy in her heart.

"I'm finally free..."

Before he left, God of Fate Catio didn't forget the task assigned to him even as he exclaimed over his own fate. He viciously shook the stars in the sky, sending all astrological signs into chaos.

The utterly chaotic trails of Fate he stirred rendered all prophecy-type abilities and magic spells useless. This greatly lowered the possibility that other existences would be able to locate and come to the new Hell.

But even if Catio didn't do this, it wasn't that easy to come to Hell uninvited.

Ayer no longer needed to hide anything, so he used his full power to separate the Dragon World dimension, now known as Hell, from the other planes. Soon, every connection to Hell from other planes would be severed. And the Holy War was in its heated stages, with angels and demons about to clash. The Order and Chaos Factions would be unable to locate the Hell Gods to vent their anger.

That's right—the Ayer Faction would now be known as the Hell Gods, the gods of the neutral faction, and this new dimension would become their main base. They would help create a complete Cycle of Reincarnation in this new world, breaking the total monopoly Order and Chaos had over the mortal plane.

By now, the former Ayer Faction had completely broken with the Order Faction. But since the new Hell Faction possessed far lesser strength than the Order and Chaos Factions, these neutral Gods would go into hiding in the new Hell, just one of many dimensions impossible to locate in the void of the universe. Still, the Hell Gods had left backdoor programs behind in the mortal plane that would allow their divine power to be shared with their believers.

However, just like the Chaos Evil Gods, the Source of Order would no longer have control over the Hell Gods. If this was an era of peace, the Source of Order would naturally send out a force of Gods to deal with this situation. But it was now a heated stage of the Holy War, and the Chaos Faction would never miss such an opportunity to take advantage of their opponent's weakness—they'd just been betrayed by so many Gods, after all. Since the Chaos and Order Factions would be drawn into an inevitable conflict of epic proportions, neither faction would have the spare

time to chase down and deal with the neutral Hell Gods.

And according to the "grand scheme," when the Hell Gods finally reappeared in the Holy War, they would possess the ability to stop the Holy War once and for all.

All the signs in the skies informed the mortals that there had been a huge break in the Order Faction. Even some of the Gods themselves were confused by this, so it wasn't exactly a surprise that all divine job class members went into a frenzy. At this moment, yet another meteor suddenly streaked through the sky. Almost as if it would tear the sky apart, its quality surpassed that of any meteor before it.

"...A Main God! Which Main God is it?"

"By the Holy Light! It's..."

"Elf Main God Anslo! He actually betrayed the Order Faction at such a time!?"

Don't misunderstand—Anslo's meteor headed in a different direction from the Hell Gods' meteors. It hurtled towards the lower planes, the Chaos Abyss, the realm of the demons. Anslo had long intended to betray the Order Faction, and when he noticed the other Order Gods' betrayal, he didn't hesitate to take this opportunity to run and betray as well.

He had indeed chosen the perfect timing. Ayer's betrayal had been made obvious, and the Source of Order would soon send out Main God-level strength to assassinate the traitors. Of course the Source of Order wouldn't have sufficient power to chase down a Main God-level existence like himself.

As the Elf Main God took advantage of this opportunity and the new Hell Faction Gods headed towards the new Hell, Ayer, one of the two "main culprits," simply stood quietly next to the River Styx.

The River Styx's murky waters splashed against its shores as it

had for time immemorial, and demons' wails could be heard in the burning waters and rubble not far away. More than a century ago, this was where Ayer and Roland had formed the beginning of their "grand scheme."

Now, the most important part of their "grand scheme" was about to be enacted here.

"It's time."

Chapter 449: Contract with the Powerful

"We don't have much time left. It's time for you to make a choice. Please give me your answer."

As the entire mortal plane sunk into utter chaos and winged messengers busily flitted around everywhere, Solo had already cursed his shameless companions countless times. It was as if all the other Gods felt that his Divine Concept included Messengers, which it didn't.

"...I'm no God of Messengers! I'm clearly the Guardian God of Bards! I'm not a professional messenger! I'm the God of Art and Music, the muse for all artists and musicians!"

But from a certain standpoint, since he had been sent out on too many messenger and diplomacy tasks already, outsiders now saw Solo's identity as being the personal messenger representing Ayer. Quite a few had actually forgotten his original job.

And right now, Solo was acting as a messenger yet again. He delivered his side's proposal for the contract, but the side he was offering the contract to was rather hesitant.

Solo was currently negotiating with two behemoths that represented two major factions in Dragon World. Although the size of Solo's incarnation was already gigantic, he was still nothing more than a tiny mosquito in front of these existences.

The more powerful a Titan was, the larger he or she would be. That was a trait of the Titans. And, compared to his fellow Titans, the Titan King was the largest one of them all. The fourth-ranked Titan, Yins, reached only up to his waist. Solo was nothing more than a tiny mosquito the size of his eyelash.

The Titan King's ancient features and beautiful body were just like a perfect sculpture. His simple armor only covered the weakest parts on his body. Rather than calling what he wore defensive

equipment, it looked more like decorative attire.

He stood there unmoving, as if he was a divine sculpture from the ancient generation. However, nobody would truly think that he was a sculpture, as thunder and windstorms swirled all around his body. Just the energy level of this alone far surpassed all so-called forbidden spells in the world. This furious thunder capable of destroying any city easily was actually quietly streaming around him, as if it was a quiet river stream. It showed no signs of power leakage whatsoever.

When faced with Solo's question, the Titan King's ancient and serious face appeared expressionless. However, the situation for the Titan King and his tribe was quite terrible at the moment. Everywhere around them, holes and cracks could be seen in the sky itself. The ground was constantly cracking as small pieces of mountains started floating in midair. The entire world was nearing total collapse around them.

"Lord Titan, you now know what Death God Ayer wishes for. Our time is limited, so please make your choice soon."

That's right, "Titan" was also the name of the Titan King. In their ancient language, the word "Titan" meant "the largest and strongest individual". Evidently, Titan completely fit the meaning of the word "Titan".

So as the first Titan, Titan naturally became his name. All the other Titans addressed Titan as "Eldest Brother". He was the most ancient child of the earth, the oldest son of the Goddess of Order, and the strongest warrior of them all in the Supreme Immemorial generation.

To assess his current power level, despite the fact that being sealed away for so long would somewhat diminish his strength, he wouldn't be any weaker than any so-called Main God of today as he was the strongest existence of his time. In fact, over the entire Titan species, if you only looked at combat strength, there would

definitely be two or three that could reach the level of Main God.

Yep, the Titans would never fear the so-called Gods when it came to combat strength. In fact, there was even a saying that the Titans were the original models from which the ancient Gods were based on, that the Creator Goddess had used them as the model to create the first Gods.

The Titans all had their own unique natural talent abilities. These abilities were typically comparable with or even better than the Concepts that Gods had control over. But, compared to the varied number of Gods out there, the Titans' greatest advantage was that they were exceedingly capable fighters. Yins, the fourth-ranked Titan, and Hatley, who wasn't even in the top ten of Titans, had managed to use their incarnations to absolutely suppress the True Gods' incarnations in the battle at Oak Town.

In the ancient legends, not only were Titans the most skilled artists and architects in all the planes, they were also the most powerful guardians for the Goddesses of Order and Chaos. The Titans fought against all sorts of demonic beasts from other dimensions, while the Gods were the masters of the dimensional laws. The Gods back then were just like civil officials that would rarely partake in actual physical fighting, which was the root cause behind why the Titans, who loved to fight on a daily basis, looked down on the Gods. How could a weak civil official in a high position possibly get along well with a warrior general who was constantly on the frontlines?

Ever since the ability to ascend to Godhood through power of belief appeared, powerful Gods, including Main Gods, started appearing more and more often. Yet back in the Supreme Immemorial generation, the Titans had relied purely on self-cultivation to achieve a combat strength which far surpassed the ancient Gods. And, they were unwilling to submit to the rule of those they viewed as weaker than themselves, which was why they finally rebelled against the Goddess of Order's view of "Order".

And even now, these Titans that had reached the peak through actual battles and self-cultivation would still look down on all the so-called Main Gods that obtained their powers through belief or the High Gods of today. And to be honest, if the Titans really fought against the True Gods of today, it would be difficult to say who would win and who would lose.

Finally, the entire Dragon World's collapse and the Titans' fear finally caused the Titan King to no longer be able to remain silent. His deeply booming voice was like thunder.

"Such a dirty scheme and such sly tactics aren't Ayer's style."

Since he was willing to talk, that meant there was a chance at negotiation. Solo was delighted inside but didn't allow that to be revealed in his expression.

"Yep, Boss Ayer's personality is quite direct. He wouldn't use such little tricks. Still, one of our younger brothers came up with this scheme. His reputation is just as black as his hands are. As long as the result goes well, he's never afraid to get his hands dirty... Just think about it. As long as you promise to contract with us and agree to our conditions, won't the end result be quite beneficial for you?"

Solo unhesitatingly sold out Roland as the mastermind of this scheme, although Roland wouldn't have minded to begin with...

At this moment, Titan sunk into deep contemplation. As the leader of his entire tribe, he was no brawny musclehead like what he appeared to be. In fact, things were the opposite. In the ancient past, he even had a good relationship with the first generation of humans and was acquainted with Ayer as well.

The Titans had survived even until today and had never even once had an internal conflict amongst themselves despite having suffered numerous setbacks before. This was the best evidence that his leadership abilities were outstanding. This was something that couldn't be achieved with power alone.

The gigantic Titan was quite wise as well. Titan was the one who had his juniors send out incarnations to act in the mortal plane, making preparations for after they broke free from their seal. And even while sealed, Titan came up with many plans for what to do after they all broke free. But unfortunately, not a single one of his plans was usable in this current situation.

Titan could sense that this dimension had already become severed from all other dimensions. It would still be possible to enter this dimension from other dimensions, but leaving here was now basically impossible. And, the dimension was also collapsing at a rate that was one thousand times faster than what Titan expected. He didn't have much time to think at all.

Titan knew that it would be impossible for the Titans to leave this plane as they didn't have dimensional coordinates for any other dimensions. Although it might still be possible for himself and a few of the strongest Titans to escape and survive in the void, all the other Titans and their bloodlines' descendants would be doomed.

The entire Dragon World was collapsing. But due to the Titans' protection, the land that they stood on didn't appear to even shake one bit. Yet, everyone here knew that when Dragon World collapsed entirely, even if they still managed to survive the dimension's collapse and maintain a simple ecosystem here, they would end up using up all their resources and supplies in the void.

Everyone knew that the Titans had no other path to survival now. And so, a devil took advantage of this opportunity and made them an offer with conditions that were impossible to refuse.

"Little lizard, what will you decide?"

This was actually a three-way negotiation that had reached a stalemate. Titan glanced over at the other faction that was in the same situation as him, even though this faction had been mortal enemies with his own just not long ago.

Supreme Immemorial Gold Dragon Loft was the ancestor of Immemorial Gold Dragon Halos, the council leader of Dragon City. Loft was one of the most ancient existences in all of Dragon World, who was large enough to cover an entire city. Yet, he was only the size of one of Titan's hands.

The Titans had always looked down on the dragons. Even the Titans' relatives, the giants, would dare to challenge the dragons, so how could the Titans of pure bloodline possibly respect the dragons?

The dragons wanted to be respected? Sure, but they would have to prove their power. They would have to invite the oldest dragons of all that had experienced the wars between Gods in the very first generation.

Perhaps Supreme Immemorial Gold Dragon Loft was indeed one of the eldest, most veteran, and most powerful existences among the dragons. Yet, when compared to Titan, the first Titan, the only difference would likely be if it took one or two attacks to kill him.

"Venerated God of Artists, I shall represent all of Dragon City in agreeing to your conditions."

But, it was important to save face even if everyone knew who was superior. Loft pretended not to hear Titan's words. Instead, Loft turned around and nodded directly at Solo, agreeing to the terms of the offered contract.

Since one of the three sides in this negotiation had now agreed to the conditions forced upon them, the remaining side would naturally become more disadvantaged.

"How wonderful. Dragons are indeed a wise and reasonable species."

The handsome Solo smiled sunnily as he praised the dragons. He was delighted as he had now completed half of the task given to him.

"It's just like what Roland said. The dragons will be completely shameless and submit when their lives are threatened." That's what the little brat is thinking right now.

A one-eyed Titan chuckled strangely as he said this out loud. His diamond-like single eye seemed to see through everything. This Titan was the ancestor of the Cyclops –"Agus the Mind Reader".

Agus was even capable of mind reading the thoughts of a God's incarnation. This was the best evidence of just how powerful and unreasonable the Titans' natural talents were. Although Agus was chuckling as he stated Solo's thoughts out loud, he immediately frowned right after because he mind read what Solo immediately thought out next.

"'So what if you can read my mind? Refuse me if you dare. It'll be quite fun to watch all of you starve to death in the void, idiot.' You actually dare to laugh at us? I..."

Titan blocked Agus' angry roaring. The Titan King knew that such anger would be meaningless, as the Ayer Faction had already seen through everything. Right now, the ones in "need of assistance" wasn't the Ayer Faction. The Titans needed the Ayer Faction to save them!

Since both sides had completely different standing, how could this even be called a negotiation? This wasn't a negotiation from the very start. It was pure extortion that was called negotiation only to help the extortion victims to save face. The Titans were being forced to agree to the Ayer Faction's conditions if they wanted to live.

The Titans were never known to have good tempers. Yet, they weren't idiots, either. Currently, the Titans' imposing aura caused even Solo's incarnation which possessed SemiGod strength to feel quite uncomfortable. He had a bitter expression as if he could barely stand the Titans' pressure, which helped the Titans to save face. Right now, Solo was truly impressed with the foolhardy

Roland who dared to even threaten and extort the Titans.

"Who cares if they have ridiculous combat strength that's number one in the world? They lack the ability to act proactively, so I can control the situation however I like. Once they're in my pitfall, they can only obediently become chess pieces under my command."

Solo still recalled Roland's words, and the one-eyed mind reading Titan obviously overheard this comment as well. However, Agus knew that telling his tribe about Roland's thoughts would only make them all feel more awkward, so he could only vent his anger on the land that was now beginning to shake.

Agus viciously pounded the ground and even attempted to pull up the mountains and cause an earthquake like how he always would when he was angry. But, he only managed to thrash around a few times before the other Titans stopped him. Yet, Agus had already exposed the fact that the area under the Titans' protection was already unstable. The Titans wouldn't be able to maintain the small dimensional area under their protection for much longer.

An appropriate amount of forcefulness would actually sometimes be useful in helping negotiations to proceed. Although the Titans' expressions worsened when it was exposed how bad of a situation they were in, at least they were smart enough to stop trying to save face and not waste time, the most precious resource of all.

"...Even if all of us are destroyed, we shall never submit to the weak. If Roland wishes to obtain our tribe's recognition, at minimum he must be capable of defeating his enemies without our assistance to prove that he has the ability to become the master of this new dimension he is creating."

Titan's voice was quite low yet also forceful. This was his bottom line that he would refuse to budge on. If Ayer and Roland were unable to prove that they could successfully push back and defeat the forces of Order and Chaos, then Titan would refuse to board

their sinking ship.

"That's quite reasonable."

This was also the end result that Roland had predicted. Solo nodded and reached out his hand, forming the light of a magical contract.

"As long as Roland obtains victory in the battle here and successfully creates the new dimension of Hell, the Titans shall become the Guardian Gods of the 'Land of Spring' and 'Heaven'. The Titans shall protect the lives of these lands."

Yep, this was the task that Roland had arranged for the Titans. They would protect (be architects of) the Land of Spring where lives would go to prepare for their next lives, as well as protect (be guardians of) a new Heaven where a portion of the Gods and good individuals would be sent to reside.

Only having Hell and the dead would be insufficient to create a truly independent and self-sufficient new world. According to the God of Law's teachings, criminals would go to Hell to be punished for their crimes, so that meant the reverse was also true. Good individuals should go to Heaven to enjoy the rest of their lives after death. Just having Hell and torture would not be enough to establish a world.

"Replacing the Cycle of Reincarnation will naturally require a complete cycle of our own."

The dimension of Dragon World, now Hell, was becoming severed from all other dimensions. Any living that entered this land of the dead would be unable to leave alive. That was why Roland created a temporary "Purgatory" which he named the "Land of Spring"– this was a location where the living would be able to remain alive. Souls that had atoned for their crimes would be able to re-enter the Cycle of Reincarnation here.

As for Heaven? Right now all that could be done was to send a

few of the Ayer Faction Gods with nothing to do into Heaven. Roland's Heaven would have nothing to do for a long time to come, but he figured he might as well write it down into the contract with the Titans.

"'Yep, I'm extorting you. Since you've boarded my ship, you naturally need to work for me. What? You're saying that you didn't voluntarily board my ship? Sure, you can leave any time you want. The endless void welcomes you.' My, Roland is such a terrible person," Solo thought to himself.

But unfortunately for Agus the Mind Reader, he was infuriated beyond belief but had no way to vent. Agus even began to smash his head into the ground. As someone prone to bearing grudges, he etched the name Roland deep into his mind.

The contract with the dragons was quite similar to the contract with the Titans. Yet, the contract with the dragons had even harsher conditions for them. But, when considering the disparity in power between dragons and Titans, if it wasn't for Roland's interference, the Titans would have likely begun a slaughter of the dragons already. And so, the dragons could only smile and swallow down their aggrievances while signing such an unfair contract.

Solo finally heaved a sigh of relief at having completed the task given to him. That was when he saw meteors suddenly streaking through the sky, causing his heart to clench.

Although this represented that the Gods of the Ayer Faction had arrived, this also represented a complete break from the Order Faction as well as the fact that the grand scheme had entered the critical junction. Success or failure would all be determined here.

"It's time."

Chapter 450: By the River Styx

Low Gods, Mid Gods, High Gods, and Main Gods. It was unknown who came up with such a naming system to classify the Gods' power levels, but this classification system had been used for countless generations already.

Yet, this classification system was far too removed from mortals' daily lives. Mortals already viewed Gold rank individuals as grandmasters and treated Gold as their life's goal. Next was "Legend" rank which would already be viewed as, well, a legend. The power levels after Legend were even more mythical to the mortals.

Yet, ancient existences would view Legend rank as only the beginning. The so-called Saint rank only represented having just left the realm of mortals. Myth rank represented true foundational change after having overcome many difficulties, and SemiGod represented endless potential.

The top-ranked Titans could only be classified as SemiGod under this power level system. Yet, SemiGod was a power level with no upper limits. Even Main God level existences wouldn't dare to face the top-ranked Titans in single combat. Any similar ancient powerful existences that were from the first generation typically ruled over a dimension of their own, preferring to remain as hermits, or even slept in hibernation. This was the foundational reason why there were so many forbidden districts in the mortal plane and other planes. There was even a female Supreme Immemorial Dragon that directly went to the Chaos Abyss and took over a layer to rule as the lord there. The Chaos Abyss didn't even give her any trouble for it.

It could be said that the price for having a famous reputation was that it was easy to be dragged into the Holy War that would occur once every one or two millenniums. Any powerful ancient existence with high intelligence would prefer to remain as a hermit

instead. And, these existences' power levels would be impossible to assess by the current power level system used in this world.

Dragons were physically powerful and skilled in magic as well. Elves were even more skilled at magic. Beastmen were highly skilled at pure physical fights. The Gods specialized in their Divine Concepts and knew how to cheat the dimensional laws of the world. There were countless strange and wondrous natural talent abilities and inheritances out in the world. Forcefully trying to separate everyone's power levels into ranks wasn't actually something meaningful.

To be honest, the current so-called power levels was a system where the lower power levels were for the humans to improve their own potentials. The higher-ranked ones, especially the divine ones, were only there for the weak to look at. All those seemingly powerful ranks were only there to let the weak know where they belonged, that they shouldn't recklessly challenge the strong.

Of course, the current power level system was suitable enough for the current generation of low magic. But, once this Holy War escalated even further, liches would be everywhere and SemiGods would be as common as dogs. The current power level system would naturally become meaningless, so a more appropriate power level assessment system would be necessary.

But no matter what power level system there was, Main Gods would forever be at the very top of all lifeforms and existences. Roland had been quite curious about this and even asked Ayer about it.

"Main Gods? There's no direct way to rank them. I suppose you could say that any God capable of easily shredding another God to death as if the other God was a piece of paper could be classified as a Main God. The Main Gods all experienced countless eons to reach their current levels. It's quite difficult to kill them off even in the Holy War. Each Main God represents the history and accumulation of an entire dimension."

There were seven Main God level existences in the Order Faction and fourteen Main God level existences in the Chaos Faction. ...But now, there were five Main God level existences in the Order Faction, thirteen Main God level existences in the Chaos Faction, and three Main God level existences in the new neutral (Hell) faction. Without counting the unknown number of ancient hermit existences in the world, these twenty-one Gods represented the strongest existences in the world. Not a single existence among them would be easy to deal with.

The Lord of Putrefaction had conquered and destroyed countless dimensions. The Devil King led his tribe in betraying the will of the Chaos Abyss. War God Donatis had never been defeated once in battle throughout endless eons. Every single Main God possessed an uncountable number of legends about them and represented the peak of the world in both wisdom and power.

Even Anslo, who appeared to be a second-rate Main God amongst the Main Gods, had the "grand accomplishment" of having destroyed the Gold Elves that ruled over his own elves. And if one looked at his recent actions, it was easy enough to see that he was actually quite sly and scheming.

Anslo picked the best possible timing to betray the Order Faction. And now, the Silver Elves and his Moon Elves were in a vicious elven internal war. It would seem as if he wasn't even able to protect his own, an obvious lapse of his guardian duty, but some things couldn't be judged only from the surface.

Since Anslo had now joined the Chaos Faction, his Moon Elves would likely join the Chaos Faction together with him in order to avoid the wrath of Order, while the Silver Elves and other Elven Gods still remained with the Order Faction. Anslo and his Moon Elves would continue the elves' internal war regardless. For the short time being, other species would see no reason or need to interfere with the elves' internal war.

Yep, this was the typical elven style – betting on both sides while

instantly betraying to join whoever seemed stronger. No matter who won or lost in the end, this way some elves would still be guaranteed to survive this Holy War. Of course, the prerequisite for this was that the ridiculous ending of Armageddon destroying the entire world wasn't brought about first.

From a certain standpoint, Anslo was helpless in making such a decision. This current Holy War was different from the previous one where the elves were the ruling species. Humans were the current ruling species of this generation. No "overthinking" was necessary as both humans and elves had the tradition of sending their "trusted allies" to protect "critically important defensive locations" (highly contested locations that would be okay to sacrifice) and to fight as the vanguards (cannon fodder). Plus, the Order Faction was at an obvious disadvantage in this Holy War, so sacrificial cannon fodder on the Order side would become even more common.

And, the elves' internal war was no act at all. No acting would possibly fool any God. The Silver and Moon Elves truly viewed each other as mortal enemies. No matter which elf species won the internal war, the victor would definitely be seriously injured as a whole.

Anslo chose to sacrifice more than half of all elves in order to ensure the elves' survival in this Holy War. It could be seen that the Elf Main God was quite vicious and decisive, but this indicated even more that he had quite a negative view for the elves and Order Faction's potential in this Holy War.

Apart from a certain Death God, there were basically no Main Gods that were completely isolated. And, the Death God who appeared to be isolated had now revealed his own faction to the entire world.

"Ayer is special."

Yep, this was referring to Ayer. He was the most unique Main

God of them all. Not only did he not have a clear Divine Concept that he had to adhere to, he didn't even have any followers or a species that he needed to guard. Alright, we all know that was only an illusion to fool the world, but the mortals always believed Ayer to be a lone individual who roamed the world. In the legends about him, Ayer was always black-robed and brought death everywhere he went. Of course, this meant that the stories about him almost never placed him on the side of good.

And, the most special thing about him was that Ayer didn't need to participate in the Holy War.

That's right, Ayer didn't need to participate in the Holy War despite nominally belonging to the Order Faction. All other Order Main Gods would absolutely have to get involved, yet Ayer was always able to coldly watch from the sidelines as newly-ascended Gods killed each other. This meant that Ayer was always victorious in every Holy War, which newly-ascended Gods couldn't comprehend. Yet, it was actually understandable if one analyzed what his true job was.

"Ayer is the Guardian of the Cycle of Reincarnation. He is eternally neutral."

Since some people would occasionally be reckless enough to challenge Ayer at the River Styx (such as Roland), Ayer had occasionally used his powers to defend the River Styx. He was never one to intentionally conceal his power level, and all the most powerful Gods knew what his true job was. However, very few knew this next piece of information about him.

"Ayer is undefeatable."

This was no vague description like "most powerful" or "amazing". Ayer could only be described as an existence that no other existence could face directly at all. This was a fact known by all the strongest Gods. Ayer would be undefeatable while at the River Styx.

The reason? As an example, in the previous Holy War, two newly-ascended Main Gods of Order (Guardian Gods of Wood Elves and Silver Elves) believed that if they destroyed the River Styx, that would stop the unending flow of new demons and devils. The senior Gods that understood Ayer's true job tried to convince these two Gods to not go, but they ignored their seniors and brought numerous powerful Elf Gods to challenge the Death God. The end result was complete annihilation under the Death God's sickle.

From a certain standpoint, this unexpected large-scale death of Order Gods was a major reason why the previous Holy War had been so difficult for the Order Faction. The entire elf species and elf Divine Arts rapidly declined as well due to this reason.

By the way, this was also why the elf kingdoms and Elf Gods hated undead so much. Yep, they were simply blaming the undead because of Ayer. That was because even now, no elf or Elf God would dare to directly blame Ayer.

And that day on the River Styx, Ayer had only used a single black rose to destroy the pack of Elf Gods.

He simply gazed quietly at the black rose which bloomed in his hand. When the black petals finished falling, the River Styx's shores were now filled with divine corpses.

Although Ayer obtained countless accolades of "undefeatable" from this battle which wasn't a battle, his overly easy victory also caused many gazes of suspicion to be cast upon him. That was because the power level he displayed had been overwhelmingly ridiculous. If he wanted to enter the Holy War, no matter which side he chose to help, that side would likely win instantly.

But, it was quite easy to infer why he was so powerful and undefeatable. All one had to do was analyze his true job and his combat records of only fighting on the River Styx. It could be easily assumed that his ridiculous power was limited only to when he was defending the River Styx.

And now, his own tribe and allies had all escaped to Hell. Ayer was standing by the River Styx when he met with familiar figures.

The existence at the forefront was of course, a familiar being of pure light. His figure was created out of the light itself and appeared to have an endless amount of divine authority. This was yet another incarnation belonging to the God of Holy Light.

It would seem that the Main God who was viewed as the strongest Main God of all, the God of Holy Light, was being commanded by the Source of Order to come face off against the Main God who was viewed as undefeatable.

And, the God of Holy Light hadn't come alone. The divine might emanating from those around him indicated that even if the other Gods that came with him weren't Main Gods, they were at minimum all High Gods.

Chapter 451: Truth of the River Styx

Historians loved to use important events as bookmarks for the pages of history. In the spring of the year AD 1898, perhaps not a single historian could have predicted that the entire world would foundationally change. The number of important events that occurred in this year and their overarching influences were so numerous that the historians could probably write several hundred volumes sufficient to pay their salaries for the next few centuries.

But if one analyzed all the events by tracing the course of history, the sequence of events was actually quite clear. In the year AD 1896, the Year of the Dragon, Wumianzhe ascending to Godhood was the very beginning. The previously inactive Ayer Faction finally began taking action. Various Gods' incarnations began to walk the mortal plane, as schemers and messengers walked all around the world. Roland also came back to the surface at this time.

The year AD 1897 was the Year of the Griffin. In this year, the entire world was in the calm before the storm. Roland and others' activities helped the Northlands to successfully defend their homeland and become truly independent. The new Mist Alliance came to secret accords with Auland, Bardi, Xiluo, the Underground, and so on. This faction for overcoming Armageddon (now the Hell Faction) had finally been born.

The year AD 1898 was the Year of the Vulture. This was the year when the Holy War erupted full force, with countless incidents all occurring at once. The dark clouds of warfare covered the skies, angels and demons forcefully descended to the mortal plane, Estrada sacrificed himself to prove that there was another way to interpret Holy Light, the elves' engaged in internal war and their Main God's betrayal made the elves' future appear rather dim. But, if one had to look for the greatest incident of all, that would be

everything that happened at the River Styx. The direct consequences of this was that the former year naming system of AD was abandoned. The new era started over with the year naming system of FT.

The year AD 1898, the Year of the Vulture, later became known as the year FT 1, Year of the Black Rat. By the River Styx, when the white-robed young-appearing individual finally received the guests he had been waiting for, he still didn't lift his head to look at them.

"...I never expected that we would truly achieve this step."

Even Ayer himself never expected that this step could finally be achieved. At the current moment, he had undoubtedly become the enemy of the entire world.

Unfortunately for him, the Gods that came to visit weren't going to give him time to reminisce on the past.

A pair of twin sisters walked over while smiling. The older sister walking in front resembled an elf with portions of her body being entwined with wood. Her gray skirt was also made of wood fibers, and her green hair was the color of tree leaves. If it wasn't for the fact that there were no wood spirits that had the appearance of adult females, her aura of nature would make her seem just like an older wood spirit.

While the older sister resembled a wood spirit, her younger sister was hoofed and ran about happily on all fours, as if she was a wild centaur.

The Goddesses of Joy and Laughter were the descendants of the now-deceased Main God of Nature. Although they only possessed part of their powerful ancestor's Divine Concepts, they were still powerful High Gods.

These twin sisters were the caretakers of nature, as well as the guardians and allies of some druids. Although the Goddesses of Joy and Laughter rarely participated in the mortal plane's affairs, they

had a huge amount of connections. Since there were already Elf Gods, the twin sisters weren't the Guardian Gods of the Elves, but they had the job of protecting the forest. Many higher-ups in their church were Wood Elves.

Another God that came to visit was a red-nosed dwarf whose silver hair was filled with dirt and dust. There was also a black smithing hammer on his back.

This was Dunder, the God of Smithing and Dwarves. Although he was only a High God rather than a Main God, he was the leader of the Dwarf Gods, and had countless allies and resources as well.

The nature faction and dwarf faction's highest leaders had arrived. From a certain standpoint, these three Gods also represented another two factions within the Order Faction. And, these two factions were typically more moderate and peaceful.

It was impossible to fool Ayer's senses. He knew that the four Gods before him were all only incarnations. He could only shake his head at the situation.

"...It's such a pity. The God of Holy Light only sent an incarnation. Did the other Gods all realize everything already?"

Although hunters were expected, the God of Holy Light's incarnation was the only Main God that arrived at the River Styx from the Order Faction. The God of Holy Light himself didn't use his true body to take action anywhere. It was unknown what he was planning.

The other remaining four Order Main God existences didn't even send their incarnations. Obviously, they already knew about Ayer's undefeatable abilities and didn't intend on wasting their divine power or committing suicide by coming here, either in an incarnation or in their true bodies.

"Of course, this old man isn't here to die. The three of us are here to greet you and see you off. Right, I'll have to ask you to take good

care of the little girl in my family."

The Dwarf God spoke quite directly. The Dwarf Goddess under him, Mary the Goddess of Hammers and Alcohol Barrels, the Guardian Goddess of the Shield Dwarves, was one of Ayer's staunchest supporters. In a way, she also acted as the connection between the Dwarf Gods and Ayer. And now that Mary had chosen to directly enter Hell, the fact that there were other Order Gods not directly in the Ayer Faction that were still friendly towards their cause had finally been revealed.

"Mister Ayer, we sisters have been under your care for so long."

"Mister, Mister!"

The Goddesses of Joy and Laughter brought their smiles with them. The older sister waved her handkerchief at Ayer, while the younger sister joyfully ran around everywhere. But no matter how one looked at it, it seemed as if they were seeing Ayer off for the final time.

This was why Ayer had sighed and said that things were "such a pity"– not a single enemy God had sent even an incarnation here to deal with him, apart from the God of Holy Light under the Source of Order's orders. But, this was something that was already expected because the fact that "Ayer is undefeatable on the River Styx" was known by too many already. Thus, Ayer wasn't too anxious about this.

That's right, Ayer was indeed undefeatable on the River Styx. This was a fact. This was already a basic concept of reality that had been written into the dimensional rules. And, as long as the Source of Order still possessed basic logical reasoning capabilities, even it wouldn't force the Order Main Gods to all come here in suicidal fashion.

Ayer's undefeatable abilities had a price to them. Just like the other Order True Gods, while he had power over his Divine Concepts, he was also restricted by the same Divine Concepts.

As the very first undead who broke the boundaries between life and death, he was loathed by Order. And since Ayer also lost the living's most basic ability to evolve as well as losing all desires, he became an undead that was unable to change anymore. Naturally, Chaos also disliked him.

The current undead were in the same situation. Order viewed undead as mortal enemies, yet Chaos viewed undead as nothing more than slightly useful cannon fodder. The undead were stuck between a rock and a hard place with the two major factions. And, the dimensional laws would always be hard on the undead, making things even worse for them.

However, the fact that neither Order nor Chaos liked Ayer represented something else – he was a third party that both were willing to accept. And so, the important job of guarding the River Styx was tossed over to Ayer. That was because neither faction would be able to rest assured if the River Styx fell under the control of the other faction.

The River Styx was quite different from its counterpart, the Heaven's Pillar. The Heaven's Pillar was a path that didn't truly exist. Rather than calling it a path to Divine Kingdoms with the God's permission after having worshipped a True God, this was more like a natural law regarding souls that had reached the point of being "harvestable" after being engraved with a God's imprint.

Every single God's believer that obtained the recognition of the Divine Kingdom would receive a special imprint in their soul. This was a basic natural law of the world. And, the closer one was to their God, the more apparent that imprint would become, and the more of that God's attention he or she would receive. In fact, some would even become the God's living representative in the mortal plane, and become a heroic spirit after death.

However, the River Styx was different. The River Styx was a path of Chaos, so how could it possibly have something like "rules"?

This river passed through countless planes, but most would be the lower planes belonging to the Chaos Faction. All souls that weren't guided by the Order Gods would fall into the River Styx. And whenever these souls were attracted by the "Order" of some chaotic plane, they would crawl up and become new lives. But since they crawled ashore in the lower planes, they would naturally become new residents of those planes – demons and devils.

It could be said that the River Styx was the birthing grounds for new demons and devils. However, nobody knew just how many souls were contained within the River Styx. No matter when you looked at this river, one would be able to see that it was completely filled with souls.

However, very few existences knew that the River Styx even passed through some of the upper planes. It was just that in the upper planes, the River Styx would appear to be as beautiful as the glorious galaxy itself, or even appear to be a rainbow bridge. Back when Ayer brought Roland to the Underground, the River Styx had even appeared in the underground rivers in the caverns.

And if the Order Divine Kingdoms didn't "harvest" enough souls, causing a large imbalance between the total number of souls on the Order and Chaos Factions, the upper planes' dimensional laws would be slightly modified so that souls were more easily attracted to Heaven's Pillar and the Divine Kingdoms. The creatures of Order would undergo a population boom. And if the overall population of Order became too high, the demons and devils' rate of birth would also be secretly increased.

Crawling out of the River Styx represented a blank soul's new life after having undergone reincarnation. Naturally, this blank soul could become an angel or a devil.

Of course, this was something that no mortal would be allowed to learn about. Not only would this affect the believers' faith if they learned that angels were born in a method identical to demons,

just the fact that it was possible to enter Divine Kingdoms without going through a church would make it quite difficult for any church to collect donations for "the people's salvation."

Actually, not only did the mortal Roland not know about the River Styx's true functions, not a single one of the newly-ascended Gods from the recent generation knew about this second use of the River Styx.

What people believed was that as long as the River Styx wasn't stopped, demons and devils would forever be endlessly born. The Chaos Abyss would have an endless amount of combat potential because of this. And, it also had the hidden role of balancing the power between the two major factions. Not only that, the River Styx was the soul harvester in all Holy Wars, so it could be said that the River Styx was the most critical part of the Cycle of Reincarnation... as well as the weakest part!

That was because the River Styx was far, far too long, passing through so many planes. Although the River Styx itself was already highly dangerous, as long as part of the river was blocked at a single location, that would naturally cause a problem with the entire river. That was why the River Styx needed a guardian – a guardian that both major factions would be willing to accept.

And so, Ayer became a part of the River Styx and the Cycle of Reincarnation. As long as any individual possessed the possibility of harming the River Styx or the Cycle of Reincarnation, Ayer's true body would instantly teleport to that individual's location. And, Ayer would then be buffed by the powers of the River Styx, Order, and Chaos into becoming the most terrifyingly powerful existence in the world. All the Order Main Gods in the past that had attempted to destroy the River Styx used their lives to prove just how powerful Ayer was.

That was also why Roland had to die on the River Styx. Those who tried to harm the River Styx would be forced to fall into the River Styx. This was one of the most basic dimensional rules of

this world. It was part of Ayer's Concept that he would be forced to carry out.

"There's a problem with your plan."

"Yep, a huge problem. My entire scheme will be nothing more than empty air if this problem isn't solved."

Back on that day at the River Styx, both Ayer and Roland knew what problem there was with Roland's scheme. Still, they knew what it meant and didn't go any further into this.

That's right, the problem with Roland's scheme was with Ayer, the Guardian of the River Styx. If Roland wanted to create a new Cycle of Reincarnation, of course he would need to destroy the former Cycle of Reincarnation so that souls could enter the new Cycle of Reincarnation. Otherwise, everything would be nothing more than empty air.

Yet, it was obviously impossible to defeat Ayer, the Guardian of the River Styx, who was undefeatable on the River Styx. At the very least, Roland found it impossible. Back then, he didn't have anything even close to a Main God's combat strength. Not to mention, not even multiple Main Gods would even come close to being able to face Ayer on the River Styx. Ayer was being powered by the entire Cycle of Reincarnation!

And so, Roland came up with a ridiculous idea at the time. If he wanted to stop the Cycle of Reincarnation, he would need to defeat Ayer the undefeatable. Yet, defeating Ayer was an absolutely necessary part of stopping the Cycle of Reincarnation. This was obviously a dead end with no solutions.

"Okay, if I can't defeat him, why don't I try talking to him?"

And so, Roland intentionally went to visit Ayer at the River Styx. In order to realize this "ridiculous" scheme, Roland would absolutely have to obtain Ayer's recognition. Roland would have to convince Ayer to no longer carry out his duties as the Guardian of

the River Styx. And, asking a God to give up on, and even destroy one's own Concept, was the equivalent of...

"Is it time? Yes. It's finally time for this River Styx that's as ancient as the world itself to change. It's time for everything to have a new beginning."

Chapter 452: Choice

The petals of a black rose fluttered with the wind, falling with the fading golden glow.

In just a single instant, the God of Holy Light's incarnation died, even though this was a powerful incarnation with a Main God's power level.

The snow-white-robed Ayer simply sat there in his rowboat on the River Styx. This scene appeared mysteriously poetic, making one feel the sadness of passing time.

The River Styx continued to quietly flow, just as it always had for countless years. At that time, right after the mortal plane of Eich was created, Creator Goddess Eich left her two daughters behind and then completely vanished.

Once this new world was completely formed, an "ecosystem" with the mortal plane at its core was naturally formed as well.

If I had to use an analogy, this was like the Solar System from my original world. The mortal plane was like Earth, being the location that was most suitable for lifeforms to live and reproduce on. All other dimensions, such as the Elemental Planes, upper planes, lower planes, and so on, were similar to other planets and planetary bodies like the moon, Mars, and so on.

Of course, the core of this new ecosystem was the most useful currency in all the planes – souls.

Unlike the Solar System that was all one dimension, when numerous dimensions became intricately connected to a certain extent, dimensional walls would evolve and harden to the point of completely blocking off attempts to spy and observe from other dimensions. Apart from dimensional will-level existences, few would be able to influence other dimensions.

However, the newly-born mortal plane possessed an unending

treasure trove of new dimensional laws and soul resources. Souls were the best currency in all the planes, while dimensional laws were an important resource for strengthening other dimensions. This newly-born mortal plane that didn't possess any dimensional laws or a dimensional will was just like a newly assembled computer built by a novice which went online for the first time without a firewall. Countless dimensional invaders and conquerors instantly swarmed to possess the mortal plane for themselves.

This was something that was destined to occur to all newly-born dimensions. In fact, dimensional merchants even came up with a term for this, "Dimensional baptism."

"Only by surviving the baptism will the dimension be able to evolve its own mature dimensional walls. If it doesn't survive... the dimension will naturally become nutrition for other dimensions."

In the very first generation on Eich, the mortal plane's abundant resources and weak dimensional laws attracted countless invaders. However, thanks to the hard efforts of the Goddesses of Chaos and Order as well as the Gold Species, the mortal plane of Eich managed to survive through the most difficult time of being a newly-born dimension.

And, the power of the invaders caused countless Gold Species to go exist. This was the foundational reason why both the Goddesses of Chaos and Order sought to have a highly effective society with powerful individuals. This was simply an instinctive response to having the society's lives being threatened.

In "Eich's Seven Calamities" from the game, it should be remembered that there was a certain calamity between the "Fourth Calamity: Demons' Return" and "Sixth Calamity: Chaotic Warfare amongst the Gods". That would be the "Fifth Calamity: Dimensional Invasion". But actually, this was only some "seeds" left behind from eons ago being revived, as these revived individuals began summoning their own species. Yet, these dimensional invaders would bring about far greater trouble and

calamity than even the demons.

From a certain standpoint, these "suddenly revived seeds" were meant by the game developers to remind the "game players" and "Gods" to not forget about their existence.

Yet, it was evident that nobody truly took the threat seriously. The Sixth Calamity was classified as yet another normal part of the Holy War. The end result was that in the "Seventh Calamity: Armageddon", these dimensional invaders viciously made their presence known yet again. But this time, everything was over.

The Seventh Calamity was the final ending.

"The Goddesses of Chaos and Order will revive and continue their ancient war from the first generation. All the Gods will directly begin fighting in the mortal plane, causing countless fissures in the land of Eich. An endless number of Dimensional Doors from other planes will open up as powerful species from other dimensions transform the mortal plane into an utter living hell. There's no so-called Eighth Calamity because the world has already been sliced up into several thousand pieces. Who would still be around for such a calamity?"

It could be said that destroying the world of Eich was mostly because of the Goddesses of Chaos and Order. At the very least, since they were both half of the dimensional will of Eich, they were the most responsible for causing the destruction of the mortal plane's dimensional walls protecting it from dimensional invaders. Still, it couldn't be forgotten that it was also the fault of these invaders from other planes. They were just like dimensional locusts that would leave nothing behind.

It could be said that unlike Roland who only "slightly" understood the overall situation, Ayer who had survived since the very first generation had seen far more of the big picture.

Of course, Ayer already knew about the true identities of the so-called "great precognitors" of the Order Faction that came before

Roland. The Armageddon that Roland told Ayer about and the seemingly unreasonable "dimensional invaders" gave Ayer a tremendous sense of danger. Roland was limited to only worrying about Armageddon itself, so he wouldn't care what happened after the Seventh Calamity. Yet, Ayer saw a tremendous amount of danger.

Ayer had never talked about this with anyone before. Nor was there any need to tell anyone. Ayer had already seen through everything. No matter which enemies came in the future, Roland would simply face them. Some depressing statements would better be left unsaid.

"It's still the River Styx..."

Back in the earliest generation, the River Styx originally carried countless hopes. It was the place where souls returned to and were newly born. Although life in Eich was the most difficult in that time, the overall constant increase in the total number of souls was the best evidence that this new plane was beginning to flourish.

Rather than the four elements, souls were the most basic and important resource in any plane. Souls could become powerful individuals or provide the power of belief. A sufficient number of souls was a measure by which a dimension was healthy or not.

And, only Ayer knew that over the recent years, the River Styx's total number of souls had gradually yet constantly been decreasing, and that the mortal plane's dimensional walls had constantly been weakening. This was the best evidence that Roland's prophecy was likely to be real.

The reason for this? There could be no other explanation for this other than the two "dimensional will" sisters that were getting ever closer to waking up, meaning that their appetites constantly increased as they ravenously devoured soul shards to help wake themselves up.

Ayer felt very close to the Goddesses of Chaos and Order. But this

time, he felt that they were in the wrong.

"...Mortals aren't beasts to be trained and raised. Even if they are the parents that gave birth to us, they don't have the right to turn us into their soul food. No, if they truly were parents worthy of respect, how could they possibly give such a cruel order? There's no worthy parent who doesn't love their own children!"

Ayer recalled Roland's angry roars as if he was right next to Ayer. While playing with the black rose in his hand, Ayer couldn't help but recall the oath that Roland swore at the River Styx, a soul oath that Roland had carved deep into his soul.

"...I swear that I shall bear any crime and distort karma in order to change fate so that the mortals may survive this calamity!"

Finally, Ayer raised his head.

"Alright, Roland. I'll believe in you this time. I'm gambling everything on you, so you absolutely cant let me down."

The black rose's petals began to fall. Ayer watched with head tilted as the petals were blown away into the air. Sunlight actually shone into the deep abyss. Ayer, who typically always had an icy expression, paused in surprise for a moment before revealing a rare smile.

"I bet that my hometown, the Sanri Mountains, will be having a wonderfully clear day tomorrow again. I should have paid a visit there first..."

When the final rose petal was blown away by the wind, the river was covered with floating rose petals. The entire River Styx suddenly stopped, and the rowboat on the river lost its rower. The rowboat simply stayed still on the river.

Ayer's final words that he spoke to the world was actually an unimportant complaint. Perhaps it was his dissatisfaction that he had kept bottled up for eons already.

"Mother Goddess (Goddess of Order), Sister Cynthia. Perhaps all

of us were born because of you, but you don't have the right to have us die because of you. Perhaps mortal lives seem unimportant to you, yet they're working so hard to survive. The seemingly light weight of their souls is everything for them..."

The River Styx's silence didn't continue for long. It then started moving again as the Dwarf God and the twin sister Nature Goddesses of Joy and Laughter observed. The River Styx started flowing in an abnormal direction, straight into the unknown void.

Although the three Gods here to observe already knew that this would be the result, they and all the ancient existences were still shocked to their very cores to see the ancient and unchanging River Styx beginning to flow into the unknown void. The more ancient the existence, the more shocked the existence was.

And, what shocked the ancient existences even more was that the white-robed Death God on the rowboat had transformed into nothing more than sand that was scattered in the wind. Right after that, the rowboat he left behind also flowed into the pitch-black unknown void.

At this moment, all lives stared in confusion at the sky. Although they didn't know what had happened, they instinctively felt sorrow and despair. The meteor that streaked through the sky, signifying a God's death, actually covered half of the entire sky.

"A God has died! The most ancient God has died! The Death God, the very representation of Death, has died!"

What would happen, theoretically speaking, if the God of Law who represented Justice and Fairness started to break his own laws? What would happen if the God of Holy Light who represented Purity and Cleansing became tainted?

Death.

What would happen if the Goddess of Order chose to compromise with Chaos? What would happen if the Goddess of Chaos decided

to use numerous rules to restrict herself?

Death.

What would happen if the Death God who represented Death and Eternity decided to break the "status quo" of the River Styx, to disturb the eternity of the Cycle of Reincarnation for the dead?

Death.

The undefeatable Death God was already part of the River Styx itself. He was a part of the Cycle of Reincarnation. And the moment that he acted to change the Cycle of Reincarnation, he became someone who was attempting to harm the Cycle of Reincarnation. And, he had the Divine Concept of Guardian of the Cycle of Reincarnation, which he would be forced to carry out – an obvious contradiction. Under the power of this contradiction, "deleting the contradiction" became the only possible solution.

"Please die for the sake of everyone's salvation."

The crazy lich Roland who always joked around ridiculously actually had such a serious expression upon his first meeting with the Death God. Roland lowered his head and requested Ayer to die.

This was the first time in Roland's life that he had ever lowered his head to someone, along with the only time.

Roland didn't lie to him. There would be no meaning to lying to Ayer.

Roland didn't praise him. Glory held no meaning to Ayer.

Roland didn't beg him. Other people's attitudes were meaningless to Ayer.

Roland didn't hesitate. That was because this was the only solution.

Indeed, that was just how cruel reality was. This was the worst possible type of request to make.

"Please die for the sake of everyone.

"Please die so that we may survive.

"Please die so that the world you love will have a sliver of hope."

Invisible evil intentions transformed into the most vulgar of words. Even Roland felt that he was far too vicious and selfish to ask someone else to die so that he may survive.

But even if he could go back to this point in time, he would still make the same decision and speak the same words. That was because he had no other choice at all!

Back at that time, Ayer hadn't responded. After that, the more that Roland noticed that his scheme seemed likely to succeed, the more Roland started urging Ayer to choose death.

Perhaps Ayer had made his choice already from the moment that he didn't choose to kill the lich that made such insane statements by the River Styx.

"It's time for the old Cycle of Reincarnation to begone..."

"It's time! This is what we've waited for our entire lives! The time for a new Cycle of Reincarnation to be created!"

Ayer's final sigh echoed at the same time as Roland's angry roar on the battlefield.

Back in the world of Hell, the Dimensional Door which suddenly opened up, sending the River Styx pouring in was already the best indication of what had happened.

Every single drop of the River Styx was directly absorbed into the new land of the dead. This helped to transform Roland's Soul World illusions into reality. The River Styx which would be the most vicious toxin for anything living was the nutrition that the new country of the dead needed the most.

The dead started crawling out of the River Styx. This newly-born country of the dead had now become a part of the Cycle of Reincarnation after receiving the River Styx's nourishment. This

new land became more active as it became more real.

Yet, Roland's current situation wasn't all that good. Once his undead armies showed off their completely undying properties, all enemies' gazes settled directly on him.

All the existences here knew that no matter how ridiculously powerful a Soul World's effects were, the entire Soul World would vanish the moment that the Soul World's controller died. And, no matter how powerful the current Hell was so far, it was still currently all part of Soul World.

The God of Holy Light's incarnation blocked the Devil King who was the Lord of Lies. On the chaotic battlefield, the Chaos Evil War God Donatis who swore to kill Roland unhesitatingly charged directly at him.

While the battle between the demons and devils still raged on, Donatis's charge directly tore a huge fissure through the battlefield. His greatsword was rapidly getting closer to Roland.

Yet, it was as if Roland didn't even notice the approaching threat. He simply stood there quietly, looking at the white ice crystal floating in front of him.

The white ice crystal was actually giving off a black glow. This gem wasn't beautiful at all, yet it mysteriously managed to attract everyone's attention.

This ice crystal had just arrived together with the waters of the River Styx. This ice crystal was the final foundational piece that Hell had lacked.

Roland opened the notebook in his hand, causing the other two ice crystals tucked into the pages to begin floating. The ice crystal that was water blue gave off a faint icy chill.

"Aylos. You had to die for your husband's revival."

I muttered that to myself as I recalled coming to that decision when I sent such a message to Aylos. [TL note: yes, the narration

suddenly goes from third to first person. Sorry if it's a bit jarring.]

"I really am a terrible person."

That was how I forced Aylos into her own death.

Now, I could only smile bitterly as I lightly stroked the ice crystal which had been colored water blue with her soul. I felt that I was far too villainous compared to Aylos, who had been willing to sacrifice everything for her love.

Right now, I was also currently holding the God Equipment Ocean Bottle, which I also received on the River Styx just now. It had been filled with the divine power of the Queen of Storms, and currently inside were furious waves as if the God inside was venting his anger and dissatisfaction.

Another ice crystal floating in midair had a golden glow to it, as if it was a sun that dispelled the darkness around it. Yet, it wasn't as blinding as the light bulb in the sky.

"Estrada has to die, because the Holy Light requires salvation."

The ice crystal of Holy Light felt cold to the touch. Yet, there were no tears representing weakness in my eyes. The holy battle hammer on my back even faintly resonated, as if it was consoling me and telling me not to think too much into things.

Of course, how would I dare to think too much about things right now? I had no time left.

The Death God's soul contained far too much power of death. His white ice crystal had already been tainted completely black. In just a short few minutes, the crystal was already beginning to crack.

Unlike the other souls, Ayer's soul was far too powerful for the container. I needed to complete my ceremony before the ice crystal broke.

"The mortals require salvation. The Cycle of Reincarnation must be ended. That's why Ayer must die."

These three ice crystals whirled around me as their three different colors began distorting this entire world. The prelude had now concluded. There had been too many sacrifices and losses along the way. It was now time to complete our ideal, it was now time to change the fate where everything would be destroyed! At the very least, it was time to make their sacrifices worthwhile!

Imperceptibly, a silver-robed masked individual had arrived behind me. He had arrived here simultaneously with the other Ayer Faction Gods, yet had maintained an abnormal silence.

Currently, this God wearing a faceless mask appeared to be trembling as if he was laughing maniacally.

Faced with the Chaos War God's charge, he suddenly tore off his mask, revealing the face of a skeletal lich. The moment that he ascended to Godhood, that was the true appearance that he would have for eternity. All illusions were now transformed into reality.

The final empty ice crystal floated in front of him, as my voice and his spoke in synchronicity. Our faces also became identical.

"All criminals shall be judged. All Divine Laws shall become the very dimensional laws of this world. That's why, Wumianzhe... Wumianzhe Roland must die!"

Chapter 453: Four Elemental Towers

"We deny Order..."

The hurtling meteors didn't only bring our reinforcements. Breaking the Cycle of Reincarnation and having so many Order Gods betray the Order Faction on such a large-scale basis obviously antagonized the Source of Order completely. It was impossible for the Source of Order to let these traitors go so easily. Otherwise, the Order that it emphasized so much would lose all basic authority.

"We reject Chaos..."

The distorted void brought even more messengers of despair. More avengers from the Chaos Abyss had arrived, as the will of the Chaos Abyss's angry roars shook the entire Chaos Abyss itself. Countless demons despaired as they were devoured by the Abyss itself.

The River Styx's direction being changed would be a critical blow against the Chaos Faction. The Chaos Abyss would lose more than anyone. Even though the River Styx wouldn't dry up so quickly in such a short time, there would be a huge decrease in the production of new demons, the main fighting force for the Chaos Faction. Top-level combat strength would also be permanently decreased every time a top-level individual died. Even if the will of the Chaos Abyss succeeded in luring high-quality souls into the Abyss, the effectiveness would be much lowered without the River Styx's support. With the Chaos Faction's typical way of thinking, it would be inconceivable for them to simply let go of someone who earned such a deep grudge with them.

Not long after the Hell Faction's Gods arrived, new Gods arrived to chase us down in Hell. But since Ayer had cut off this new plane from all the other planes, these Gods hunting us down would need to mentally prepare themselves to be unable to return anytime in the near future even if they completed their masters' orders.

"...We shall create a Hell for the sake of mortal lives!"

More accurately, even if these Gods that just arrived defeated us here, they would likely be embroiled in decades or even centuries of warring here afterwards.

Meteors and distorted dimensional tears brought even more hunters from the two major factions. There weren't many that came to hunt us down, since any lower-ranked Gods would be meaningless against the Hell Faction. So, every one of these new Gods that arrived were major personages.

A white-robed old man arrived. He had a white beard that reached all the way to the ground, along with a kind and smiling expression. Rather than calling him a mage, he looked more like an old man that you'd commonly find living next door.

He was actually the Order Main God Kalumandas. His Divine Concepts included Wisdom, Libraries, Courage, Dawn, Sculptures, Craftsmanship, and so on. He was one of the most ancient former humans who had ascended to Godhood, ancient to the point where not a single individual remembered how he had ascended. It was said that Kalumandas was the only survivor of his prehistoric culture.

If the Source of Order still had feelings, I felt that it would be hysterical right now. Even I didn't expect that it would send out yet another Order Main God to come and hunt me down, and that the Main God would actually be Kalumandas, the God of Wisdom.

Kalumandas was one of the very few Gods who the mages would worship, although the mages' belief would still be rather lacking. The mages would worship a God basically only to not fall into the River Styx after death. Still, the fact that Kalumandas had witches and mages' recognition was a good indication of his wisdom and open-mindedness. I truly didn't expect that Kalumandas would come to hunt me down. No, I should correct myself by saying that I truly didn't expect the Source of Order to send yet another Main

God here to hunt me down.

That was because the Order Faction only had five Main God level existences left after Ayer and Anslo's betrayals. Since Kalumandas apparently descended here in his true body, how would the remaining four Order Main Gods possibly fight against the Chaos Faction that still had more than ten Chaos Main Gods?

Logically speaking, since the Source of Order would only mechanically calculate benefits vs. losses, it should have allowed itself to take this hit and wait until later for an opportunity to strike.

But soon, when I saw two more demon Chaos Main Gods walked out of the distorted void, and how they even greeted Kalumandas in a friendly fashion, I understood everything that must have happened.

"We actually forced the Source of Order and the Chaos Abyss to directly negotiate with each other in order to deal with us? It seems that we've done a good job here..."

Obviously, the Source of Order was able to accept the loss of one Order Main God since the Chaos Faction sent another two Chaos Main Gods here, as none of these Main Gods would be returning anytime soon no matter what the result was. However, to have forced the Chaos Abyss... no, Cynthia to voluntarily accept such a bad deal, she must have been truly furious.

I didn't know how successfully Ayer completed his task of completely changing the flow of the entire River Styx (very unlikely), but only changing the flow of part of the River Styx to here would successfully destroy Cynthia's dream of being able to revive in this Holy War. It was only natural that she would be completely infuriated.

These two new abyssal visitors stunk of sulfur. Obviously, they were residents of the lower planes. It was quite easy to identify them based on their physical characteristics with how few Chaos

Main Gods there were.

The first was a large, rotting piece of meat with disgusting green fur and a stench that reminded me of a garbage disposal site. All sorts of strange decaying and rotting stenches covered his entire body. Although he was clearly a Demon Lord, it was impossible to identify anything on his body that resembled a face or limbs. It was even impossible to see any eyes on his body from which he could see others.

"Gaar, the Murky Nightmare. He's a Demon Lord who doesn't have a noble title, as well as the Demon Lord who's the closest to being truly undying. He was originally a common bloody byproduct of demons' internal warring, an amalgamation of half-dead demons and corpses, but he somehow managed to survive... Nobody knows how Garr successfully became one of the strongest demons in existence. Similarly, nobody knows just how to kill him. In fact, nobody even knows if Gaar is capable of speech or if Gaar is truly alive."

Of course, I knew about who Gaar was. Gaar was the living definition of Chaos' evolution, yet he was loathed by the will of the Chaos Abyss to the point where he didn't even have a noble title. In fact, even his name of Gaar was just an onomatopoeia that represented disgust.

At least the other Demon Lord was far more pleasing to look at when compared to Gaar.

He had just an ordinary demon's appearance. His demon wings, horns, and gray-black body were quite muscular. His arms and legs all appeared ordinary. He had a normal greatsword on his back. Yet, I was unable to identify him instantly. Fortunately, Little Tias was acquainted with all the Chaos Main Gods.

"Sophocles the Deceiver. He's the most difficult Demon Lord to understand. He loves to lure mortal heroes and powerful individuals into becoming fallen. His favorite hobby is to arrange

the most ironic tragedies of fate. I've always felt that he's more befitting of the title 'Lord of Lies' than I am."

Alright then, that made it easy to identify this Demon Lord. Sophocles the Deceiver, who was also known to be skilled at art and music, would definitely rank in the top three in the mortal plane for how much damage he caused and how many people hated him.

Sophocles' most famous accomplishment was how he managed to establish a church in the mortal plane which worshipped his own incarnation to the point where even his incarnation was declared as a God. A Demon Lord successfully passed himself off as an Order God and even fooled several other True Gods into allying with him? This was something that caused the Order Faction to greatly lose face. Even today, Sophocles and his believers were one of the top mortal enemies of the Gods' Churches.

But, considering the fact that demons weren't truly able to use the power of belief to strengthen themselves, all this could accomplish was to let him have some fun. Working so hard and spending so many resources all for the sake of fun? Should I say that it was to be expected of a Demon Lord?

I never expected that such a dangerous existence would actually have such an "ordinary" appearance. But, when considering the fact that he was capable of even deceiving True Gods, perhaps this type of appearance was more suitable for his "deeds".

And now, a total of five Chaos Main Gods had arrived at this battlefield of Hell!

Considering how arrogant and unwilling to listen to orders that Chaos Main Gods typically were, plus how selfish they would be in not wanting to take any personal risks without benefits, sending five of the Chaos Main Gods here was pretty much the full extent of Cynthia's power. On top of that, she probably had to pay a hefty price to the Chaos Main Gods for all this.

"In that case, the scale of the Holy War in the mortal plane will be greatly diminished? That's truly wonderful news... No, I can't be happy so early. It's not even time for the Gods to personally descend in the mortal plane. To the ordinary humans, just the low-level demons are already their worst nightmare."

Although I was facing the expected reprisal of the Chaos and Order Factions, even though I was facing two Order Main Gods and five Chaos Main Gods, I wasn't nervous or panicking right now at all. Rather, the feelings welling up within me were delight and excitement.

"This is exactly what I wanted. If we couldn't even attract the Chaos and Order Factions' attention and enmity, what worth would there be for our hard work and sacrifices...?" My enemies' strength only made me delighted. This wasn't because I was insane at all. We had all worked so hard to prepare for this moment, sacrificing so much along the way. How could we possibly be afraid of powerful opponents? Rather, since our enemies viewed us with such importance and enmity, this was the best proof that we were on the correct path.

Currently, the Chaos War God was right before me, yet he was forced back by silver chains. Four towers were now raising together, along with new dimensional walls that represented the birth of an entirely new world.

That's right, there were now four towers. Three additional towers were rising next to the tall silver tower that I and Wumianzhe were standing on. The forbidden spell of Creation by the Four Elements was now fully activated.

The white tower was the amalgamation of ice. This tower represented all the life in Hell. At the top of the tower was a statue of a Goddess which contained the former Water Elemental Goddess Aylos' soul crystal at the core. A white glow spread out which illuminated the residents of this new world, keeping all the dead residents of this world forever alive.

The black tower was the amalgamation of death and undeath. This tower represented all the souls in Hell. At the top of the tower was a crystal skull within Ayer's corpse. Ayer's black soul crystal was glowing ominously and powering this world with death magic.

The gold tower was the amalgamation of Holy Light. This tower represented the concept of Time in Hell. This was the only pure light in this world. Although the power of Holy Light was still gathering, Estrada's soul crystal was glowing with a light that represented salvation in a sculpture of a lantern-bearer.

Only the silver tower under my feet had yet to be activated, so it appeared rather dim. But of course, this tower represented the final foundational fourth element for creating my world – Law, which also represented Space.

When using Creation by the Four Elements, these Four Elemental Towers would be the most critical foundational core. Every change would be controlled by these towers. And even in the ancient creation myths, the Four Elemental Towers had appeared as well in a form that people didn't know about.

"These are my version of the Elemental Thrones in the Elemental Planes! Eich was truly and ridiculously powerful to have constructed such things. But, for me, these will become the strongest mage tower in the entire world!"

That's right, the Four Elemental Thrones which would give birth to new Elemental Gods were no natural byproducts at all. They were relics left behind from Eich's creation of the world. They were a part of Creation by the Four Elements, and also acted as the balance mechanism for the four elements in the mortal plane of Eich and the Four Elemental Planes.

How Elemental Gods were able to use Elemental Thrones to manipulate the power of an entire Elemental Plane was actually quite similar to how mages controlled the power of their mage towers. And right now, these Four Elemental Towers were just like

natural mage towers that would provide me with an endless amount of power! How could I possibly be afraid of any opponent with their assistance!

Chapter 454: Three Layers

In the year FT 1, dawn of the new generation, the Chaos and Order Factions met a new challenger for the first time in the eternal Holy War. When the River Styx's waters of reincarnation started flowing towards an unknown dimension, the entire Cycle of Reincarnation had been broken.

This was no vague statement. It meant that the Cycle of Reincarnation had concretely been broken. The River Styx's flow restrained all the souls within it, but once that restraint was broken, countless souls suddenly obtained freedom.

Some of those who died in battle between the years FT 1 and FT 4 were the luckiest. The old Cycle of Reincarnation had been broken, and the new Cycle of Reincarnation was still immature. A few people were able to reincarnate without the River Styx as their souls directly formed into new lives without having their memories wiped. These individuals were able to begin new lives with their past lives' memories fully intact, meaning that they had a tremendous advantage from the very start.

However, others that died in battle that year the unluckiest of all. Although the River Styx restrained the souls within it, it was also a mechanism for protecting the fragile soul that had lost its physical body and life. Without the River Styx's protection, powerful netherworld gusts would easily destroy the weaker souls. Only the most fortunate and most stubborn of souls were able to successfully reincarnate, memories intact and all. Although it was impossible to calculate the success rate of those who reincarnated with memories intact, when considering the tremendous number of deaths vs. the new population born afterward, it had to be less than one percent.

And even for the few that successfully reincarnated, they obtained far too many memory fragments from the still immature Cycle of Reincarnation, which meant that most of them had to deal

with chaotic memories and multiple personalities as a result. The few "heaven-blessed" who retained their full sense of "self" were less than ten percent of those who reincarnated successfully.

But since there was a bug in the system, there would always be those who benefited from such a bug. And of course, there were "cheaters" who intentionally made use of such a bug in order to benefit.

Those who acted the swiftest to take advantage of this bug was the Ayer Faction... I suppose I should call them the Hell Faction now. This was because this bug was something that we created intentionally in the first place. With my typical habits, how could I possibly let go of such an excellent opportunity? Everything had been planned from the very start.

The Halls of Valhalla that housed heroic spirits and God Envoys also fell down to Hell together with the Hell Faction's Divine Kingdoms. It was now time for these powerful heroic spirits to make their own choice as well. That was because Halls of Valhalla were a special byproduct of Order from the Source of Order. Without the Order Faction's support, it would be quite difficult for ordinary Gods to maintain heroic spirits.

The heroic spirits had only two choices. One was to enter Hell together with the Divine Kingdom, become truly dead, and thus become a member of Hell. However, entering Hell was easy enough, but exiting would be quite difficult. The other choice would be to enter reincarnation by taking advantage of the immature new Cycle of Reincarnation.

That's right, that's the loophole that I and our faction took advantage of. From a certain standpoint, heroic spirits were like a physical byproduct of the soul, as well as a "special form" for dead spirits. Naturally, they could still be reincarnated if they wished.

Unlike those who died naturally and had extremely low chances of preserving their memories fully intact, heroic spirits had far

stronger souls. Their own heroic spirit bodies already had the ability to protect their soul from the Cycle of Reincarnation, so their reincarnation success rate was one hundred percent.

These newborns destined to grow up in the Holy War now possessed their former memories, experiences, and techniques as heroes. They now also once again possessed actual physical bodies with the power of evolution. As long as they didn't die on the way, they were destined to far succeed their original power levels in their first lives.

Of course, being reincarnated still meant starting over from the very beginning. There would still be problems such as the clash between the new and old personality. Before they "awakened" into becoming "heroes", they would still have a long path ahead of them before they matured. Yet, these heroic seedlings were now spread throughout the entire world, destined to sprout during this Holy War.

"...Perhaps this can finally make up for the fact that there are no game players... who were the strongest army in the latter half of the Holy War. Just think about it, for ordinary mortals with such difficulties, perhaps your next-door neighbor's child is actually a famous former emperor or some great dragon and demon-slaying hero. These mortals that became heroes have become mortals again, so they'll naturally fight again for the sake of the mortals' future. One hero is more than capable of protecting an entire town or changing the course of an entire battle. Each hero can lead an entire squadron. They'll be far more useful than heroic spirits, who can only act as fighters that are unable to improve their power level."

That was how I convinced the Gods of the Hell Faction to allow their own heroic spirits and God Envoys to choose for themselves. Most of the heroic spirits chose to enter reincarnation... the future generation would eventually call them the "heaven-blessed" individuals.

Although the other True Gods eventually learned about this loophole and attempted to have their heroic spirits take advantage of this loophole as well, the new Cycle of Reincarnation had matured already and fixed the loophole. Very few not from the Hell Faction succeeded in abusing this loophole. This maneuver from the Hell Faction was destined to leave a great influence on history.

That was because these heroes had already proved themselves in the past with their heroic deeds, rather than being "game player heroes" who could only grow through endless failures. Now that these heroes had a new chance at starting over again, they would be far superior to game players who only received their strength through "infinite lives with endless saving and loading", in both willpower and personal ability.

Just to give one example, if a dragonslayer hero reincarnated, it would probably take only two decades before the dragons would have a huge problem to deal with. Each generation typically only had one hero, but this upcoming generation would have countless heroes in it. Some things were destined to change because of this.

More than ten Divine Kingdoms descended into the new dimension of Hell. However, most of the Divine Kingdoms didn't enter Hell itself, but actually began to orbit the plane instead. That was because Hell was a country for the dead, so how could the living possibly survive within it?

Once the new dimension of Hell fully matured, all existences not powerful enough to ignore dimensional wills would all instantly be transformed into the dead within Hell, including even all Gods not at the Main God level. If our Hell Faction Gods left their Divine Kingdoms within Hell, then the dimensional law of death would invade their Divine Kingdoms and corrupt them with death.

"The Gods of the country of the dead can only be Gods that are already dead."

Of course, while most of the Hell Faction Gods chose to avoid becoming the dead, there were a total of five Gods that voluntarily chose to become dead Guardian Gods of the new Hell.

The God of Fate Catio already merged his entire Divine Kingdom into the land of Hell. As one of the top-ranked Gods in the Hell Faction, he made his choice to become one of the core members and elites of the new Hell.

Mary, the Goddess of Shield Dwarves, also joined her Divine Kingdom together with Hell. She had made a promise to Ayer to become one of the Guardian Gods of Hell.

Three other Gods also joined Hell as according to their agreements to begin their new "jobs".

As for the Hell Faction Gods who didn't join their Divine Kingdoms together with Hell, they were still going to become part of the divine Hell Faction. Of course, these Gods wouldn't belong only to Hell.

As an extension on top of the plane of Hell, the other Gods' Divine Kingdoms were all combining to transform into a paradise in the void. This new Divine Kingdom would be the "Heaven" according to Wumianzhe's divine laws, a paradise for the kind and innocent. The other Hell Faction Gods would become the Guardian Gods of the new Heaven.

In between the newly-born Heaven and Hell was no longer a space as simple as the void. Part of the Ghostwind Plains acted as the core where the first Titans and Supreme Immemorial Dragons from the first generation were now busily working. As existences capable of surviving even in the void, they were some of the strongest existences throughout all the planes. But right now, they were simply construction workers.

Some of them were busily applying dimensional coordinates to the shattered ground, which would make it more convenient for stabilization and teleportation. Some of them were busily

gathering dimensional shards together, while others were going through the void and creating new dimensional coordinates. Some were acting to protect the weaker, ordinary lifeforms. The Titans and dragons all worked hard for the sake of themselves and their own species' future.

And after the new Heaven Gods settled down, the Titans and dragons would be going over there to assist as well.

In my blueprint, this would become a tri-layered dimension. The top dimension would be Heaven, where the Heaven Gods and the kind and innocent would reside. The middle dimension would be my "Land of Spring", my equivalent of Purgatory where mortals and animals would reside while awaiting their next reincarnation. The Titans and dragons would become the guardians of the Land of Spring. And, the lowest dimension was naturally the most important one in my plan, Hell.

Under the influence of my Four Elemental Towers, the entire dimension was now rearranging and trisecting itself. However, if you measured the amount of nutrition that I gave Heaven and the Land of Spring as a unit of one, then the amount of nutrition I provided to Hell would be more than one hundred.

That was because the other two dimensional layers were only temporary add-ons to Hell so that the entirety of this Hell could begin to work as it was intended to. The true add-on for Hell would be the entire mortal plane of Eich, which meant that Hell's capabilities and energy level requirements would naturally have to be more than one hundred times more than Heaven and the Land of Spring. [TL note: so does this mean that Roland feels that more than 100x the number of people will go to Hell compared to the Land of Spring (Purgatory) and Heaven combined...?]

And now, a large amount of the River Styx had flowed within Hell, bringing along a countless number of souls. A new Cycle of Reincarnation would absolutely be required, and the entire system of Hell had to be activated now. None of us had any path of retreat.

And, it was the same for our enemies. They also had no more path of retreat!

The dimensional walls of Hell had now been established. Leaving this plane was now directly equivalent to jumping into the void. The rate of survival in the unknown void, even for Main Gods, would be less than 0.001%. And once Hell finished forming in its entirety, this entire world would embrace the dimensional law of death. Although the Main God level existences would likely be able to remain alive in Hell despite the dimensional law, it was a certainty that they would lose a significant amount of power by having to fight the dimensional law. And, all of their subordinates and squadrons would absolutely die to the dimensional law.

Looking at it from the Chaos and Order Main Gods' standpoint, the best possible result for them would naturally be to destroy us all, after which they could take over this still incomplete dimension. They would then wait for the two major factions to slowly locate this dimension in the void and provide them a path of return several decades later, and receive a hefty payment from the Source of Order or the will of the Chaos Abyss afterwards.

And since these Main Gods were all willing to come here, they must have realized beforehand that it would be almost impossible for them to return. In that case, the only possible course of action for them was quite obvious – whoever stood in the end would be victorious!

Warhorns sounded as numerous Dimensional Doors sounded. However, this time it wasn't enemies that arrived.

Heroic spirits started walking out of the Dimensional Doors. The black tower of Death and the white tower of Ice were both glowing as the Hades Mist provided these "dead spirits" with even more power. The gift of Ice also gave them powerful physical bodies.

Indeed, the heroic spirits in the Hell Faction's Divine Kingdoms had two major choices they could choose from. One was to start

over again after reincarnation, and the second was to appear like this and become a part of Hell. They would fight for the sake of the mortals' Heaven and Hell.

It was now time to go all-out in the battle. The Hell Gods wouldn't possibly hold anything back here. If it wasn't for the fact that they were busy stabilizing the new dimension of Heaven, they would have likely sent divine incarnations containing a majority of their power here, despite the fact that it would be impossible to get their incarnations back with the dimensional law of death here.

"It would seem that this will be a difficult battle of attrition."

I was still rather dissatisfied with the three glowing towers before me, even if the black and white towers were now playing the role of important strategic objectives.

Even these strengthened heroic spirits would be dispatched by a single attack in front of Main God level existences. Even if they were capable of endlessly reviving... would endlessly reviving ants be capable of killing a tyrannosaurus rex?

As for the gold tower of Holy Light, it was acting in the same capabilities as the concept of Time, one of the two most important dimensional coordinates which represented the order of existence for all existences living and nonliving... To use simpler phrasing, Time represented a one-track direction, the constant progress of all existences.

People would grow old. Machines would age. It was impossible to turn time backwards. That was the impression that mortals had of the Concept of Time. No matter if mortals were happy or sad, their Time would always progress forward. And in the new dimension of Hell, Holy Light also represented this always forward-progressing direction.

"Our Holy Light is now completely separate from the God of Holy Light. Our Holy Light represents the Concept of Salvation."

That's right, that was the direction for Holy Light in Hell. Criminals and villains would be locked up and tortured in Hell. Yet, torturing them for eternity wasn't the final goal. The goal was for them to be punished a suitable amount for their crimes so that they, too, may receive salvation. Once an individual was punished sufficiently for their crimes while alive, that would wash away all their sins. Only then would they be able to enter the Cycle of Reincarnation after being cleansed of their sins. This would be a warning to all the living to do more kind acts and perform less heinous deeds.

And, the result of the chosen direction for Holy Light in Hell was naturally that mortals and souls in Hell would all receive salvation. This was naturally the most important function of Hell, and it would have wondrous effects and uses after Hell formed in its entirety. But right now...

"No matter how bright you are, it's still useless."

On the current battlefield, this Holy Light of Salvation was basically completely useless against those Main God level existences! In fact, its cleansing properties weren't even as effective as the large light bulb incarnation not far away.

"It would seem that it will all depend on the Tower of Law."

This silver tower was still inactive, as if it was gathering energy. And only I knew that if "Salvation" was Hell's direction and final goal, "Law" would be the method to achieve this goal. It could be said that present everywhere in the future Hell would be a land filled with Law.

And, this Tower of Law that was about to be ignited would become the true core of the entirety of Hell.

At the top of the Tower of Law, Wumianzhe had finally completed his final preparations. Hell was about to start a new chapter.

Chapter 455: Ace

If one drew red spots on a map of Eich of all locations that were currently at war, perhaps the entire map would be drenched in red. The returned Great Demons, the Demon Lords that begun slaughtering, the low-level angels that were just like war machines, the elves' cruel and bloody internal war, the human kingdoms' forever ongoing clashes for benefits. Apart from the frozen Northlands that still remained peaceful and quiet, the rest of the entire world was embroiled in bitter warfare.

"Ha, the so-called Holy War? It's truly addictive. Kings desire new territory, military officers want to use the heads of their enemies to obtain promotions and loot, merchants finally have an opportunity to sell off all the stock they've been hoarding, and even that heroic-appearing young man desires to become a so-called hero, doesn't he...? The Holy War? Does it have any difference with past wars? Don't look at how the atmosphere seems so joyous now. Let's see just how many people can survive to the end of this Holy War."

With the Holy War currently ongoing, bards that sang ironic songs about warfare and those who predicted ominous forebodings were detested despite the fact that they saw the truth. Countless taverns and theaters were still performing epics praising past wars and legendary achievements, so such "truth" was far too annoying for people to listen to.

What few mortals knew was that right now, in a dimension currently unknown to the world, a battle to determine the fate of mortals was raging at this exact moment. Judging by this battle's cruelty and power, and what it represented, this was the true representation of the Holy War.

"Five Chaos Main Gods and two Order Main Gods. That's almost half of the total number of Main Gods in this entire world. That would seem rather difficult to deal with..."

Countless Dimensional Doors kept opening up with the Main Gods forcing their troops to the battlefield of Hell. Both Chaos and Order's reinforcements were constantly arriving, even though this was destined to be a one-way ticket to death.

Those embroiled in battling continued to fight, while those who weren't currently in battle were summoning additional allies as well as preparing for battle. Not only were they on guard against the dimensional will and Hell's forces, they were even more vigilant against their own armies. That was because there were many grudges between the Main Gods, especially the demons that had grudges against each other which could be material for an endless amount of soap operas. Any demons that let their guard down might be killed off by their own side here, which would be an aggrieving way to die.

Behind me, all Four Elemental Towers had now been lit up. My preparations were nearing their end. On top of the core tower, the Tower of Law, Wumianzhe was currently holding on to the Original Codex of Law as he loudly incanted the maxims of Law. What this God Equipment book gave him wasn't merely the first divine laws.

This Original Codex of Law had once been my notebook in which I recorded my plans and laws for Law in. It imperceptibly evolved into a God Equipment which was the very representation of Law, as it represented the purest original source from which Law stemmed from. At this moment, another notebook was beginning to combine with the Original Codex of Law. This other notebook contained all the secrets of Hell... as it was my notebook that recorded the entirety of the Hell grand scheme.

And now, these two notebooks were combining into one, as if it was declaring that the God of Law would also become the ruler of Hell in the future.

"A new God Equipment has been born. It shall be known as... the Book of Hell!"

Once that black-covered thick book was opened up in the dark night of Hell, all secrets about it were revealed as all lifeforms instinctively learned of its existence and true name.

The Book of Hell would become the core of Hell as well as the representation of the ruler of Hell.

The Four Elemental Towers had finished transmitting my four elements. Creation by the Four Elements was fully developing as this entire dimension became a complete new dimension of its own. The newly born protective dimensional walls here were more than strong enough to withstand any Main God's challenge.

Reaching this point where all Four Elemental Towers had successfully awakened meant that the first two stages of our goal was now complete. This chaotic battle which had been on the level of fighting in the streets and alleyways had now escalated into a dimension-scale strategic battle. We were the rulers of this dimension, and these invading Main Gods were the enemies of our dimension.

After Ayer made his choice, at most our Hell Faction would have two Main Gods' strength within it, and that would come from two Devil Lords that both had overly specialized powers. Our overall combat strength was still obviously weak, so transforming guerilla warfare into a much more advantageous castle defense battle was part of our preparations from the very start.

According to the basic rules of all dimensional battles, killing the ruler of a dimension would always be something difficult. Slowly invading a dimension and corrupting its dimensional rules, lowering its defenses, killing the dimension's Gods, and finally corrupting and killing the dimensional ruler, all in that order, would be the most basic "rules" of how the game of dimensional invasions went. Demon Lords, the most experienced veterans of this game, would naturally know this better than anyone.

From a certain standpoint, this battle could be viewed as a

practice battle for the Hell Faction, as the mortal plane would eventually face many dimensional invaders...

At this moment, all dimensional invaders were automatically rejected by the dimensional will. They would have to use a certain amount of power in order to maintain their existences here. The weaker demons were directly vaporized into dust as death mist began spreading.

Since this was destined to be a long battle of attrition, the Demon Lords unhesitatingly summoned even more cannon fodder. They wouldn't be personally entering battle until they learned more about this dimension's potential traits and dimensional laws.

Clang!

Alright then, I had spoken too soon. Even I inhaled a cold breath upon witnessing the greatsword that viciously swung against the dimensional walls in a hail of sparks.

However, Donatis merely sent me a cold stare before he instantly flew back and retreated after finding out that his sudden ambush had failed.

The facts had now proved that our predictions had been on point. For the short time being, these dimensional walls would more than suffice. So of course, I unhesitatingly focused on assisting Wumianzhe with his current task – creating Hell.

On that opened Book of Hell, the blueprint of Hell was already beginning to form into reality. The faint figures of Hell appearing above the book were identical to the blueprint within. The book was currently spread out to the table of contents which indicated the outline for the future vision of Hell.

"Four Pillars, Four Halls, and Seven Hells..."

That's right, that was my future vision for Hell. There would be Four Pillars which represented my four elements, along with representing the four main Gods that would become the Pillars of

Hell.

Just as how the Elemental Planes had their Elemental Gods, the Four Pillar Gods of Hell were the four major controllers of Hell's four elements. They would become the very Pillars of Hell as well as the rulers of Hell. Wumianzhe, the representative God of the Pillar of Law, was naturally one of these four Gods.

No, I should say that Wumianzhe was actually the most important pillar of all. Not only was he one of the Four Pillar Gods, he would also be the Head of the Four Halls as well as the King of the Seven Hells. Wumianzhe would become the main ruler of Hell and the final judge who oversaw everything. His importance even exceeded that of Ayer's, who was the foundation for all the dead.

I slowly walked over and lightly touched the silver mask on Wumianzhe's face. I felt rather strange inside, as from a certain standpoint, Wumianze was both a part of me as well as being my child (creation).

And as the strangest creation that I made, I created him without any self-will or emotions so that he could remain forever just. Despite the fact that not having self-will meant that he shouldn't exist as a "Concept", he was also recognized and worshipped by the people of the world. Such a contradictory existence became the last one of my Seven Original Sins – Wumianzhe, whose true identity was also Sloth.

This was difficult to understand? Actually, even I didn't realize that I had unknowingly completed this Original Sin of mine until my System told me recently.

Just as I stated when I gave the wood spirits my blessings, my understanding of Sloth was that Sloth actually represented "cold indifference" Even the laziest of individuals would instantly become quite active when their life was in danger. Many times, seemingly slothful actions were foundationally because people felt that performing such actions were unimportant to them. In that

case, the true meaning of Sloth was that Sloth was a type of selfish indifference which "lacked desires" and was "emotionless".

Passionate people were always hard-working and loved to meddle in others' affairs. Indifferent individuals would always live only in their own worlds, using various excuses to cut themselves off from the world and interact with others as little as possible.

The best representation of indifference, having no desires, and no emotions would naturally be Wumianzhe, who was absolutely just. Since he had no desires, he would never be biased in his decisions. Since he was emotionless, no matter how worthy the crime was of compassion, the judgement and punishment would still be carried out according to the letter of the law.

Under a certain Goddess of Order's guidance, my split-off soul shard created the fairest God and judge of them all. And, this was also another evidence for my previous inference – that "Gods were actually another type of undead."

"There are no coincidences in the world. There are only certainties? System, I'm going to settle all accounts with you after this battle... Ha, take a good look at this ultimate move of mine, Karwenz! God's Descent!"

Time was limited, so I couldn't be wasting time with my System right now. I angrily roared, causing my vision to suddenly transform strangely. Wumianzhe who had been incanting in front of the Book of Hell suddenly became myself.

After the two of us combined into one, I was now wearing the silver judge's robe and Wumianzhe's silver mask. The weight of the gavel attached to my waist was quite nostalgic. This familiar appearance of the judge made me recall when I was still in the Underground. The main difference was that the scarily high amount of power of Law within me had far surpassed the realm of mortals.

Indeed, we had now combined. This perfect reverse God's

descent was the ace I had prepared.

If the entirety of Wumianzhe's strong divine power descended upon me, no matter how high our synchronicity would be, my physical body directly exploding would be the only possible result. That was the only possible outcome due to the limits of a mortal's physical body as the vessel.

"Wumianzhe is overly powerful here and is unable to descend upon my body. However, I can perform a descent upon Wumianzhe's body!"

Since a God's will was capable of suppressing a mortal's will and descending upon that person's body, in theory it would be also possible for a mortal to descend upon a God's body. But in any normal situation, the God would instinctively resist against this, causing any mortal's soul to be destroyed. However, "Sloth" Wumianzhe didn't even have a self-will, and his soul wavelength was identical to mine, so of course we could create a perfect union.

And so, I reversed the typical rules of God's Descent as my will descended upon Wumianzhe's body. Now that I had a sufficient amount of divine power supporting me, my Soul World continued to improve as the blueprint on the Book of Hell transformed into reality.

I alone would be insufficient to complete the grand ceremony necessary to truly create the new dimension of Hell and grant new Concepts and Godhoods here. That was because my personal power level would be far too insufficient. Only Wumianzhe by himself would also be insufficient because he had no self-will at all. Only Wumianzhe Roland in perfect union would possess the power to create Hell and assign new Concepts to the Hell Gods. This was the foundational reason that Wumianzhe needed to obtain a sufficient amount of divine power!

This scene was impossible to conceal from others. Everyone witnessed the owner of the Hell Soul World massively increase in

power, which naturally changed the entire world. The world which suddenly became more alive obviously caused my enemies to begin a panicky commotion. As the Book of Hell continually powered up and the Main Gods panicked, my response was to laugh.

"This is only the beginning. You're all astonished already, my dear revered, strongest existences in all of Eich? You should know that you Main Gods are about to face Hell's highest-level God and dimensional ruler! This is a war, a war between two dimensions!"

Chapter 456: Wrath

Chaos Evil God Donatis was rather hesitant as he stood in a patch of fog. Just one moment earlier, he had been standing on the battlefield, observing the enemy that he had sworn to kill. Yet at the next instant, he found himself lost in a patch of fog.

"He's able to forcefully change my location without my noticing?"

Despite having experienced countless battles against powerful opponents throughout so many planes, this strange scene still somewhat confused Donatis. Even though his expression didn't change, he couldn't help but feel uneasy in his heart.

The tactic of divide and conquer against more powerful opponents was quite a common strategy. It was quite obvious that he was now the divided one who was now alone.

Clang!

Donatis didn't immediately act. Instead, he inserted his greatsword into the ground and appeared to close his eyes and enter a contemplative trance. He was actually using his unique combat instincts to observe and sense this world which had become distorted even further.

Donatis wasn't waiting for his own allied reinforcements. The fog had gotten even thicker to the point where it was impossible to even see his own fingers. But imperceptibly, the fog had become red and bloody.

"Asmo?"

Donatis attempted to mentally contact Asmo, the commander of all his heroic spirits. Asmo was a fallen hero who forever remained calm while giving wise and decisive opinions. Yet, Asmo didn't instantly respond as he always would. Instead, the only response that Donatis received was a strange roaring sound with limited intelligence.

"Ahh!!! Why can't I kill them all... Die, die! All of you go die!"

Under a strange interference, his other heroic spirits also responded with nothing more than chaotic thoughts, as if they had all gone insane.

Not only that, Donatis had lost the ability to sense the exact location of all his subordinates. Although he could clearly sense that they were nearby, he remained unable to see any of them or receive any coherent responses.

Donatis was rather astonished at this situation. Unlike other Demon Lords that summoned expendable cannon fodder, War God Donatis would only respect true courageous warriors. It could be said that there wasn't a single weak existence in his heroic spirit army. All the weak ones would be culled out by the endless amount of battles.

Not only that, Donatis only summoned the elite of the elite into this battlefield. Some of the more powerful ones would even have the power level of True Gods. How could these heroic spirits all be vanquished so easily?

And, after the fallen heroic spirits entered this plane, they obtained the recognition of the dimensional law as they were also dead. Not only were they strengthened by the aura of death here, the heroic spirits even gained the property of endless revival, just like their opponents. That was because this was supposed to be a country for the dead.

Strengthening one's enemy sounded rather foolish? That was just how dimensional laws worked. The dimensional laws would limit specific targets and always have the same result. As long as conditions were met, there would be no difference.

Unlike dimensional laws that could be manipulated in other dimensions, Roland created a dimensional law of death in Hell that was even more "rigid" than others, which also allowed this dimensional law to have greater "restraints" and "adaptability".

"Since the dimensional law has been set, I would never allow it to be trampled on so easily. If Law can be adjusted because of someone's identity, status, or characteristics, then what makes us any different from the Gods' churches? Why would we need to exist?"– Roland Mist.

Donatis didn't feel reassured or relieved at all when his enemy appeared to foolishly strengthen Donatis's fallen heroic spirit army. That was because he knew that Soul Worlds represented what a person desired the most. Ever since Donatis entered this world, he could detect just how distorted and insane the dimensional laws here were. Being able to create such a Soul World was already the best evidence of Roland's extremeness and insanity.

And since willpower was capable of transforming into concrete strength, that meant extremists and the insane were the most difficult type to deal with in this world. Extremists' stubbornness would always create Soul Worlds with ridiculous restraints and effects, while it would be impossible to predict the laws of an insane individual's Soul World.

Still, doing nothing wouldn't be a solution to this predicament at all.

Finally, Donatis chose to step forward. But, the moment that he took the first step, the entire world distorted around him yet again.

"...This... is... a battlefield!"

That's right, this was a blood-red tundra that stretched for as far as the eye could see. Even the land had been drenched red with blood. Countless souls were currently fighting against each other here, including ghostly knights, butchers with vegetable knives, and undying heroic spirits. No matter how powerful, glorious, honorable, or what they believed in, they were nothing more than ordinary soldiers here.

This was the most insane of battles where all souls lost their sense of reason. They were using sharp weapons to slash each other, or even tearing into each other with teeth and hands. They ripped off their own heads and innards to toss at each other. Their only thoughts were to tear apart the enemy before them. Every moment, a flag and its holder would be slashed to death. But the next instant, countless souls would revive and begin fighting again.

At this battlefield, even the strongest of heroic spirits was no different from a butcher. Their originally clear eyes now contained nothing apart from distorted insanity and bloodthirst. In fact, Donatis witnessed some of his most powerful heroic spirits on all fours, tearing at each other as if they were wild dogs. No matter if these fallen heroic spirits had been venerated kings or glorious heroes in the past, they had become nothing more than raging beasts being controlled by wild, raw emotions.

"Asmo? Diboer? Kalii?"

Donatis was rather hesitant to identify these figures with the fallen heroic spirits that he knew. However, the master's summons still received no response. These souls that had died multiple times and constantly revived here had already lost their most basic senses of logic and reason.

At the end of the red mist, Roland was currently standing there in his silver robe and mask, apparently enjoying the scene before him.

"A battle for the sake of justice? A Holy War for cleansing evil? A battle for the sake of survival space? Don't joke around. Since you all love to find so many excuses to fight, then let me give you a reason to fight each other here for all eternity, just like the wild beasts that you love to be."

When Roland turned around, his holy robe of Law was glowing with the pure light of Law. Yet, the lich's vicious skeleton face was

evilly laughing maniacally. The insanity and distortion on Roland's face caused even Donatis's expression to flicker.

"Welcome to Hell. This is the first of the Seven Circles of Hell, the Bloodbath Inferno. Those who casually take the lives of others, love to slaughter, participate in war, and revel in bloodthirst, yep, along with so-called heroes and outstanding talents, and anyone that participates in war and takes others' lives, no matter the reason, excuse, or identity, shall all fall into this Circle of Hell."

And when Roland noticed Donatis looking at him, he suddenly bowed, filled with evil intentions, as if he was a friendly host.

"My venerated War God, please forgive me for the impolite greeting. But, I feel that as you're a War God who's the literal incarnation of War, this Bloodbath Inferno is the most appropriate place to greet you at. Do you happen to like it? Or, perhaps you're not enjoying your subordinates' performance of fighting against each other? Or, perhaps you're intending to personally participate?"

The silent War God didn't respond verbally. His greatsword which glowed with a murky black attacked through all dimensional limitations, acting as his only response as always.

However, his greatsword that was always able to pierce through even dimensions met with an opponent. A gigantic monster standing in the red mist blocked his greatsword.

The red mist was blown away, revealing the identity of the beast in the fog. Even Donatis inhaled a cold breath at the sight.

This beast was truly fearsome to behold. Its physical appearance was similar to Cerberuses, and its blood-red body was as large as a mountain. Its gigantic back was on fire, as if it was a living volcano. One of its dog heads was currently biting on to the War God's greatsword.

As if the dog was dissatisfied with its master's restrictions, its

three heads were endlessly roaring and its blood-red bestial eyes were filled with cruel joy of the desire to slaughter. Its limbs and tail were covered in the flames of Hell, while its toxic saliva directly corroded everything that came into contact with it.

Not only that, this dog's other two heads were busy tearing and devouring other souls which were once venerated heroic spirits that it was now easily trampling upon. Although its master was restraining it, this incarnation of Wrath was still unable to stop itself from slaughtering.

"Oh my, someone as frail as me is unsuited for direct battle. My little cutie will be playing with you – my Little Bas...

"Bastian! Bastian the War Hound!"

"WOOF!"

The gigantic hound's roar contained an endless amount of anger within it. Even in front of its master, this hound of Wrath that entered its combat form was unable to restrain its infinite amount of anger.

"Alright then, I'll allow you since you requested it, Little Bas."

"Call me Bastian!"

"Yep, Little Bas! I know, no need to emphasize." "...Fine, whatever."

In the end, the magic hound helplessly gave up on having Roland call him Bastian instead of Little Bas. But despite this almost comical display, Donatis didn't dare to look down on his opponent. He already recognized this undead magical hound, but Bastian was now far different from before in terms of strength and imposing aura.

"He possesses the Concepts of Wrath, War, and Slaughter? He's at minimum a High God's level? So this is his Divine Kingdom..."

Donatis could sense that this tremendous beast was completely

compatible with the dimensional laws of this location, as if this was the beast's Divine Kingdom. If this beast was the master of this Divine Kingdom, then naturally that meant Donatis was an invader who came uninvited into this Divine Kingdom.

And, even Ayer would be unwilling to invade other Gods' Divine Kingdoms in ordinary circumstances, as invading another Divine Kingdom would be endlessly troublesome with a huge price to pay.

As for Donatis, he considered the level of his opponent to have escalated from troublesome to slightly dangerous.

Roland laughed upon seeing how the Chaos War God was becoming ever more cautious.

"Allow me to reintroduce him to you. This is the Hell King of the First Circle of Hell, the Bloodbath Inferno, the Overseer of those who commit the crime of Slaughter, Hell's hound who represents Wrath and the Sin of War..."

"Bastian!"

The furious magic hound roared out his own name before I could finish. No longer able to suppress his anger, he instantly started attacking. One head spat out raging flames, one spat out an icy chill, and one spat out death breath along with beginning to tear and bite. Even when facing a Chaos Main God, this incarnation of Wrath still chose to begin the battle.

A stench and toxic mist started spreading. The inferno flames were more than powerful enough to destroy any soul. Even a God would tremble in front of the hound of Wrath's anger-filled attack.

However, Bastian was facing no simple God. The gigantic dog, who was even taller than the War God, didn't even get close before a swing of Donatis's greatsword cut through Space itself.

Shining thin trails continuously cut through Space where the greatsword sliced. The void could faintly be seen through the dimensional tears, but the next moment, the dimensional tears

were instantly fixed.

"So what if you're a powerful God now? Countless souls have died to my sword already."

Donatis swung his greatsword again, tearing through Space once more. Bastian's body viciously crashed into the ground, creating a tremendous crater while also crushing an innumerable number of souls that were currently fighting.

"Ha, as expected of the undefeated Chaos War God. However, you'd better not underestimate my Little..."

"It's Bastian!"

The magic hound that was nothing more than scattered pieces of a corpse still angrily roared. And, the next instant, he stood up again as a magic hound that was even larger than before. Not only that, his strength had increased by almost ten percent.

The war hound of Wrath was currently twitching all over as his already ridiculous muscles strengthened even more. Even the inferno flames around his body became fiercer than earlier.

Anger would make the magic hound even stronger, and the dead were unable to become deader in this plane of Hell. This dimensional law was just as effective on the Hell Gods. When in Hell, how could the Gods of Hell, who were already dead, become any deader?

If Donatis was unable to find a method to deal with this, Bastian would only become ever larger and stronger through his anger. As Donatis was a War God who specialized mainly in only physical attacks, it seemed as if he had met the most troublesome opponent in his entire life.

The next instant, the war hound charged at Donatis yet again. Although Bastian was larger than earlier, his movements had become even more agile.

The magic hound that had just died unhesitatingly challenged

the Chaos War God yet again. And, perhaps the end result would still be the same, but what about ten times, one hundred times, or one thousand times later? Perhaps the undefeated Chaos War God would finally meet his first defeat and die here.

"Chaos War God? Ptui! If you strip away the reputation that was obtained through slaughtering, doesn't that make you into a butcher and evil hound that's the same as me? Come, let us enjoy a fun fight."

Chapter 457: Chess Match

There was a saying that the workings of the world were just like a game of chess. But if one compared the current situation in Eich to a chess match, then this would absolutely be a death match that would cause anyone to despair.

Not doing anything would end in total destruction of everything in Armageddon. Resisting against this fate would end in Armageddon. Winning this Holy War would still end in Armageddon. Even if one wanted to escape, there were no possible directions to escape to. The existence which would cause the total annihilation of everything was even higher up than the strongest existences on both sides of the Holy War. This was such an unfunny joke that nobody would be able to laugh at.

"Is there really no solution?"

Evidently, there would be no solution in all of Eich. This wasn't even a guess. This was an analysis based on the pure facts of reality.

The two major factions of Chaos and Order which ruled the world would also end up destroying it. Since these two major factions possessed the great majority of all resources and all top-level strength, there would be zero chance of victory in their home turf.

This was the equivalent of game players trying to turn against the game masters (administrators) of a game. That would be the most foolish thing possible. If it wasn't for the fact that the two "game masters" had already lost most of their "administrator" privileges due to fighting amongst themselves, there likely wouldn't even be a way to resist.

"I'm so unwilling, truly unwilling to accept this! How can this be the only possible ending no matter how hard I work?"

If Roland had been a native of Eich with the same "cheat", then he would have likely shaken his head and helplessly given up in the end when faced with this situation. That was because this was a world where the Gods were tangibly real. The myths about the Creator Goddess were well known to everyone. Having the creations disobey the creator was conceptually even more difficult than children disobeying their parents, not to mention that the possibility was basically zero from the very start.

However, Roland's identity as a transmigrator gave him the ability to think outside the box. He managed to find a solution when there was supposed to be none.

"Since it's impossible to accomplish in the world of Eich, perhaps it'll be possible if I create a new world! At the very least, I can create a safe location to escape to, like an ark of sorts."

And that was the origin of the "Hell's Ark" plan. Even the first edition of the plan had "Ark" in its name because it was originally intended to only be a safe haven from which to avoid the upcoming Armageddon. But as Roland gathered more and more pieces, the "Hell" part of it finally became possible. Of course, if Roland found that the Hell portion was still impossible in the end, he would have unhesitatingly reactivated the Ark part of the plan.

"Pride? Honor? Why don't you try asking the billions of dead that will die in the upcoming Armageddon what meaning pride and honor have to them? Little brats, don't be foolish just because you're young. We're nothing more than a group of pitiful worms that are struggling just to stay alive. We're capable of doing anything just for the sake of survival."

Although Roland kept talking about how there was no path of retreat, he had been preparing a path of retreat from the very start. In his "Plan B" that he didn't wish to carry out, the new dimension of Hell would instead become a dimensional ark that would likely never have contact with the world of Eich again. But at the very least, Roland would be able to save specimens of as

many species as possible along with the people that were important to him.

And that was why he decided to attempt at creating a world when he was in the Earth Elemental Plane. That was basically a practice session for trying out his true ace card. Since he was in the distant Earth Elemental Plane, it was highly unlikely that the Chaos and Order Factions would notice what he was doing. Ayer also personally acted to cut off the Earth Elemental Plane, which completely removed the possibility of information leaking altogether.

In fact, even Roland's single combat against Emordilorcan had been a type of practice as well.

He used Frigidwinter Earth to cut off Emordilorcan's connection to the Earth Elemental Plane. Roland then successfully defeated the undefeatable Earth Elemental God by using an otherworld weapon which didn't exist in Eich... did all of this seem familiar?

That's right, the current Hell was also the same type of battlefield. Hell cut off the Main Gods from their own Divine Kingdoms and the mortal plane of Eich. Hell's unique dimensional laws and magical creatures would become weapons capable of fighting even against the Main Gods. No matter if you looked at basic strategy, foundational workings, or our combat tactics, this current battle was nothing more than an escalated version of the battle in the Earth Elemental Plane.

And if this type of battle was escalated even further...

"I shall cut off the Goddesses of Chaos and Order's connections to Eich, strip them of their cheat-like powers, and kill them by using human-wave tactics!"

Roland had uttered such an insane statement back in the year. But as he increased in power, this actually seemed like less and less of a possibility. Yet if he was able to kill off one or two Main Gods here, that would mean that his "Plan C" which would

foundationally solve all the problems would doubtlessly become far superior to "Plan A" which was simply to delay the two Goddesses from waking up for as long as possible. Plan A simply had too many uncontrollable variables affecting it.

What exactly was Plan C? Obviously, this was the "Godslaying" plan which the System had secretly blacklisted.

After paying an uncalculatable price and planning for well over a century, gaining tiny advantages over time to break the dead-end situation, it was finally time to reveal all the cards.

It could be said that this battle would directly decide the fate of the entire world.

Hell had already been cut off from the mortal plane and all other planes. The new Cycle of Reincarnation that was beginning to establish itself here was providing this new dimension with a limitless amount of power. Every single moment, this newly-born dimension was expanding its area. And in the Seven Circles of Hell, which would be the core-most section of Hell, the Hell Kings were currently battling against the Main Gods.

Hell Kings? The newly-born Hell was separated into the Four Pillars, Four Halls, and Seven Circles of Hell. Pillars meant pillars of support that were also the ruling Gods of Hell. The Four Halls would be the entire mechanism for running all of Hell, while the Seven Circles of Hell were naturally the location where souls would undergo Hell's punishments after death. And, the rulers of the Seven Circles were the Seven Original Sins who now became the Seven Hell Kings.

If you treated Hell as a dimension analogous to the mortal plane of Eich, Hell absolutely fit all the criteria for being a main plane. Hell was independent, had a dimensional ruler, and its own four elements. The Seven Hell Kings would become existences equivalent to High Gods at the minimum with the power of their Concepts here. Plus, each Circle of Hell would additionally power

them up even more, making them almost reach the level of being able to fight against Main Gods. Main God was the only rank left higher than High God, after all.

"...This doesn't seem in our favor."

Just as how there would be huge differences between SemiGods, that was only because there was no power level assessment system for those at SemiGod rank. The Main Gods that had accumulated so much knowledge and experience throughout the eons had long since surpassed the analysis possible of any normal power level system. Although it seemed as if they were only one rank above the High Gods, that was actually because there was far too limited a number of Main Gods, so there was no need to separate the ranks even further.

The Chaos War God in fact didn't even originally have a Divine Concept related to War. And as a Chaos Evil God, he didn't require any belief to begin with. It was just that his overwhelming power and combat accomplishments along with his undefeated record all helped to attract countless fallen warriors who worshiped the strong. That was how his first Evil God Church began.

It was basically the same for the Demon Lords. No matter what the reason was, they had all reached their current levels by fighting other demons ever since being born. To use a common term, they were the victors in a society where "might was right." But, precisely because of this, these sufficiently powerful individuals were able to break free from the Chaos Abyss's restraints and mostly be treated as almost equal-level existences.

Actually, most Main God level existences had reached the peak slowly one step at a time. The Elf Main God Anslo was formerly the strongest Elf King in the past. The Order Main God of Wisdom Kalumandas had formerly been the strongest mage and scholar in the world.

Powerful individuals were typically pure and stubborn in their

beliefs. Although power gained from belief in them would also bring benefits, this belief would also contain many impurities that would convey disadvantages.

The God of Holy Light was a God who had ascended purely through the power of belief. Yet, he could even be considered a God who used "wicked" ways, as he even specially raised other Gods to provide him with belief power in his Divine Kingdom. The price that he paid for being a God powered by belief was that he completely lost his sense of self.

But even if he didn't want to lose his sense of self, it would have been impossible for him to retain his sense of self due to the overwhelming amount of belief and faith in him. And so, his boss, the Source of Order, could now easily manipulate this puppet that had no self will at all, just as how Roland could easily manipulate Wumianzhe. Of course, these were divine secrets that the great majority of Gods couldn't possibly know about.

It was quite difficult to become a Main God. Their countless generations of experience and the River Styx's baptism created these extraordinary existences that couldn't be assessed. The repeated cruel Holy Wars were the best proving grounds of all. All that didn't meet the "standards" had already been eliminated. Only the strongest of the top-level existences in all of Eich had been able to survive until today.

"...Three hundred and sixty-eight times."

In just slightly over one hour, Bastian had already died three hundred and sixty-eight times already. War God Donatis's breathing wasn't even slightly ruffled at this point in time.

The magic hound of Wrath was now more than ten times his original size. His strength had multiplied by more than one hundred times already. Bastian's tremendous body would be more than capable of easily crushing Donatis under him. Yet, the only difference for the Chaos War God was that he was now using two

sword swings instead of one to slay Bastian every time. Since Donatis had created far too dimensional tears here, even the speed of fixing the dimensional tears had slowed by half.

Donatis didn't hesitate at all. He simply kept swinging his sword. His pure physical might was unstoppable.

"He's too powerful. So he's the strongest warrior in the entire universe? The most undefeatable existence in direct confrontations?"

I already heard from Ayer and Kamiltias about just how ridiculously strong the Main Gods were. I didn't plan for being able to kill all the Main Gods that came here to begin with. I would be more than satisfied if I was able to kill even one or two Main Gods. If the rest were trapped here in battles of attrition, that would be more than an acceptable result already.

It was quite common already that battles between Gods would take several centuries or more. It wouldn't be strange of battles between Main Gods took millennium. For existences like Main Gods, several years would pass by in the blink of an eye. As long as the dimension of Hell fully matured and its dimensional walls were completed, it would become simple enough to forcefully kick them out of Hell.

"If we're able to kill two Main Gods here, then we'll activate Plan C, the Godslaying plan. If not, we'll activate Plan A, the Sleeping Beauty plan. The Goddesses of Chaos and Order can simply slumber until the world ends."

However, the Seven Hell Kings weren't doing well at all. Although they were all undying, most of them were at a large disadvantage.

Although they were all dimensional rulers here, they were newly-ascended to their power level of High God. The dimension of Hell itself hadn't even fully matured yet, so the dimensional rules powering them would naturally still be insufficient compared to

ancient Gods, not to mention that these were Main Gods.

And, there were no idiots among the Main Gods. Naturally, they weren't simply wasting their time by continuously crushing their undying opponents over and over again. It would take them time to analyze the dimensional laws of this world. Once they finished their analyses, they would naturally know what they needed to do next.

The dimensional laws here weren't that difficult at all. While I provided the blueprint, the true "architects" were the Four Elemental Towers. These four towers were constantly replenishing and strengthening this new world. But, everything would cease to exist if the Main Gods simply destroyed the Four Elemental Towers. If that happened, the dimensional walls would be broken, and my Seven Hell Kings would naturally lose their abilities to be undying.

The Tower of Holy Light which represented Salvation was also the door between the worlds of the living and the dead. Naturally, this tower was at the very top level of Hell, the closest location in Hell to the Land of Spring and Heaven. A very special guardian was protecting this tower, so I wasn't worried about that one at all.

The Tower of Law which represented Judgement was deep underground, located at the source of the River Styx. This was where all the dead would receive judgement. This tower was also connected to the Seven Circles of Hell and the Four Halls. Since this tower was the true core of the entirety of Hell, this was the single most important location to keep safe.

The Tower of Ice which represented Life was located in the Frozen Inferno, which was the Third Circle of Hell. It could be said that if this tower was lost, it would be a serious problem that would bring danger to the other two towers.

The guardian of this tower was myself, as I was also the King of the Third Circle of Hell. And, the Main God that was brought here

was my foolish younger twin brother.

I didn't need to worry one bit about the Tower of Death which represented Death and the foundation of Hell itself. That was because even I didn't know where this tower was located. This black tower had already vanished completely together with Ayer's corpse and soul crystal, but it was definitely somewhere within Hell.

But if the other three towers were all destroyed, it would be all alone and lose its powers of invisibility.

I was also unable to use that cheat-like ability to instantly teleport my enemies anymore. That was because it wasn't instant teleportation to begin with. I simply classified the coordinates that each Main God was standing on as different parts of Hell using the powers of Creation. But now, Hell's basic blueprint had already been established, so I was naturally unable to do the same thing again to the Main Gods. In the end, everything would still depend on power.

[...Roland, I've suddenly recalled a classical anime from deep in your memories, Saint Seiya's Hell arc...]

"You don't say, I've suddenly recalled it as well. The battle between Hell and the Gods? The situation really is quite similar. Still, I watched it so long ago. How am I supposed to remember the story of an anime I watched more than three hundred years ago? What was the final ending? Did justice win in the end?"

[I recently replayed it in your memories. Since Saint Seiya is a shonen story, naturally justice won in the end.]

"Wonderful. That's a good sign for us."

[But, the problem is that we're the Hell Faction in this story, which is the antagonist side from Saint Seiya which was defeated so pitifully. It was the Goddess Athena's warriors that won in the end...]

I was instantly rendered speechless, as I now recalled how the Hell God and Death Gods in Saint Seiya were all defeated by the Goddess's warriors. The Goddess Athena even personally stuck a spear into Hades, which was quite vicious.

"...You jinxer. Can't you reference some other anime instead?"

[Sure, another arc of Saint Seiya.]

"Which arc? I've forgotten all of them."

[The Poseidon arc!]

"What? There's no Death Gods and Hell Gods in that arc."

[But there are pillars! Seven of them! Yep, and also seven guardian generals, just like us. Although, all the generals were defeated and all the pillars were destroyed...]

"Can't you say something that's luckier or better for us?"

[...Yep, the Goddess is with you. Go, undying cockroach! Am I using the right style now?]

"I'm no abnormal creature like a hot-blooded cockroach! Those shonen story main character existences that were beaten half to death last chapter but suddenly revive with full HP and explode with new power are so unscientific!"

[But you really are undying, and personally carry the Goddess with you! Oh, so you're the legendary hot-blooded main character – Sei...]

"If you dare to call me that name, I'll immediately take you to go on a gorilla sightseeing trip. Yep, together with Beifeng. You know exactly what you'll see next. Don't blame me if you go blind..."

[...]

Astrya finally fell silent. Alright then, it would seem that even the Goddess of Order was afraid of this individual. So Beifeng was the real main character all along?

However, her silence didn't last as long as I expected.

[Are you inviting me on a date? You're even bringing along a wingman? So you were the shy type, eh?]

Alright then, I was rendered speechless yet again. Just what had I done to Astrya! Give me that legendary elegant, gentle, and venerated Mother Goddess from the legends!

Chapter 458: Hell Dragons

There was no sunlight in the deeper levels of Hell. Yet, there was no worry that you wouldn't be able to see anything around you. That was because the dead wouldn't need eyes to see what was around them. Souls had true vision that could see the reality around them even if they didn't have physical light.

In this pitch-black world, if one closed their eyes and opened their heart, this world would show you its true form that shocked all the dimensional visitors.

At every moment, this sunless pitch-black land was trembling. However, this was no catastrophe, but rather the tempo of life. It was as if the land was a sleeping giant beast, with the trembles being the beast's breathing and heartbeat.

That's right – this world was alive. It was breathing, moving, and growing.

When one first entered the doors of Hell, the endless River Styx would flow from the void just like Heaven's waters. Countless newborn souls would helplessly float within it. This was the source of the new Cycle of Reincarnation.

And at a turn in the river, the fast-flowing River Styx actually stopped. This shore was constantly bombarded by blizzards, where devils busily worked to wield spears and clubs, forcing the souls that had lost their senses of self to come ashore.

"Who... who am I? Where am I...? I am... John, a village militia member of Kati Village, I... I think I was killed by beastmen while I was out patrolling?"

The moment that John recovered his memories, the fatal injury on his chest appeared at the same time, together with the arrow that pierced his body. This endlessly reminded him of the reality that he was now dead.

This was one of the dimensional laws of Hell, which allowed these souls that lost their memories and senses of self in the River Styx to regain their forms from when they were alive.

The snow would then fall upon their souls and help create new physical bodies of ice and snow. These bodies were capable of hunger, pain, and possessing desires. And with the devils plodding them on, they would start proceeding down a twisted mountain path, heading towards the temple in the mountains where they would all be judged for their actions in their past life.

There was a large obsidian stone door at the end of the mountain path with unclear words inscribed upon it.

Behind this door was a large group of hallways. To reach the temple, one would first have to pass through a corridor of mirrors.

John walked through this mirror corridor. Yet, the mirrors didn't display his current appearance. Instead, they displayed his past, present, and even future appearances.

On the left mirror was the young John as a hoodlum teenager who committed petty thefts. On the right mirror was a recent John who regretted his past actions and joined the village militia, finding meaning in helping and protecting others.

This was a special product of Hell – the Fate Corridor of Good and Evil. Here, Fate-powered magic mirrors would show each person's acts of kindness and evil. After walking through the mirror corridor, one would reach the first Hall of the Four Halls of Hell. This Hall was where each person's acts of good and evil would be weighed on a scale – the Balance Hall.

Only by walking into the Balance Hall would one discover that this wasn't a temple at all. Instead, it was a world with no visible boundaries.

This well-lit hall was filled with busy people. A galaxy of Fate was inscribed into the floorboard, and devils were working hard

everywhere. Countless Fate Mirrors were flashing. Just recording all the dead's major deeds of good and evil as evidence for their judgements already made these newcomer Hell Devils incredibly busy.

Right now, the God of Fate Catio who should have been the master of this Hall was currently in a hibernation. He was currently being transformed by the dimensional laws of Hell. Once Catio awakened, he would gain the Concepts of Measuring Scale of Good and Evil as well as Accusation. The Balance Hall would gain its true master once Catio finally awoke.

Since Catio was currently sleeping, a certain silver-robed judge was sitting in his spot and busily working. Not only that, in the other three Halls that had also been activated with their Guardian Gods currently asleep and absorbing the dimensional laws, the same silver-robed figure could be seen busily working at the administrator's seat.

"...I'm doing so many jobs all by myself. Can I ask for overtime pay?"

[You're the ultimate boss right now, so who are you supposed to ask for overtime pay?]

Right now, the only reason that I still had free time to make comments to my System was that I had gained new abilities as the master of Hell.

I had free time because I now had the ability to send out countless incarnations. It was quite a subtle sensation to simultaneously observe many locations. The even more subtle part was how I sent an incarnation to each of my Seven Original Sins to loudly taunt and make fun of the Main Gods, yet I didn't have to worry about them being able to kill me.

"Oh my, Donatis is such a violent fellow. I lost yet another incarnation."

Yep, I should say that no matter how many incarnations I lost, it wouldn't affect me at all.

And so, as if I was playing a strategy game, I sent another incarnation over to Donatis to continue taunting him. This was all in order to interfere with his rational judgement and obtain more information on my enemies.

The current me was Wumianzhe Roland, one of the Four Pillars of Hell, the Pillar of Space. I existed within the Four Halls and the Seven Circles of Hell. I was Hell, and Hell was myself. An "endless amount of incarnations" was both my most useful and useless special ability. That was because these incarnations had basically zero combat strength, yet they were capable of helping me finish countless tasks.

Not only that, unless the Tower of Law and Tower of Death were both destroyed, I would be absolutely undying. This was yet another special ability I just received.

To be honest, as long as the Tower of Death wasn't destroyed, every single Hell God would be absolutely undying. Perhaps it would be easier to comprehend if I explained it directly –"In Hell, how can already dead existences die again?"

The Hell Gods absolutely had to be dead already to be in their roles. Any living God that chose to become a member of Hell would become dead the moment that they entered. As since the Four Pillar Gods were the foundation, they would need to reincarnate from their very souls. They had to be the purest dead individuals "born" in this world in order to become the Four Pillars of Hell.

This was the basic dimensional law of the world, just like how only elemental lifeforms would be able to become Elemental Gods. Only dead Gods would be able to become the Four Pillar Gods of Hell.

That's right, there was no need for me to hide it. I was already dead, deader than dead, absolutely dead. The moment that I used a

reverse God's Descent to descend upon Wumianzhe, combining our physical bodies and souls, my physical body was invaded by the aura of Hell and biologically entered the state of death. Dimensional laws would never separate friends from foes, so from that moment onwards, I was completely dead from a biological standpoint. And actually, I was destined to die from the moment that I entered Hell...

What? You're saying that this isn't shocking enough? That's it's too sudden? Who made a rule that the author has to use several chapters to slowly boil up to a climax? Who says that authors have to tug at the readers' heartstrings? I was already so used to dying already. Readers will get bored of the main character dying too much, and since this is my fifth death already, I won't be contentious and I'll simply allow myself to die.

"So many have died already anyways. Who cares if I die as well?"

Fortunately for me, Wumianzhe was also Sloth, a unique undead created by cutting off part of my soul. He counted as dead already, and I was able to completely combine with his current physical body. Otherwise, I would have needed to first die in the mortal plane and then fill in my soul crystal. Who knows how long that would take for me to wake up, or if I would wake up at all? There would then no longer be someone in charge of Hell's construction.

As I now had the power of the dimensional law of Space in Hell, I gained the ability to create as many incarnations, even millions, as I wanted. This was an absolutely required ability for Wumianzhe, the Judge of Hell. Otherwise, just the unending amount of dead souls that required judgement would simply fatigue him to death.

And now, this was my most convenient ability that allowed me to control everything and observe every single battle simultaneously. I could instantly send reinforcements to any place that needed it. And even more importantly, this ability of infinite incarnations allowed me to substitute for the other Hell Gods that were currently hibernating in order to absorb the dimensional laws here

in performing their "jobs" for them. This allowed the Cycle of Reincarnation in Hell to already become activated.

As long as Hell continued doing the job that it was supposed to, and allowing the Cycle of Reincarnation to operate, not only would Hell itself become more complete and powerful, even the Hell Gods, and Hell's warriors and guardians would become ever more powerful. This was the backup support powering us up in any long battle of attrition, as well as the critical element that Ayer had obtained for us.

Every time that evidence of a crime was collected and a person was judged to deserve the punishment of Hell, the sleeping Catio would obtain more power and become closer to waking up. And with every judgement, every reincarnation, and every deliverance of the Law, I would naturally be further powered up as I was the master of Hell, the ruler of Law, and the God of Judgement.

It was the same for the Seven Kings of Hell. Every time that the guilty were tossed into the infernos, then the Seven Kings would carry out their jobs, naturally gaining more power through the process. And since in all of history, the mortal plane of Eich had been capable of giving birth to over a hundred Main Gods (With approximately twenty alive today), and there were even main Gods at the very beginning of Creation, our plane of Hell would naturally be capable of raising Main God level existences as well.

And now, this naturally revealed just what exactly I had promised to certain existences.

Being able to convince the powerful to work for me would naturally be even more power and higher status.

The Seventh Circle of Hell, the Bestial Lust Inferno. That was where "Lust" Cher guarded. The Main God opponent that she had to stop was Sophocles the Deceiver.

Yet she herself didn't have much combat strength. She could only rely on her subordinate Hell Dragons. The Seventh Circle of Hell

was where the Hell Dragons resided.

That's right, Hell Dragons. This was a brand-new species of dragon which would become the future messengers of Hell. They were also the only existences capable of freely entering and exiting Hell.

Compared to their former selves, these Hell Dragons were even larger and blacker in color. Yet, nobody would mistake them for Black Dragons. The foundational difference these dragons had from other dragons was the aura of death around them.

Dragons' strongest special ability was to travel between dimensions without being affected by the environment. And now, these Hell Dragons were capable of traveling back and forth between life and death. They would become the messengers of Death and Hell in the mortal plane. Their combat strength was also incomparable to before.

"I know that all dragons desire strength. What I can give you is naturally an endless amount of strength and the glory of being a dimensional ruler. This is strength that's more than capable of slaying a king. You, Sam, shall become the strongest dragon king of all! The White Dragon species shall become the strongest dragon species!"

And so, the Supreme Immemorial White Dragon Sam had participated in my plan after he confirmed the likelihood of it succeeding. He completely joined my faction in order to change the fate of the White Dragons. The entire White Dragon species became Hell Dragons.

Yet, Sam still wasn't the highest-ranked Hell Dragon. The true leader of all the Hell Dragons was the three-headed dragon that was currently fighting against the Demon Lord Sophocles the Deceiver – Evelyn.

"...Apart from helping to cure Cher, don't you want to have your own family and tribe? Of course, you'll also obtain appropriate

strength and the position of a dimensional ruler. You shall receive glory one hundred times what you currently have!"

There were two leaders of the Hell Dragons. One was the former Supreme Immemorial White Dragon Sam, while the other was the three-headed Evelyn and her younger sisters. Right now, the Chaos Main God Sophocles the Deceiver was actually at a disadvantage against the Hell Dragons!

Chapter 459: Discussion

The Creator's power was limitless. Creating a world would bring along countless lifeforms and abilities. It would be possible to create any event, twist karma and Time, create Main Gods, and create new species.

The Creator's power was also limited. No matter how powerful the parent or how strict the parent's rules, it would still be impossible to control their children's accomplishments and growth. It would be impossible for even the Creator to know what their children would become like.

Back in the day, the Titans' inconceivable amount of strength was because Creator Goddess Eich had given them the ability and responsibility of "Creating". But, the original goal for them was that they would become the most outstanding artisans and craftsmen. And, the demons that had been given the abilities of "Evolution" and "Combat" should have been the best warriors and Eich's dimensional guardians, yet demons were now as we all knew them today.

Parents were only capable of giving "a direction" for their children. The Creator was stronger, but would still only be able to give "abilities" as an additional gift. But, what the child ended up like and whether the child's natural talents would be used as intended, what realm that individuals would reach or how a species' culture would evolve, that all depended on an individual or species' opportunities for development and how hard they worked. This would be impossible for anyone to know beforehand.

What I gave the Hell Dragons was the responsibility and power to be the messengers of Hell. Just as how Inferno Dragons made use of their natural dragon talents to travel through dimensions, typically becoming the representative messengers of the Hell's Abyss in the mortal plane, the dragons of Hell would become the messengers of Death and Hell in the mortal plane.

And, to carry out this responsibility, the plane of Hell gave the Hell Dragons the right to spread death. This was why later in the future, the Hell Dragons became known by various names such as the "Representatives of Death", "Hell's Death Messengers", "Death Notification Dragons", and so on.

Their beautifully sculpted bodies were even stronger than normal Red Dragons by thirty percent. Their translucent wings of night made them appear like flying nightmares. Pitch-black mist swirled around them while only their bright red eyes could be seen shining clearly. This mist was actually a form of protection for lives in the mortal plane. As Hell Dragons were the incarnation of death, any weak lives that saw their true bodies would likely die instantly otherwise.

A large number of Hell Dragons were currently around the powerful Demon Lord. They used their breath attacks, which resembled slow black balls of mist that didn't even seem as powerful as thunder-element dragons' breath attacks. Only Sophocles himself knew that this Hades Mist breath attack was far more vicious and dangerous than any other type of dragon breath attack.

"Dimensional law of death? Dragon breath with the power of instant death? It would seem that I'm going to lose a lot here..."

The Main Gods were capable of resisting the dimensional law of death's invasion into their bodies because of their outstanding personal abilities. They had long since gotten used to resisting against dimensional laws that were highly hostile to them. Yet, this didn't mean that they could completely ignore the dimensional laws invading them, especially when this particular dimensional law was the law of death.

Normal lives that were invaded by this dimensional law of death would directly die. And even the Main Gods that didn't want to be invaded by the dimensional law of death and remain here forever would have to avoid absorbing too much.

Every single attack meant that the death mist connected to the Demon Lord's body as if it was an unshakeable fire. Sophocles' gigantic body became the best target of all, and this penetrating Hades Mist was now attempting to transform the Demon Lord into the dead.

As one of the demons who was closest to devils in personality, Sophocles the Deceiver was only willing to work for the Chaos Abyss because of the excellent benefits that Cynthia had promised him. The most valuable payment that the Chaos Abyss could pay would be dimensional territory, as rich planes would equal concrete power and wealth, along with countless souls. But if Sophocles was trapped in this plane and became a devil like his mortal enemies, what meaning would any of this have to him?

Although he had fought for so long already, only one percent of him had been invaded. He was still far from being restrained by the dimensional law. Yet, Sophocles was already focusing almost entirely on defense and avoidance. It was quite obvious that he wasn't the type to fight to the fullest, preferring to focus on safety first.

However, every single time that Sophocles counterattacked, no matter if he used a natural talent, magic spell, or physical attack, a Hell Dragon would end up howling in pain as it dropped from the sky. Sam felt like his heart was bleeding every time this happened, because most of the Hell Dragons here were his descendants and future tribe.

That's right, the Hell Dragons weren't undying like other members of Hell. There were always drawbacks to every advantage. Since Hell Dragons were half-living, half-dead and possessed the special ability to leave Hell as they wished, how could they possibly still have the advantage of being undying?

They received other abilities instead. As the messengers of Hell, they possessed innate abilities to summon and control undead souls. A large amount of undying undead were manipulated into

attacking Sophocles. And, what place apart from Hell would possibly have stronger undead souls?

Yet, Sophocles was no idiot. After he noticed that these undead had low attack (towards a True God) and were undying, Sophocles unhesitatingly ignored the undead and focused instead on the Hell Dragons.

If you only looked at direct combat strength, Sophocles the Deceiver was probably the weakest Main God as he preferred to scheme rather than directly fight himself. Yet, he was still a Main God level Demon Lord whose combat strength was far superior to other existences. If it wasn't for his inhibitions, he wouldn't be suppressed here at all.

And when I focused my main attention on this battle, I was rather surprised and delighted to see how well the Hell Dragons were performing.

Considering that Cher wasn't skilled at direct combat, I arranged for her to face the weakest Main God here. I even had the Hell Dragons assist her, but I didn't expect that the Hell Dragons would be outstanding enough to actually force Sophocles to become passive.

Of course, if this combat situation continued, either the Hell Dragons would suffer unacceptable losses and all collapse, or Sophocles would be forced to the brink, revealing his true demon nature and beginning to slaughter everything without caring about the consequences. I found it highly doubtful that these newly transformed Hell Dragons would truly be able to corrode this Demon Lord with the dimensional law of death.

"Perhaps we can have a discussion."

My voice echoed in the empty space as the Demon Lord actually increased the intensity of his attacks. Sophocles suddenly tossed out a magical spear which sliced through the air and directly pierced through a dragon which was gliding in circles. Sophocles

then immediately dragged the Hell Dragon over to himself with the spear's chain and swallowed it whole. The Demon Lord's murky yellow eyes even stared at my incarnation while he swallowed.

Everything happened right at the moment that I spoke. There was no time at all to save the Hell Dragon.

"YOU!"

Sam roared in fury, yet he didn't counterattack for revenge. He was also a veteran who instantly understood what all this meant after his fury subsided.

The Demon Lord's sudden attack wasn't because of his vicious nature. It was to represent that he would be unafraid to continue battling. And, a show of force would always be one of the most effective negotiation chips at any negotiation. This was the best evidence that Sophocles was indeed willing to negotiate. Continuing to battle would only cause the new species of Hell Dragons to suffer even more losses.

Yet, I still shook my head. I would have had a higher opinion of Sam if only he had been willing to charge forward.

"Come, fight for me once more, my servant."

I pointed and corroded the dragon corpses on the ground with Hades Mist, transforming them into Ghost Dragons and Bone Dragons. The ice and snow of Hell provided them with even stronger physical bodies. These revived dragons roared out in anger, greatly improving the Hell Dragons' morale.

What could be more reassuring than having the Hell God personally stand behind you? Death wasn't the end. The chance to live yet again would be better than any reinforcements.

Of course, since they were no longer Hell Dragons, they also lost most of the Hell Dragons' abilities and the power to leave Hell. Still, this little trick of mine gave Sophocles a significant amount

of pressure. If these Hell Dragons no longer had to worry about death and went all-out in an attempt to corrode his physical body, it was indeed possible that he would be forced to remain here forever.

"...Perhaps we can indeed have a discussion."

I nodded my head slowly with a cold expression, but I was actually quite satisfied with this inside.

Dividing my enemies wasn't only to enact the strategy of divide and conquer. It was also to obtain chances to bribe them to join my side since they were no longer under the watchful eye of their bosses. Since these Main Gods were the equivalent of temporarily hired mercenaries to begin with, how much motivation would they really have to go all-out and fight here? Especially when I had sufficient chips that I could bribe the Main Gods with.

As long as I could achieve even some results through discussion, even if it was only a verbal promise to remain neutral, I would be able to use an entire Circle of Hell's combat strength to deal with other enemies instead. The final advantage I'd receive in the end would be like a constantly increasing snowball effect. Everything was for the sake of overall victory. Otherwise, even if I forcefully defeated all my enemies here through direct battles, it was highly doubtful just how many benefits I'd be able to obtain.

From the very start, my main goal in dividing them was to obtain this chance to have a "discussion" with them!

Still, out of the seven Main Gods present, I only felt it would be possible to negotiate with two of them. I felt that it would be impossible to negotiate with the other five.

And so, the exact same thing was happening on another battlefield. In the Fourth Circle of Hell, the Endless Greed Inferno, Harloys was simply playing chess and drinking tea together with the smiling God of Wisdom Kalumandas. It appeared as if this Order Main God had zero intentions of starting a fight.

The reason? This was actually due to Harloys' identity. She was the last Gold Elf, the final pure elf ruler who existed. And, Kalumandas was actually a half-elf. If one thought about his ancient age, it was evident that he was alive as a mortal back when the Gold Elves ruled the world.

Half of Kalumandas' bloodline originated from the "scholarly age" known as the Haletdam generation. Yet, the other half of his bloodline was from a lowly Wild Elf. While the former gave him an endless amount of knowledge and memories, the latter made the elves view him with great enmity. Yet, it was his Wild Elf bloodline that helped him to escape the destruction of the Haletdam generation.

It was said that the main reason Kalumandas was able to escape the True Gods' slaughter of the Haletdam generation scholars was primarily due to the protection of the Gold Elf Emperor at the time. The Gold Elf Emperor claimed that he was merely protecting a fellow elf, although it was impossible to know if that was really for the sake of protecting a fellow elf or simply wanting to obtain the Haletdam generation's technology. But at the very least, this God of Wisdom indeed owed a favor to the Gold Elves.

Alright then, I admit that I heard this entire "story" from Harloys. This God of Wisdom, Witches, and Libraries had indeed secretly taken care of her to help return the favor he owed to the Gold Elf Emperor. Otherwise, the Elf Gods would have long since gotten rid of the final threat. Why else would the Elf Gods allow the final Gold Elf, Harloys, to act as she pleased in the mortal plane and wreak so much havoc?

Of course, the price for this was that the God of Wisdom would be unable to give Harloys too much direct assistance.

Once I heard about this relationship between them from Harloys, and when she volunteered of her own volition to talk to Kalumandas, I was astonished and delighted. An excellent personal relationship? Without a doubt, that would be the best way to start

any negotiation.

"Perhaps we'll be able to talk to Kalumandas."

And so, yet another Wumianzhe incarnation appeared in front of Kalumandas and Harloys. This time, I even tried my best to put on a friendly smile.

Still, Kalumandas' first sentence managed to surprise me.

"Discuss? Of course that's fine, that's exactly what I came here for. Still, you must first allow me to meet my tribe, the remaining survivor that's also from the Haletdam scholars generation."

Chapter 460: Brothers

Not all Main Gods would be the reasonable type. It was quite common for powerful existences to be unreasonable with weaker ones. Or, to be more direct, powerful existences wouldn't even treat weaker existences as worthy of communication.

"At first, demons weren't evil at all..."

Ayer's words from our discussion on the River Styx sounded in my ears again. Yet, I had nothing to reference for this, as in every single plane in existence, demons already had the worst of reputations.

"Is weakness a sin?"

Perhaps other species would still at least discuss this with you at a surface level, debating life philosophy and societal realities, giving you a platitude like "The strong should protect the weak", then demons would use concrete actions to tell you...

"The weak? The weak are good for nothing except to become food and toys."

In demon society, the strong preying on the weak was the only rule they had. The only greater sin than being weak was being rich without the power to protect your wealth. That would be a direct shortcut to death.

There were only two possible paths to take in demon society. Become stronger and strive to reach the top, or accidentally fall off along the way and become the stepping stone and food for some other demon.

As for the Main God level demons, striving to reach any higher would basically be impossible. That was because the will of the Chaos Abyss would forever be above them. While they could be partially free from her control, as long as they lived in that chaotic Abyss, it would be impossible for them to be completely free from

Cynthia's control.

And now, these dimensional invader Main Gods discovered after a short moment of confusion that this dimension was truly unique. This wasn't yet another plane born from the main world of Eich. This was a completely new independent dimension!

For the Chaos Main Gods, a newly born dimension would be like the most appetizing piece of steak. Yet, an entirely new independent dimension would be an opportunity that would only come along once per million years.

Just receiving a normal dimension would help any Demon Lord to become more powerful by obtaining part of the dimension's resources and dimensional laws. Yet, an entirely new and independent dimension would be the only chance for them to surpass their eternal master after so many eons!

That's right, all demons wanted to become even stronger. Devouring and evolution were part of their very blood. As long as there was a chance, even a Demon Lord would be willing to betray.

No matter how the discussion with Sophocles the Deceiver ended up, my best expectation was that he would be able to temporarily remain neutral. As for the other Demon Lords, it wouldn't even be worth trying to negotiate with them.

Although, there was one Chaos Main God who was rather unique. That would be...

"My foolish younger brother..."

"What?"

"Er, nothing, I just wanted to say that out loud..." A certain already dead older brother found himself unable to finish speaking such classical lines. That was because the next part would be to start taunting with words like "You're still too weak!" or "Live on in an ugly fashion", yet I was probably the one who was much weaker.

If Karwenz was taunted by me the moment I came in, he would likely immediately attack me with the end result of me being swatted away. Even though I wouldn't die, that would be too humiliating.

Karwenz was still cooking his fish soup. I tossed away Wumianzhe's mask and came to visit him in my true body. Demons were already so difficult to deal with already, plus this was Karwenz. A demon and Karwenz was definitely the worst possible combination... I would never underestimate him.

Ever since young, he hated to use his brain. He loved to be direct about everything, yet this wasn't because he was stupid at all. Instead, he simply had his own attitude and way of doing things.

"Why must I use my brain when I can solve it with my muscles? Thinking too much will cause one's physical abilities to dull."

Karwenz always acted faster than he thought. He learned through practical methods and actual combat. His growth rate was astonishing, yet he didn't have an unstable foundation. Underneath his seemingly direct personality was a maturity that far surpassed his age, yet he was still as hot-blooded as a youth. When he needed to, he had his own slyness as well. He always imperceptibly obtained other people's favor and hearts... Fine, I admit that he had slightly better luck with women than me.

[...]

"...What do you want to say? Just say it out loud. Fine, he's not slightly luckier with women, he's a lot luckier."

[When looking at the number of partners he's already had, the total amount that he's luckier than you is...]

"Several tens of thousands time luckier, am I right? Fine, I shouldn't have commented about you."

[No, since your number of romantic partners is zero, the answer is that he's infinitely luckier than you with women...]

"Alright, my dear Goddess of Order, thank you so much for your precise calculations. Still, please shut up for me now."

Getting back on topic, compared to myself who often wasn't back at Diffindor back in the day, Karwenz always had an excellent reputation. Even the military recognized him for his achievements back then in fighting against the demons of the Chaos Abyss.

If it wasn't for the later incident of the Mist Kingdom's destruction, I probably would have ended up as a Holy Knight for the rest of my life, while Karwenz would have become the best ruler in the Mist Kingdom's history. While I wasn't dissatisfied with how things were back then, I would sometimes complain just a little.

Yep, I was really envious of him, just as how people who loved to overthink things would sometimes envy those who always had fun by being simple-minded. Those like Karwenz would always grow stronger without even planning for it. As he matured, he obtained others' trust and recognition and finally succeeded in the end.

"I have to work so hard and plan everything for my accomplishments. He can accomplish basically the same thing with some sudden flash of inspiration, and not only that, he can even obtain more of our parents' and friends' recognition and favor. Even if I actually do better than him, that's so unfair! Is it really that bad boys are more favored? It would seem that I should learn how to be a bad boy."

When I was young, I would often think in such a way. This was also the cause of several rather stupid incidents that I was behind. Still, this didn't affect our feelings for each other as brothers. That was because when faced with such a simple-minded brat, I wouldn't even know how to get angry.

"Roland, what spices do you prefer for your fish soup? I have the Blood Tribe's holy blood spices, the Inferno Demons' abyssal spices, and everything you can think of in between."

"...It's quite obvious just from the name that there's something wrong with those spices. I don't want any spices at all. By the way, it's almost time for battle. Do you really not care at all?"

"Yep, I really do care about eating fish. I prepared more than thirty years to successfully scam this pot of fish soup. You have no idea just how hard it was to catch him on my fishing pole. I had to collect seven or eight God Equipment and killed off a dozen Demon Nobles."

"...You schemed to kill off a Demon Lord who ruled an entire layer, yet you make it sound like it was just to cook some food. Don't tell me that you killed him just for the sake of having some fish soup."

Yet, Karwenz glanced at me with an expression as if I had asked an idiotic question.

"Of course it was for the sake of eating fish soup. He was the largest fish in all the dimensions. That would definitely be delicious! Why else would I share some with you?"

I instantly knew that he was telling me the truth. Despite the fact that Karwenz had now joined the Chaos Abyss, he still led as simple a life as he always did. How envious I was of him.

Yep, only envy, but not jealousy. That was because it was impossible to hate someone as simple as him.

Not only that, I was fairly skilled at dealing with such simple-minded fellows. Whenever such a person was on fire with some mysterious passion, it would be impossible to stop them head on. So if you wanted to dump some water on their fire, what you needed would be an ice cube of reason.

"...Ah, I've heard of this fish as well. Isn't he one of the oldest Demon Lords in the Chaos Abyss? In other words, his meat is so old that he's like a living fossil. A fish that's countless eons old will be so tough and disgusting to eat. Delicious? Did you really think

this through?"

And so, Karwenz instantly stopped stirring his pot of fish soup, as he turned his head with a loud creak to stare at me. The complaining look in his eyes of "Why didn't you tell me earlier?" made me... really want to laugh uproariously at the skies.

Alright then, I laughed. I laughed loudly, maniacally, to the point where I was clutching my stomach, to the point where even tears were dropping out of my eyes.

"As always, joy should be gained from others' misfortune."

As I wiped away my tears, I also took out my gavel and codex. Since this fish soup was almost finished, and since Karwenz had mentioned that he would only share the fish soup with me if I didn't die, it was about time for us to have a serious fight. This was an annoying tacit understanding between brothers.

However, I then stopped, as I recalled some information that I needed to tell him.

"...By the way, do you know about Cynthia? And our souls..."

"That we were once two halves of the same soul? Of course I know about it. I knew about that even before I entered the Chaos Abyss. Why else would I have left my Frigid Nightmare behind for you? Besides, even if I didn't know before, do you really think that I wouldn't understand about the soul after I became a demon?"

Of course. How would Karwenz possibly not know? He was the person who broke all records in how fast he became a Chaos Main God, and souls were the eternal goal of all demons.

"...You're still as sharp as always. Is that your wild instinct yet again? I'm so envious."

"You're envious of me? Ha, I'm actually rather envious of you."

"You're envious of me?" "Yep. My brain isn't as good as yours. You always have so many strange ideas. Nothing ever seems to be

too difficult for you. Back in the day, Sister Kelly and little Sara both loved to follow you around everywhere, listening to your interesting stories. Father also always praised you for being smart and capable."

Karwenz even awkwardly scratched his head as he said such embarrassing words. "Ha, since I couldn't beat you in brains regardless, I decided to simply stop thinking and force my way through with my body's instincts. I never expected that I ended up becoming completely used to such a method. Tsk, even though we're clearly two halves of the same soul, why is it that I can never come up with such wondrous ideas? My intelligence must have all been taken away by your half of the soul."

You don't say, my younger brother's familiar face was actually turning red? Hey hey hey, was this really that monkey-like younger brother who was always so fearless and didn't know what the concept of embarrassment was?

"..."

At this moment, I was rendered speechless, not knowing what to say. Perhaps this was the best evidence of a classical phrase –"We always desire what we don't have."

"Sigh..."

In the end, all my feelings transformed into a sigh.

I then took a deep breath and stepped forward, abandoning all idle thoughts. That was because only battle was left for us.

The annoying tacit understanding between brothers let both of us know that our current situations were both the result of our own decisions. In that case, there was nothing to regret.

Perhaps this would be the first time that we had ever seriously fought each other. Perhaps this would also be the last time. That was why such an awkward pair of brothers like us were finally able to speak the truth in our hearts.

As for convincing each other? Compromising? Haha, how could that be possible at all? The biggest similarity between us were just how stubborn we were. I had my own ideals, and he made his own choice as well. Since he even knew the matter of Cynthia's meddling with the Mist Kingdom, and he reached the peak of the Chaos Faction already, all his choices must have come from within his heart. I wouldn't insult him by attempting to convince him unnecessarily to join me.

"Are you having a good time in the Chaos Abyss?"

"Ha, that really is a demonic location where fighting is the only thing that takes place every day. Still, that's the type of place I love the most. Yep, that's my home now, a place where you never know what will happen tomorrow. I really do love living in such a place."

"Ha, I knew that even Cynthia would be unable to control you. With your bastard of a personality, you really are suitable for the Chaos Abyss."

Helping to rebuild East Mist and Sleuweir had been Karwenz's final nods to his past memories. The current him loved the murky and lively Chaos Abyss. He loved Chaos and the law of the jungle that Cynthia represented. He was the equivalent of an obsessed game player who loved this world more than anyone, while I loathed this beautiful yet cruel world.

Our beliefs and personalities were different. Thanks to three hundred years of influence, our originally identical souls had now gone down completely different paths.

We brothers suddenly broke out into simultaneous laughter with no need for words as we looked at each other. The next instant, a silver holy battle hammer viciously clashed against a murky yellow demonic sword.

"Since we can finally have fun playing together, then let's see just whose ideals run deeper. Roland, you absolutely can't die here! I still want to have more fun playing with you in the future."

Karwenz's murky yellow bestial eyes were filled with delight in the fervor of battle. As always, he received his older brother's sarcastic insults.

"Ha, my idiotic younger brother... F*ck, don't hit my face!"

The battle hammer and demonic sword clashed with sparks that illuminated this pitch-black deep portion of Hell. The light revealed two faces that were excited and delighted.

Chapter 461: Holy Light of Salvation

I viciously rushed over while swinging my battle hammer, and was then sent flying back at an even higher speed.

"There's such a difference in our strength..."

I couldn't even react before the distance between us was instantly shortened. Karwenz had instantly appeared before me as my battle hammer clashed yet again with his sword. The result was that I was sent flying yet again.

"There's such a difference in our speed..."

The sounds of our weapons clashing were as loud as if the very sky was falling and the earth was cracking. The shape of the land itself was changed, as the shockwaves from our impact were sent everywhere. These shockwaves even directly shattered the dead's souls into nothing more than shards.

I stomped my feet into the ground the best I could to stagger the impact. Karwenz's frightening brute strength caused my feet to create two deep ditches into the ground. More than ten injuries had appeared on my body due to his sword energy, although I did manage to stop myself from being completely blown away.

"What?"

But the moment that I steadied myself, I hadn't even finished swinging my battle hammer again when Karwenz's murky yellow demonic sword soundlessly struck my arm.

If it wasn't for the fact that I had summoned my dragonarmor just in the nick of time, my entire arm and battle hammer would have been gone already. And only now did I finally see Karwenz's sword movements.

"The complete version of the Karma Sword technique? I've only learned the basics! Damn it, there's even such a difference in our sword techniques..."

Just our first exchange of blows caused me to inhale a cold breath. Although I already expected that there would be a large difference between us, I still didn't expect that the difference would be so tremendous.

As he was the Abyss Prince, I could accept that all his basic stats would be above mine. But, I found it unacceptable how even his sword techniques were so far above mine.

"Damn it, there's still such a huge difference despite the fact that I have a cheat."

Right now, I was being powered up by Hell itself as well as the Circle of Hell which represented Sloth. Hell was also my home turf, so if you only looked at energy level, I should be quite similar to Karwenz. Yet, when I started fighting with him, I felt like I was being totally suppressed – in all areas, no less.

But upon closer analysis, this was only natural. Our natural talent would basically be identical, and our age was the same as well. Yet, I had focused far too much on too many different areas. Law, ice magic, Divine Arts, and so on would all require a huge time investment. Yet as the Abyss Prince, Karwenz only needed to focus on fighting. He already had better talent for fighting than I did, and I was being distracted by my thoughts, so the end result was naturally that he far surpassed me in all areas.

I could instinctively sense that at this level, Karwenz was actually warming up. And, the basic physical stats that he displayed already exceeded Amelia's, who had the most ridiculous physical stats out of anyone I knew.

I half-kneeled and panted for breath, leaning against my battle hammer for support. I was fully on guard, yet Karwenz suddenly stopped attacking me as a bored expression appeared on his face.

"Brother, are you really alright like this? How about I give you a few more decades for you to train? Of course, I won't be able to allow you to keep this Hell. Otherwise, Mother will scold me."

"Mother?"

"Mother Cynthia? Do you really not know how our souls came to be? How do you think that a Child of Fate is created? Do you think that the Goddesses of Chaos and Order would randomly select a soul? No way, your expression tells me that you really didn't know? Well then, Brother, I think that you shouldn't trust that person attached to your body too much. Perhaps she didn't tell you any lies, but she didn't tell you the full truth at all."

Karwenz's words brought new doubts to my mind, but right now wasn't the time to think too much into things. I still needed my System's assistance in winning this battle. I only lightly told the System in my mind "I need an explanation" before I refocused on Karwenz.

Comparing brute strength with the Chaos Faction would be the most idiotic of moves. Me fighting with Karwenz head-on in a clash of brute strength counted as a momentary hot blood rush to my brain. Just like the past, since I was unable to directly defeat him in a confrontation of strength, then I would simply use schemes.

"Honestly, Karwenz, don't look down on me. Do you really think that I'd confront an idiot like you with brute strength?"

I lifted up my battle hammer, causing this icy holy hammer to glow resplendently. Its light soon became the only light of this world, the purest cleansing light of all which represented Hope, Protection, and Salvation.

"Holy Light, do you see this enemy of mine? Yep, I'm talking about that idiotic-appearing muscular trap over there."

"...Don't you feel anything at all when you say that? Don't we have identical appearances...? Fine, you actually transformed your face into that of a lich's? You're something!"

I took a deep breath and started swinging my holy battle hammer

again. With every swing, this God Equipment battle hammer would strike at full power. My battle hammer techniques were simple and direct yet also powerful. The Holy Light that constantly emitted from it would also suddenly explode with the power of thunder.

Unlike longswords or great swords, battle hammers were a blunt weapon that didn't have many technique requirements. It would also be difficult to have any fancy techniques. A battle hammer's true destructive force would forever come from kinetic energy. And, its piercing damage ability of damaging internal organs against any heavily armored knight or "thick-skinned" demons made battle hammers the best weapon against zombies, skeletons, and other undying creatures that were unafraid of stab wounds. This was why the tin can Holy Knights forever favored this weapon.

Battle hammers were simple, violent, and effective. Just one short month of training would be more than enough for a complete newbie to finish learning the basics of how to wield a battle hammer. No wonder that this battle hammer had evolved into the God Equipment "Light Which Illuminates Despair from the Brink, the Guardian Battle Hammer of Dawn Envoys". If you looked at this battle hammer's physical appearance, it was just a very large and normal silver hammer. This ancient battle hammer had the standard shape of hammers from more than one thousand years ago. Its usage method and physical appearance was quite different from the currently popular sickle-style battle hammers of today.

Sickle-style battle hammers had one blunt end and one sharp end. The sharp end could be used as a makeshift piercing weapon which was especially effective against armor. The blunt end would be used to injure enemies with the shockwave impacts, which was why the blunt end would typically have a metal coating and some pointy sections as well.

However, this ancient battle hammer wouldn't have anything like pointy sections or a metallic coating. In fact, even its blunt weapon portion had been intentionally smoothed, which lowered its attack power. Nor was this battle hammer heavy to begin with, and it had been lightened on top of that. It could be said that all of these modifications directly lowered its attack power significantly as a physical weapon.

Yet, this wasn't in order to be kind to one's enemies. Holy Knights were no vegetarian monks that would pray for their enemies' salvation. Holy Knights were satisfactory warriors who knew that being kind to one's enemies would equal death on the battlefield. The "Light Which Illuminates Despair" battle hammer didn't increase its physical attack power simply because it wasn't necessary!

"Holy Light, go cleanse this idiot for me."

Countless rays of light gathered on the God Equipment battle hammer. Its glow now transformed into a glorious seal which represented Holy Light upon which all the light gathered. After the light finally faded, the seal transformed into a crystalline solid substance. This hammer had become a battle hammer of light which seemed to be crafted out of many golden crystals.

A pair of wings of light suddenly appeared on my back. All the ground and darkness around us had been cleansed. This was the might emanating from the holy hammer. A windstorm of Holy Light was blowing at this location, causing even Karwenz to furrow his eyebrows.

He, Karwenz, the Abyss Prince, was now feeling pain – a sensation which he hadn't felt in so long.

This ancient God Equipment battle hammer had only one ability: to purify and cultivate its wielder's Holy Light into physical substance, transforming into the light of Order which was capable of destroying any Chaos.

Despite the fact that it was named "Guardian Battle Hammer", this battle hammer passed down to countless Holy Knights was actually a weapon which was purely for offense. Countless powerful dimensional invaders or lower plane residents had all died to this battle hammer in the past. Its physical crystals of Holy Light would be the worst nightmare for all lifeforms that weren't part of the Order Faction.

"The best form of protection is to destroy all evil? From a certain standpoint, our ancestors weren't overly traditional then. However..."

I stroked the silver battle hammer, which then transmitted its former Holy Knight owners' beliefs to me. They had all worked so hard to protect their people in the frontier age, desiring for my strength.

Combat fervor was boiling up from within the hammer and deep inside me, yet I shook my head. This wasn't the Holy Light that I desired, nor was it the Holy Light of Salvation that Estrada sought after.

"...All demons and undead are enemies? However, that way of thinking is outdated in this generation. If this way of thinking doesn't change, the Holy War shall never be stopped for all eternity."

I took a deep breath as my eyes became filled with the light of silver. I then injected the dimensional laws of Hell into this God Equipment battle hammer.

"In my name as the master of Hell, Wumianzhe Roland, I bless you to become one of the Four Major God Equipment of Hell. From now on, your name shall no longer be 'Light Which Illuminates Despair from the Brink, the Guardian Battle Hammer of Dawn Envoys'. Your name shall now be 'The Light of Salvation, the Hammer of Hope for the Messengers of Light'!"

Names also represented actual strength. The original four

elements of wind, fire, water, and earth had all become foundational blocks of this world, while my new four elements required four Foundational Elemental Items to contain them as the new foundational controllers of the world. What could be more perfect for my Holy Light container than this battle hammer God Equipment which represented Holy Light?

The dimensional laws of Hell modified this battle hammer as its golden cleansing Holy Light was filtered and changed. Finally, a faint golden glow was all that remained.

"Sigh..."

Although I clearly sensed the battle hammer's new powers, I still sighed helplessly as an exclamation.

Holy Light was one of the four foundational pillars of my new world. The old Holy Light which represented pure "Cleansing" was far too extreme. The religious fissure between the Holy Church and the Southern Sect was primarily due to different ways to define "Holy Light". And, the fastest method to cause a collapse of faith in the God of Holy Light would be to create a "substitute" that could be worshiped instead.

"Estrada has to die..."

This step had to be taken in order to redefine Holy Light and have the Pure Holy Light become the reigning definition of Holy Light rather than having to worship the God of Holy Light. This would change the Holy Light into a light for mortals, allowing the most widespread human belief system in the Holy Light to become a foundational source of power and protection for this new world.

"...Because the Holy Light requires salvation!"

Back in the game's history, as the Holy War continued, Holy Light became ever more important to the war efforts. Everyone continuously incanted the God of Holy Light's name, which helped him to become ever more powerful. But in the end, his overly

strong power only contributed to the world's destruction.

And right now, at the top of Hell, the golden Tower of Holy Light was glowing brilliantly. An ancient soul was reawakening as this new Pillar of Hell revived. He was an incarnation of Holy Light, yet he wasn't the God of Holy Light. He would also provide Holy Light services, but he wouldn't interfere with mortals' decisions.

From no onwards, there would be even greater differences in people's understanding of the Holy Light and its incarnations. The worshippers of Pure Holy Light in the Southern Sect would receive the protection of Hell's True Gods, while the Holy Church and the God of Holy Light would eventually meet their doom.

That's right, this individual was... Estrada, the saver of Holy Light!

Unlike my other three pillars, I had zero other possible candidates for who could become my Pillar of Holy Light in Hell. This individual had to be someone who had reached the realm of the Gods with the power of Holy Light, and that individual would also have to die in order to become a member of Hell. No matter how much I thought about it, the only candidate I had was Estrada, the Strongest Holy Knight. And so, I wrote that letter to Estrada, requesting him to die. Estrada's decision was to leave the remains of his soul to the soul crystal I sent to him.

"Even undead are capable of using Holy Light? As expected, that idiot Main God has become nothing more than a broken light bulb."

Karwenz seemed to see through everything. By undead, he was referring to both me and Estrada, the new incarnation of Holy Light who was just about to wake up. Still, I wanted to laugh at Karwenz's comment.

This new Holy Light of Hell represented Salvation, Hope, and Protection. Its mortal enemies had been rewritten. Undead were no longer considered the Holy Light's mortal enemy.

"You're weakening yourself on the battlefield? Roland, did your brain break down as well?"

However, the price for this was that the Holy Light's Concept of Cleansing had to be weakened. Even though this would finally bring hope for peace in the future, it was a concrete fact that weakening its Concept of Cleansing would become a solid decrease in power on the battlefield.

"Ha, what's 334234 multiplied by 324242? You don't even know how to mentally calculate six-digit multiplication, ha! Oops, I probably should have asked you to try six-digit addition first. Let us use the facts to determine just whose brain has broken down."

Although I wasn't willing to admit anything out loud, judging from the current results of fighting against Karwenz, the power of Holy Light against demons had decreased by at least thirty percent.

However, this didn't truly mean that I was weakened. Instead, I looked up at the sky and smiled.

"...Now then, why don't you look above you?"

A faint golden glow enveloped my body. This was pure Holy Light from the Tower of Holy Light.

Cleansing? Undead were everywhere in Hell, so what meaning was there to being a light of Cleansing? After Estrada gave Holy Light a new definition, Holy Light's core Concept was now Salvation! Holy Light would point out hope and a path to salvation in the pitch-black Hell, so that all the countless souls could receive another chance after they finally finished paying for their crimes.

Large amounts of Holy Light filled my body as the Tower of Holy Light illuminated the darkness of the Indifference Inferno.

As the master of Hell, Wumianzhe was the overall leader who had many responsibilities. Wumianzhe was simultaneously the Pillar God of Law, the leader of the Four Halls, and also the Hell King of the Indifference Inferno of Sloth. Yet, none of these were

the reason why I had been able to utilize Hell's Holy Light of salvation.

This battle hammer, this holy divine hammer which I obtained from the Pillar God of Holy Light who was about to awaken, was the key to me carrying out the responsibilities of the Four Pillars.

Pure Holy Light and Law were now raging within my body. I was being supported with power from two of the Four Pillars of Hell. At this moment, the explosive energy gathered on my body as another six wings of Holy Light forcefully spread from my back. I could sense that in terms of energy level alone, I was now equal to Karwenz!

Boom!

Yet, there was a sudden explosion that attracted our attention. Another winged incarnation of Holy Light suddenly appeared before us. Yet, it completely ignored our presence, as it only stared towards the top of Hell.

"That's... the God of Holy Light's incarnation?"

The gigantic hole in the Indifference Inferno doubtlessly indicated that the God of Holy Light had been willing to sacrifice anything to break through the Infernos' dimensional walls. He had been trapped in another of the Seven Circles of Hell, yet he had broken through all the way to here. Just from seeing how ethereal his body had become, it was evident that he had spent a massive amount of divine power just in order to break through the dimensional walls.

The next moment, he then transformed into a golden light which pounced directly towards the path he opened up already. The end of the path led directly to the Tower of Holy Light!

The God of Holy Light sensed the most serious threat possible to his very existence. And so, he unhesitatingly abandoned everything else, and decided to destroy this newly born Tower of

Holy Light no matter the cost! He absolutely had to destroy this Tower of Holy Light at all costs!

Chapter 462: God Equipment Combo

From a certain standpoint, it was impossible for anyone to ignore the existence of the God of Holy Light. That was because he was by far the strongest Main God in existence. It could even be said that he was the main reason why the Order and Chaos Faction still maintained their balance of power despite the Chaos Faction being overall more powerful. It was an indisputable fact that nobody would deny: the God of Holy Light was the most powerful existence in the world.

It seemed inconceivable how a Main God who was only slightly under two thousand years old managed to reach the point where he far surpassed the power level of far more ancient existences. However, it could be understood if you analyzed just how far widespread belief in the Holy Light had become.

More than seventy percent of all humans worshipped the Holy Light. Humans were the ruling species of this generation, so they had strong reproductive abilities and powerful countries. This meant that the God of Holy Light possessed more than thirty percent of the power of faith in all of Eich. This persisted for 1700 years ever since he ascended to Godhood, which would mean several dozen generations of humans... Back in earlier generations, the Elf Gods split up the source of belief amongst themselves, weakening their overall power. The God of Holy Light was different as every single fervent worshipper and chosen individual would become power for the God of Holy Light after they died. The God of Holy Light's Divine Kingdom would forever be the one with the most overpopulation problems. Countless souls within his Divine Kingdom were providing belief power to him, from the previous Holy War to the present!

This was a frightening amount of accumulated power. Compared to the previous generation the Elf Gods ruled, this would possibly be more than ten times, or even one hundred times the

accumulated power of belief of all the Elf Gods added together! That was because humans far exceeded elves in reproductive ability and rate at which a generation of humans would die out. The number of souls that entered the God of Holy Light's Divine Kingdom did so faster than elves would for the Elf Gods, so of course the God of Holy Light had a far greater amount of belief power.

Short-lived species would have great difficulty comparing to longer-lived species in strength and wisdom. Yet, short-lived species had a huge advantage for becoming "food for the Gods". By the way, it should be mentioned that humans had complex emotions and personalities, meaning that their belief contained a great deal of stubbornness and emotions. This helped to make their "soul food's" nutrition and taste much better than the elves'.

Humans created the God of Holy Light. And now, he was powerful to an inconceivable realm. Even his incarnation was already at a Main God's power level. If you only looked at his energy level, it was possible that he already matched or even exceeded the Creator Goddess's level.

This was both a coincidence and a certainty. This was the miracle created together by humanity along with Karolan, the previous Holy War's Child of Fate. But right now, for us, this meant a huge amount of trouble.

Such a powerful existence like the God of Holy Light would naturally affect many things in the overall situation. I had been constantly testing his current condition.

The God of Holy Light's overwhelming power still had a price to it. In a way, the power of belief stemmed from soul shards. While soul shards were filled with "nutritious" memories and emotions, they wouldn't be that easy to digest. Although the God of Holy Light obtained far more power of belief than any predecessor in history, the power of belief in him was so much that it was impossible for him to retain a sense of self.

However, there were many different types of not having a sense of self. Was he just like a computer program that would only determine if something was beneficial for himself or not? Or had he already transformed into part of the Holy Light itself, becoming unable to make any decisions at all? Or had he been synchronized with the Source of Order, becoming nothing more than a loyal dog and puppet?

The type of condition he was in would determine what type of decisions he would make in critical moments.

Would he follow the foundational "Cleansing" Concept of Holy Light and fight Chaos to the bloody death? Or would he only care about his personal benefits, being a cold and calculating machine? Or would he even not do anything at all apart from being a divine power automated server?

That was why I had always carefully tested him—with the Northlands, with the Church of Pure Holy Light, with Estrada's decision—cautiously treading on his limits and seeing how he would react. Finally, I confirmed his current condition...

"He's already become the Source of Order's complete puppet? That's the worst possible outcome of all..."

When I used the "Hammer of Salvation" as the catalyst to borrow power from the Tower of Holy Light, this also opened up a direct path to the Tower of Holy Light. This spatial door which appeared for only an instant exposed the Tower of Holy Light's coordinates, giving the God of Holy Light's incarnation the opportunity that he had been lying in wait for.

The Seven Circles of Hell were all Infernos that were separated by the concept of Space itself. It would be impossible to physically travel between the Infernos by foot alone. The God of Holy Light lost a large amount of divine power in forcefully breaking through the dimensional barriers, yet he still proceeded to fly in the sky.

"...Not only has Karolan lost his sense of self, he's even

instinctively strengthening himself and became the complete puppet of the Source of Order. Since you were the previous generation's Child of Fate, you really have failed so spectacularly in such an embarrassing fashion!"

At this moment, by taking opportunity of just this instant, the Source of Order's puppet was already close to the Tower of Holy Light. As long as this tower was destroyed, one-fourth of Hell would be destroyed with it, and Karolan would remain as the only incarnation of Holy Light.

"Karolan, open your eyes! Fate is Watching You!"

My angry roar echoed in the air, but I wasn't merely cursing at him. I was using the power of a God Equipment as my anger transformed into a messenger of misfortune, which appeared in front of Karolan, the God of Holy Light.

It would be impossible for my main body to catch up to him. But as I was the ruler of this world with power over the Concept of Space, I was able to instantly send an incarnation to block his path. Although my incarnation was torn apart instantly, it already managed to succeed in activating the power of the "Unpredictable Fate" staff.

[Unpredictable Fate. High-level God Equipment staff.]

This pitch-black staff had been a gift to me from the God of Fate himself. And now that Fate had gained the Concepts of Measuring Scale of Good and Evil as well as Judgement, this God Equipment's curse of misfortune would become even stronger.

[Third ability: Fate is Watching You. Choose a target, and the target's luck will decrease. The luck this individual loses will be added to yours for the next two hours. This ability ignores all magic resistance and immunities. Even other True Gods are not immune to this ability. Note: This ability can only be used once on each target for their entire lifetime. The target will become immune to this ability afterward.]

This high-level God Equipment's curse activated instantly. A black glow twirled itself around Karolan's incarnation, but then vanished instantly as if nothing had happened at all. Yet, invisible chains of karma were now secretly changing.

Another incarnation of mine appeared. This incarnation was wearing Patricia's God Equipment crown on his head. He locked onto the attacking God of Holy Light as his target.

"Meteors, rain death and destruction down on my enemies!"

[Patricia's Protection. High-level God Equipment crown.]

[Seventh ability: Star Power Summoning. Summon countless stars to crash down in an enormously destructive AOE attack with yourself as the center. Limited to one use per month.]

The next moment, the entire sky was transformed into a bullet hell, just like in certain video games. The pure power of moonlight transformed into a devastating meteor shower that began its destructive attack.

This divine powered meteor shower should have originally landed in random locations in a wide AOE radius. Yet, thanks to the guidance of Fate, these meteors continually adjusted their trajectories and took abnormally strange paths that were either straight, curved, or even backwards. But no matter which path they took, all the meteors finally ended up exploding against Karolan's incarnation that was making normal efforts to dodge the meteors.

The results of the experiment I did previously to test the effects of negative luck were proved once again. As long as one's fate was negative, randomly tossing a stone in the sky would likely cause you to be hit by your own stone. And if your fate was the most negative it could possibly be, tossing ten stones into the sky would likely end with you getting hit by eleven.

These divine powered meteors were Patricia the Moonlight

Goddess's ultimate technique. Their power actually exceeded her full power in normal situations. Plus, Karolan currently had negative luck, and my luck was massively increased from stealing his. This made the damage from these meteors higher than normal by more than ten times. Karolan's protective barrier immediately shattered after blocking only the first few meteors. With continuous meteors pounding his body, Karolan's incarnation that had already lost a significant part of divine power was now on the verge of collapsing.

But, the next moment, the God of Holy Light's incarnation gathered itself together and cut off the entire outer portion of itself. It then formed something like an arm and made a throwing movement.

"Splitting off part of yourself? NO!!!"

After splitting off most of itself, the incarnation which had been giant-sized was now just a ball that wasn't even one meter in diameter. However, the intensity of its energy was rapidly increasing. Judging from the high amount of energy it was emitting, it was evident that the God of Holy Light's incarnation was even willing to self-destruct in order to completely destroy the Tower of Holy Light.

"You shameless person who doesn't even have a face or skin anymore... Die!"

The explosive Holy Light was right in front of my Tower of Holy Light. It would be too late if I didn't use my strongest ace card here. I grit my teeth and instantly sent another incarnation, together with a white rose, in front of that now-ball-formed incarnation of Holy Light.

And then, the rose bloomed...

The exact same scene from the River Styx occurred again. Once again, the God of Holy Light's incarnation met with the same result.

[Ayer's White Rose. Wondrous mystical item. Highest-level God Equipment.]

[Ability: The chosen target will instantly die.]

[System Notification: Yep, that's right. That's how simple the explanation is. There are no other effects. Believe me—not even a Main God can handle being targeted by this rose.]

My System's original notification had absolutely been correct. Ayer had used countless years to create three roses of death which were the physical representations of the Concept of Death. Not even a Main God would be able to stand up to one of his roses.

However, unlike all my other God Equipment aces, this strongest ace of mine was a one-time consumable item. If Ayer had still been alive, he would have been able to replenish the energy within this rose. But now, this death rose no longer had a true master alive, so I could only helplessly allow its rose petals to scatter in the wind. Of course, the rose took the God of Holy Light's incarnation along with it.

The God of Holy Light had now recently lost two Main God level incarnations, yet his divine power still didn't show any obvious signs of weakening. His incredible strength had definitely far surpassed all realms of common sense. And even though I was able to deal with this current dangerous situation, the grudges between us were certain to make us into the greatest of mortal enemies.

"Sigh, you call me reckless? I think you're the reckless one, Roland."

I slightly heaved a breath of relief, seeing the golden glow beginning to dissipate, when the sigh coming from behind me caused goosebumps to appear on my back again.

"Damn it, I just used up all my aces..."

I turned around to see Karwenz who had a displeased expression. To be honest, I really did forget about his presence in the heat of

the moment just now. Without a doubt, this was a type of looking down upon him. No wonder he was so displeased.

"...And I had wanted to ambush him with these God Equipment."

Yep, from the very start, I had never intended to have a direct physical confrontation with him. The Chaos Faction had far too many advantages when it came to brute strength. Originally, I had just intended to stall him while using God Equipment to ambush him.

First, I would use a debuff curse to lower his luck, and then weaken him with attack magic to lower his defenses. Finally, I would win with the instant-death attack. This was the classic three-step combo for dragon slaying that mages used. It was an especially effective strategy against tough-skinned targets.

Originally, I had intended to use this three-step combo of God Equipment on Karwenz. He had a much larger body size than other Demon Lords, and would always completely concentrate on only battling. He was basically the easiest target to ambush.

"But now, when I was pressured, I accidentally used all my prepared tricks on the God of Holy Light's incarnation..."

And now, I could only grit my teeth and continue to face my displeased younger brother head on.

Fortunately enough, however, it was the God of Holy Light that had rushed over here, so Karwenz was more than happy enough to watch me fight him. If another Demon Lord had arrived here, it was highly likely that it would become 2 on 1 against me.

But before we could restart our battle, the entire Indifference Inferno started shaking violently yet again. The hole that the God of Holy Light previously created exploded yet again, and a gigantic creature suddenly appeared in a cloud of smoke. This was the opponent that I had originally arranged for the God of Holy Light.

"Envy?"

The Borealis had indeed just rushed out of the Thieves' Inferno. It was just that it now had a wretched appearance. Its main body and outer parts had all been melted, and large amounts of pieces were falling off what remained, as if it would be destroyed at any moment.

"It would seem that I gave you the worst possible opponent..."

The strengths of each Main God that came to attack Hell were quite obvious. The most difficult one to deal with was obviously the most powerful one, the God of Holy Light's incarnation. His original version of the Holy Light represented Cleansing, which was the natural counter to the undead. All of my Hell Kings would be countered by him. And so, I directly went with Sun Bin 1 's strategy for racing horses, and had Marsolit, the weakest of my Seven Original Sins, do his best to stall the God of Holy Light.

Of course, another reason why I gave the weakest Sin, Envy, the strongest Main God as his opponent was because this was only an incarnation of the God of Holy Light, who would have rather low intelligence. Karolan should have been the slowest out of all the Main Gods to see through this world's secrets. Yet I hadn't expected that the moment he sensed the existence of the Tower of Holy Light, he'd decide to go all out with zero inhibitions.

And now, not only did Marsolit, who was the slow to power up type, become seriously injured, the God of Holy Light's incarnation was even the first to discover this world's secrets. Karolan had unhesitatingly attacked after he discovered the Tower of Holy Light. I had apparently matched Envy with the wrong opponent.

Yet, Marsolit's arrival still made things slightly easier for me. At the very least, a Main God (well, his incarnation) had been directly killed and was no longer a threat. I was now the one who had the 2 on 1 advantage. I was gaining the upper hand!

And, Envy's personal abilities were highly unique. Someone would have to manipulate him in order to utilize his strongest

powers. And, as long as he had enough time, his combat strength wouldn't be below the other Original Sins at all.

"Now then, it's time for you to witness Marsolit's true—"

I only half-finished my arrogant words before I was interrupted. I had just received extremely bad news from one of my incarnations.

"The Pride Circle of Hell has been broken through, and Omar was actually seriously injured and then sealed? That damned Lord of Putrefaction..."

Chapter 463: Mountain Inferno

I was incredibly astonished to hear that Omar had been defeated. He was definitely among the stronger of the Seven Original Sins. The undead knights I sent to assist him were courageous and skilled fighters. The Mountain Inferno, which was Pride's Circle of Hell, shouldn't have feared any large-scale group battle. It was inconceivable that Pride was the first to have been defeated.

Pride stemmed from "levels". At first, all humans were perhaps indeed equal. But as society developed, human habits developed to classify people into different social levels. Concepts like upper, middle, and low class appeared. Those who stood high above got accustomed to looking down at those below them, along with viewing the lower classes as not even human or toys.

I never viewed the Seven Original Sins as true evil. All of the Seven Original Sins had their positives and negatives. An appropriate amount of Pride would be self-confidence, an absolutely required form of self-recognition for bravely striving to reach the peak. However, an overwhelming amount of pride would only result in birthing a person who obtained satisfaction from looking down on others, or deriving pleasure from kicking those below them—that would obviously be going way overboard.

"Since the prideful enjoy fighting for the sake of higher positions, climbing ever higher to look down on others, I shall let you all climb as much as you like."

Sword mountains, fire mountains, magma mountains, snow mountains, and countless other cruel mountains existed in the Mountain Inferno. However, unlike normal snow mountains, the snow mountains here got colder the closer one got to the base of the mountain. The fire mountains' bases were nothing more than boiling liquid metal. The other mountains were the same as well. The closer to the base, the harsher the environment. The farther up you went, the more comfortable you would be.

The criminals that committed the sin of having too much Pride would be dropped naked into the mountains. If they wanted to be more comfortable, they would be forced to climb for their lives with only their bare hands and feet. But on these mountain paths, there was only enough space for one person to ascend. It would be impossible for them to avoid fighting and slaughtering each other. And even if some managed to ascend to a certain height, devils were waiting to knock them back down to the bottom and start over again.

I won't get into this particular inferno's philosophy and religious meaning here. Just the very rules of this inferno made it the most appropriate location for dealing with large-scale group battles.

Omar was the ruler of the Mountain Inferno. He would forever stand at the very peak of all the mountains. He could give his undead subordinates the ability to fly as they wished through the mountains, yet ordinary dead souls or any invaders would only be able to move up one step at a time. Not only that, all "movement"-related magic abilities were automatically deactivated for the dead souls or any invaders. This would make them into nothing more than easy targets.

Did this sound shameless? Dimensional laws were indeed so shameless. Not to mention, this was no ordinary dimension. Someone that entered Bastian's Circle of Hell which represented Wrath would also become a bloodthirsty maniac.

I had originally thought that such a battlefield combined with Omar's abilities would make it so that it was impossible for him to lose. It should have been simple enough to stall for time at the very minimum.

But, unfortunately... Omar met a Demon Main God, Ladvioka, the Lord of Putrefaction, who was going all out!

Yes, the critical part was that Ladvioka was going all out. Main God level existences would rarely bring out their full powers.

Demon Lords were incredibly difficult to deal with. This was something already expected. However, they were difficult to deal with for more than just their personal power levels.

The long eons gave each Demon Lord a unique path to their peak of power. These Demon Lords also all had completely different personalities and styles. Still, even Demon Main God could be described as the slyest among the sly.

Sophocles the Deceiver easily agreed to negotiate because he discovered that it was truly possible for him to actually perish here. Hell was now an isolated dimension, cutting off his path of retreat. Although there was less than a one-in-three chance for him to die here, and despite the fact that he still had plenty of hidden aces, the always cautious Sophocles still chose the path of absolute safety that would bring him the most benefits.

Did he really have no other path to take? Was that the limit of his power? The answer was an obvious no. The countless eons gave him plenty of foundational strength. It was impossible to calculate how many hidden aces such an existence would possess. Still, for the Chaos Main Gods that always warred amongst themselves, any top-level ace that would be able to affect the combat situation at a Main God level would be a priceless treasure difficult to obtain in any plane. No Main God would bring out such an ace if the benefits were less than the price of using such an ace. Not to mention, other Main Gods were here in Hell right now, meaning that a Main God might expose their most important secrets by using an ace.

There was a saying that the Gods were just like countries. Their relationships only involved benefits, not emotions. They would often test the waters and taunt each other, but all-out warfare would be incredibly rare. Although I felt that this saying was somewhat extreme, it was still accurate.

The Gods rarely warred amongst each other, but as long as they did, it would usually be an all-out war that would only end with one God's death. That was because only by stealing the enemy

God's dimension and divine power, believers, and Divine Concept would the victorious God be able to make up for their losses in the war.

This was also why most of the Gods' clashes were only in their churches' teachings and just talk. It was even rarer for Main Gods to go all out against each other.

"At any rate, the Sources of Order and Chaos are unable to surveil their actions in Hell, nor are there any deep grudges between us. As long as we display a sufficient amount of power, making them think that they'll definitely lose more than they gain, of course they won't bring out their full power."

I already saw through all of this, which was why I chose the strategy of forcefully dividing the Main Gods up and sending them to different Circles of Hell.

"Isolating them so that they can't meet up with their allies is no different from directly exiling or sealing them. Even if it's a Main God level existence, when they discover that they'll probably lose far more than they'll gain, or that they'll even meet with real danger, they'll still instinctively choose to protect themselves first. Since self-protection is their priority, of course they'll leave power in reserve, which will increase the chance that they'll enter a battle of attrition. And what we need right now more than anything is time."

The developments so far proved that my inferences had been correct for the time being. Sophocles chose to remain neutral; the God of Wisdom Kalumandas was also willing to negotiate. The other Main Gods also only started by testing the waters rather than going all out.

If I showed any signs of weakness, the Main Gods would naturally swarm in and devour me. But if I made them feel that I was a prickly hedgehog filled with toxic quills, making them lose more than they gained if they ate me, this would naturally help to

keep the balance of power and bring this battle into one of attrition, which was what I wanted the most.

My arrangements for each Main God's opponent were all specifically targeted. Harloys was with the God of Wisdom Kalumandas. Even if their negotiations broke down and Kalumandas attacked, Harloys was also an archmage who would be able to defend herself against Kalumandas' primarily magic-based attacks. Gaar, the "Murky Nightmare", was capable of evolving as he fought and healing his own wounds, disgusting abilities to deal with. He faced Ah Dang, who also had extremely high individual combat strength and was also capable of evolving through devouring. The current combat situation also seemed to prove that my choices had been correct.

However, there was one existence that surpassed my calculations—Ladvioka, the Lord of Putrefaction!

Since the Lord of Putrefaction's combat strength mostly stemmed from his armies, of course I arranged "Pride" Omar as his opponent since Omar also relied on subordinates to do most of the fighting. And, I even sent my undead knights to Omar to strengthen him even further. Omar was also supported by the dimensional laws of his Mountain Inferno. This should have been a fight that was over ninety percent in our favor.

"That damned Ladvioka! He's literally insane!"

Unlike how the other Main Gods remained cautious, Ladvioka was immensely tempted by the benefits to be had in devouring this entire dimension. He unhesitatingly brought out his true power and used countless priceless treasures that he had stored for eons.

My Wumianzhe incarnation there already gave me the information on what happened. In order to deal with the Mountain Inferno's dimensional laws and buffs for Omar, Ladvioka unhesitatingly used the strategy of a forceful Dimensional Descent.

Difficult to understand, you say? Ladvioka basically performed a forceful summon of one of his personal dimensions, forcefully overlaying the dimensions and causing a collision. To use an analogy, it was as if a bastard used the planet Mars to smash it into Earth!

In some of his worlds, Ladvioka was treated as an existence akin to the Creator Goddess. But evidently, he wasn't a good father at all. At the very least, he felt absolutely nothing for his own children.

He used a dimension with actual lives in it as nothing more than a consumable item to be thrown like a brick. This forcefully broke through Hell's dimensional walls, but no matter what the result was, by using his own dimension as a hammer, the dimension would shatter and all lives within it would be ended. It would be almost impossible for any existences within that dimension to survive.

The broken dimensional shards from Ladvioka's dimension crashed into the dimensional walls of Hell. This clash brought about a distortion of the dimensional laws, creating cracks in the very fabric of Space. Even my powerful undead knights were incapable of surviving in such an environment.

This also allowed a large amount of the Ladvioka's dimensions' survivors to enter the Mountain Inferno. Any survivor would be one of the strongest existences in that dimension, and they continued fighting for Ladvioka's cause. These dense "worker ants" of his immediately began spreading Ladvioka's faith and dimensional laws there. Ladvioka sacrificed at least more than twenty of his personal dimensions here all in order to distort the dimensional laws of the Mountain Inferno, which meant that he used up so much accumulated power which would take several tens of thousands of years to gather.

Basically, in order to steal the dimension of Hell and its laws, Ladvioka started right away by unhesitatingly destroying more

than twenty of his personal dimensions, and most of the lives within them!

A Demon Lord Main God who possessed a number of dimensions in the two digits suddenly sacrificed more than half of all he possessed. What did he have to show for it? By now, Ladvioka no longer had any path of retreat. He could only possibly fight us to the bitter end. The first mortal enemy for us appeared in the battle for Hell.

I received much information from all my incarnations. The Mountain Inferno had been broken through and Hell's Four Halls were in danger. The next moment, I decided on a course of action.

"I'm going to first go to beat up that damned fatty. Follow me if you dare."

I directly vanished together with Marsolit. I casually opened up a teleportation portal to the Mountain Inferno but didn't close it. My aura emanated from the other side of the portal right after I disappeared. And so, Karwenz unhesitatingly stepped into the teleportation portal.

This incredibly simple dare would be highly effective against someone like Karwenz who wouldn't back down against any challenge. He would especially never back down from a challenge from me... but this didn't mean that I wouldn't scam him. The teleportation portal I left for him was within the innermost core of a volcano in the Mountain Inferno. He could go enjoy a magma bath to calm down first.

"Roland, you bastard, fooling me yet again...!"

Cough, let's ignore this loser dog's angry roars coming from deep underground. Currently, the Mountain Inferno that I saw seemed just like Armageddon itself had arrived.

Countless broken continental and even world shards were falling down onto the Mountain Inferno like streaking meteors. Yet this

was a calamity which far surpassed the damage that a meteor shower would cause. It looked more like countless moons were directly falling down and causing havoc.

Numerous tears appeared in the sky as snow mountains were dissolved by magma, while spewing volcanos were flattened by stone continental shards. Even worse, the distorted dimensional laws were difficult for the Mountain Inferno to digest. With so many unfixed dimensional tears, the dead that should have revived immediately instead temporarily lost their undying nature.

And in all this chaos, all these dimensional shards and distorted dimensional laws were more than enough to let the demons create their own abyssal fortress. Large amounts of mystical creatures were walking around, and in the middle of the battlefield, Ladvioka was trampling on and tearing my undead knights' corpses, stalling and preventing their eventual revivals.

I unhesitatingly roared out in anger as I saw all this from the bow of Envy, the Borealis.

"Marsolit! Big Dipper squadron! It's time to transform and move out!"

Chapter 464: Borealis Transformer

Envy, Marsolit, the Borealis. Although he was the Original Sin that I used the most, his combat abilities weren't standing out among the Sins at all.

Maybe some people would think that this was because Marsolit was too young. However, an undead's power typically depended on the soul core. But actually, he used a Semi God level core, someone incredibly stubborn on obtaining revenge. His soul's starting point was extremely high already.

All this time, what limited his combat strength the most was actually the Original Sin that he represented—Envy.

The Original Sins were my own soul shards. My own understanding of the Original Sins determined their abilities. Out of all the Original Sins, Envy was rather unique.

Envy was the Original Sin with the least negatives. In fact, most of the time, Envy could even be considered a positive emotion to possess. From a certain standpoint, its positive worth exceeded its negative worth.

Perhaps there were a few people out there who would commit evil deeds due to possessing envious emotions towards those with better talent, status, reputation, knowledge, or wealth. But, I felt that there would be even more who thought, "Why can't that be me?" or "I'm not any worse than he is, I can definitely do even better!" when looking at their better-off classmates and friends.

From a certain standpoint, Envy and Pride were two concepts that were similar yet also opposites. Pride was an attitude and condescension that those with higher status had towards the lower, while Envy was the desire of those with lower status to reach higher status. As long as concepts like social classes and individual differences existed in the world, then Envy would be impossible to escape from. At the very least, everyone would

possess "unwillingness" toward being surpassed by others they viewed as similar.

The same concept could sometimes be helpful medicine while being toxic poison to others. There were idiots who would ignore others' talent, hard work, and sacrifice in obtaining what they had. Envy would goad them into fiercely slandering and attacking others, stoking their fires of "not respecting others." Meanwhile, the smarter ones who were "unwilling" to stay down transformed their flames into whips to constantly improve themselves instead. Not only that, smarter individuals would be able to analyze the strengths and advantages of the target of their envy, and then think of methods to imitate, learn, and improve one's own insufficiencies.

This was my personal understanding and analysis of the concept of Envy. It might not necessarily be correct or the same as others' understanding... No, I should say that every single person probably had their own understanding of what an Original Sin was. There was no so-called answer out there to begin with. Meanwhile, the Envy battleships' abilities as part of my soul shard were a perfect outcome of the definition that I gave to Envy.

The farther down the pyramid of status a person was, the more that person would desire to improve and move upward. This was the so-called "desire for betterment." That was why Envy's original battleship model didn't even have any extra combat strength at all. He started out as nothing more than an empty platform that wouldn't have any incompatibilities with any power system out there. He started out from level zero. The way he finally evolved would completely depend on how he imitated others in battle and how many abilities he was able to steal.

His true uniqueness came from his potential in that he would forever be compatible with all spare parts and abilities no matter the type. He started out as a "zero" with limitless potential and growth. He possessed "hunger" for perpetual evolution.

Perhaps some people would think that his abilities thus overlapped with those of Ah Dang of Gluttony, but they were actually completely different. Ah Dang was a predator who evolved through devouring prey. He would instinctively evolve and strengthen himself. Ah Dang's most frightening ability was actually the limitless lifeforce he could obtain through devouring.

Meanwhile, the Envy battleships would evolve through imitation and self-controlled selection. My theory had it that as long as he had enough time and underwent sufficiently numerous battles, he would eventually surpass all my other Original Sins in combat strength... although that would likely take several tens of thousands of years...

"Envy" Marsolit. As long as he experienced countless battles, he would definitely become the strongest existence amongst my Seven Original Sins.

However, I didn't have the time to wait that long...

And so, I created the Borealis's personal combat squadron.

That's right, I was referring to the Big Dipper squadron. These seven aerial battleships were actually special add-ons I created just for Marsolit!

Yep, all these battleships were actually add-ons. The Borealis was simply the core part at the center. Just imagining what type of monstrosity would appear when they all combined made me so delighted!

But while imagining was nice, reality was harsh. Creating airships was prohibitively expensive. If I started large-scale construction of airships, the most probable result was that I wouldn't obtain a single rare airship that I wanted before I used up all my resources, and the unfinished hulls would be sealed away to gather dust.

Even by borrowing Xiluo's resources and strength, I was still only

able to create two dragonbone battleships, the Mizar and the Alkaid. I still lacked four airships to finish my blueprint. That meant that progress was less than half, and I couldn't use the planned Big Dipper squadron as Envy's add-ons in actual battle at all.

But luckily for me, I dug up a wonderful treasure in Dragon World...

"Awaken! Guardian God of the Eternal Thunder tribe, Imprint of the Tiger God!"

A tremendous skeleton awakened from its deep sleep, answering my will and summons. Terrifying roars could be heard from its teleportation portal as this gigantic behemoth tore through dimensional space and arrived in the Mountain Inferno.

At this moment, when this towering presence arrived, the entire Inferno began trembling. Just how frightening was this existence? Just the skull alone was far larger than even the biggest Supreme Immemorial Dragon. And, the first to arrive through the portal from the Thieves' Inferno were two now empty dragonbone battleships—the Mizar and the Alkaid.

When Marsolit faced the God of Holy Light, Envy was so severely countered that he hadn't even had time to use the ace cards I'd prepared for him before the God of Holy Light directly broke past him.

"Big Dipper squadron, transform and head out!"

My passionate shouts echoed in the air as the mega-giant skeleton still missing some of its bones and the battleship add-ons walked together. Unfortunately for me, there was no exciting music like what would play on TV during a transformation. Alright then, by this point, the readers can probably guess what I intended.

"Borealis, you'll be the body. Mizar, you'll be the left hand.

Alkaid, you'll be the right hand. Imprint of the Tiger God, you'll be everything else! I'll be the head. Go forth, my Transformer... the Borealis War God!"

My enemies were confused by the sight. Meanwhile, I ignored my System and the silly cat's comments of "You never grow up, still playing with dolls at your age" and [Such an old joke, you're revealing your age!] The pitch-black bone giant's bones slammed into each other and distorted as it formed itself within Hell.

It was impossible to calculate his new height, because even the tallest snow mountain only reached up to his waist. The arrogant and insane Lord of Putrefaction didn't even reach up to his knee!

This giant was constructed out of pitch-black bones all over. Inside the core protected by the ribcage, the Borealis was glowing as if it was a beating heart. And, its incomplete left hand and right foot were its strongest weapons. The roaring Mizar readied its cannons as dragonbreath powered the cannons. Meanwhile, the right leg's Alkaid gave the giant the super movement ability of breaking the laws of Space.

Perhaps this bone giant was still incomplete. Yet, just by looking at this incomprehensible behemoth caused the dimensional invaders to feel truly helpless inside.

"What is that?"

"Is this a joke? Such a large body and terrifying energy level? Why hasn't he collapsed on himself?"

Out of everyone, the Lord of Putrefaction's reaction was the most unique.

"This is impossible! It completely goes against all the most basic laws of life creation! Not a single dimension is capable of giving birth to such a monster! This... this has surpassed a Main God!"

That's right, if you only looked at energy level and its limits of applying instantaneous power, this combination monster indeed

surpassed the limits of a Main God.

"My dimensions... I've successfully reconstructed the Thieves' Inferno and the Mountain Inferno."

I had finally finished what I was doing, heaving a sigh of relief. While the Lord of Putrefaction was capable of wreaking havoc upon the dimensional laws here with his Dimensional Descents, I was the ruler of Hell, and naturally possessed the ability to use Dimensional Descent to fix the shattered tears.

I had brought over the now empty Thieves' Inferno and combined it with the Mountain Inferno to fix them both. Although combining these two Infernos would likely bring along a bunch of unfortunate side effects, this would be greatly useful to the battle here.

Hades Mist started spreading again as the tattered undead knights finally stood up once more. The countless dead within these two Infernos started walking into the giant's body, becoming its spare parts and giving this giant sufficient energy for movement and combat!

"Slaughter! Steal! Evolve!"

When faced with a Main God, separate body parts that all had their own will would be meaningless. Only by combining the wills and souls together would there be a foundational breakthrough. This bone giant was a pure war machine, so slaughtering and stealing became its pure instincts.

Those simple words became the bone giant's combat fervor which suppressed everything. Just his first step created countless earthquakes. When Ladvioka saw this monster towering above him, and noticed how his own spells were actually completely ineffective against it, even this Demon Lord Main God started wondering if he had made the worst possible decision.

Countless souls gave this bone giant an explosive amount of

energy that would surpass even the Main Gods. The Tiger God's corpse gave this bone giant a skeleton frame and body that could contain his power. The three battleships became his most important organ and limbs. This amalgamation monster should have been born only after ten thousand more years, yet Hell's dimensional laws allowed the impossible to become reality.

"No, no, this is impossible! This has already surpassed the limits of this dimension. It will definitely soon collapse. My children, destroy him! Stall him for me!"

The hysterical Lord of Putrefaction commanded his children to suicide-attack the giant. With just a casual wave of one hand, the bone giant spewed pure black dragon flames, which created a destructive inferno. All the places where the bone giant stepped became tremendous crevices that swallowed countless demon warriors.

This was a monster which even the Titan King would be afraid of. The Lord of Putrefaction seemed like nothing more than a slightly large animal in front of it.

The Lord of Putrefaction's distorted children were dying in large numbers. In front of this "warrior from the future" that came through the rivers of time, these ants' resistance became completely meaningless. Even a dragon wouldn't reach the size of one of his thumbs. His overwhelming slaughtering abilities created a feast of redness on this battlefield, but I was currently calculating how much longer I had before this giant collapsed.

That's right, collapsed. This monstrous giant was only a half-complete product to begin with. I had now randomly added the Tiger God's corpse into my blueprint and was using so many temporary spare parts and whatever energy source I could. It was just like taping a random assortment of dimensional laws together. This was an impossible creation that completely broke the limits of Hell's own Elemental Tide. I was already astonished enough that it was capable of movement. It was unknown just how long it would

be able to fight for.

"At the very least, I need it to kill a Main God for me before it collapses! Envy, tear apart this green and idiotic demon for me! Take revenge for your older brother!"

Chapter 465: Hidden Aces

The dimensional tears in the sky had yet to close, and now countless crevices had appeared in the pitch-black ground. This abnormal scene brought discomfort to everyone. Falling into any crevice or tear would probably have an unknown result.

"Kill that Ladvioka! I want him to be the first Chaos Main God that dies in this Holy War."

I gave the command to kill as I stood on the top of the bone giant. Just by the action of walking alone, this tremendous bone giant would make a joke out of any attempts to stop it.

Countless ants rushed forward to die, while the Lord of Putrefaction Ladvioka himself was actually retreating. As a Main God, he had already gotten accustomed to staying as far away from any potential danger as possible. It had been more than five thousand years ago in the Holy War from two generations ago that he had last felt such fear that he could die at any moment.

It was precisely because he had suffered in that Holy War from two generations ago that he refused the will of the Chaos Abyss when it summoned him to participate in the previous Holy War. Ladvioka only went at the very end of the previous Holy War to steal some loot and pretend to add to his resume. The result was that the Chaos Abyss started loathing him and demoted his noble title, making Ladvioka become a Demon Lord Main God who was only an Earl. That made him a joke for a while.

Of course, at his power level, not many would dare to laugh at him. Ladvioka himself was also no longer interested in noble titles. The Chaos Abyss had given him everything it could already. If he wanted to progress in power any further, he could only rely on his own stealing, conquering, and personal experience. And since the Chaos Abyss now disliked him, that was probably the main reason why he was so willing to sacrifice anything to obtain this new

dimension of Hell.

Perhaps it was also because the cruel Holy War from two generations ago scared him so much that this Demon Lord changed his former way of directly fighting. Instead, Ladvioka began raising his own demon armies and military squadrons.

But right now, all those dangerous magical beasts that he worked so hard to raise were all unable to protect him! The bone giant that would send him to his doom kept approaching ever closer. It seemed to him as if his destruction was coming for him.

"Stop it! Stop it at all costs!"

The furious Demon Lord commanded his cannon fodder to stop the bone giant's charge. Although his subordinates obeyed this command, they were basically helpless.

The powerful pure white-haired girl with the chained-up body, eyelids sewn shut, and gagged mouth was the Insect Mother who was powerful enough to create an entire dimension belonging to her magical insects. As long as she had a sufficient amount of time, she was even capable of single-handedly destroying an entire dimension by herself. Not even most True Gods were capable of resisting against her. However, she didn't even have time to utilize the insect swarms that were her greatest power when she was burned into nothing but ash together with her insect servants by the bone giant's pitch-black flames. Countless magical insects and their magical nests died together with her.

Ladvioka's magical war elephant squadron that had powerful charge attacks and tremendous bodies, sufficient to make even demons be afraid, were actually shorter than the bone giant's foot. The fact that the elephants charged forward actually made it even easier for the bone giant to smush them to death like ants.

As for the distorted half-angels that spread plague and death? Ha, their strongest abilities were now worthless in front of an undead magical behemoth like this bone giant. The half-angels didn't even

cause any effective damage before they were vaporized into real corpses by the powerful aura of death around the bone giant.

Just breathing alone could create tornados. Just staring at someone could cause death. Just walking could create canyons. This bone giant, Envy's incarnation, showed the demons from other planes and the Chaos Abyss just what a real nightmare, a real dimensional destroyer was!

Magical beasts were killed, stomped to death, and burned to death in their hordes. The tremendous bone giant trampled everything that tried to stop it. It was approaching ever closer to Ladvioka's temporary abyssal fortress. This Demon Lord who had wanted to reobtain the will of the Chaos Abyss's recognition now saw his worst nightmare right before him.

"How can such a ridiculous thing even exist..."

This bone giant was constructed out of the purest dimensional laws of death, allowing it to bring death upon all of Ladvioka's demons. Countless souls transformed into energy for this bone giant. And it just so happened that the dimensional laws of this world dictated that the dead were unable to become "truly dead". No matter if it was the bone giant or the dead souls providing it with energy, they all possessed an endless amount of energy force. Basically, this "Transformer" was a bug-like existence that had a limitless amount of energy. Since the grand blueprint for this bone giant's design had incredible potential power at the peak, and it now had limitless energy, these two combined thanks to Hell's dimensional laws to become an "undead perpetual motion machine." This created a monster that surpassed even the Main Gods in energy level.

The Gods surpassed the mundane mostly because of dimensional laws. In their Divine Kingdoms, they were the administrators who held authority over their own Concepts. Any ordinary powerful individual that wanted to defeat them would first have to think of ideas to seal or weaken the dimensional Concept they possessed,

which would return a "God" back to mortal standards.

Since I had already anticipated that Main Gods would come and attack me, of course I made preparations against them. All of Hell was my personal Divine Kingdom, and I possessed plenty of powerful Concepts and dimensional laws.

But in my opinion, directly using dimensional laws to attack was nothing more than a foolish tactic. That was because dimensional laws had their limits. Instead, using dimensional laws to strengthen my greatest advantage—my creations—so that their strengths became even stronger would be the best way to abuse dimensional laws.

And so, I toyed with dimensional laws to the utmost limit, creating this existence that surpassed the dimensional laws. This was all because the Lord of Putrefaction had invaded me with all his power...

"Fine then, let's just see and compare who has the better hidden aces! Ladvioka, I can understand your fear because what all army commander types fear more than anything are powerful warriors that can ignore numerical advantage and go directly for the commander. But this... is only the beginning... Arise, those that are dead! Fight for your new master."

Black mist filled this entire world. Hell wasn't the end of life. Hell was only the beginning of everything.

The pale white biohazard Insect Mother reappeared in the middle of the battlefield. But this time, her sewed eyes were open, and her clear white eyes actually consisted of countless single eyes that created compound eyes. However, her eyes were filled with hatred as she glared at the existence she had just so furiously defended.

Her life-rending magical bees and death mushroom bombs appeared once again. However, this time, they targeted the still "living" demon armies.

It was the same for the distorted half-angels, war elephants, and all the other magical beasts. The moment that they were revived from death, they immediately started charging towards their former master.

"Haha, human-wave tactics? You want to compare with me in full-scale army battles? You want to use human-wave tactics against me, a super undead mage in my home turf of Hell? Ladvioka! Are you an idiot!?"

As long as enough death was caused, an Undead Calamity would be capable of dragging any army into total annihilation. However, something that surprised even me was the fact that I only sped up Ladvioka's dead subordinate's revival, but I hadn't distorted their wills. More than seventy percent of his former subordinates that were revived after death actually directly attacked Ladvioka with all their might even without my influence.

"My new master. If your home was destroyed by him, with your friends and family all sacrificed on the experimental table, and your entire tribe was destroyed for the sole reason that they weren't 'suitable' enough for his experiments, and you yourself were transformed into a weapon of war, you would hate a 'Creator' like Ladvioka as well!"

The Insect Mother sent me a soul message about her reasons, although I could infer them even without her message. Quite obviously, Ladvioka was a highly unpopular master. No matter what contracts or other methods to control his subordinates he possessed, they would all become ineffective after his subordinates died once.

As for the relative few that maintained their loyalty to Ladvioka, I directly tossed all their souls into the River Styx, making them leave this battle.

An abnormal scene now appeared in this fight. The undead knights were rushing forward at Ladvioka, and the just deceased

demons all crawled up again and joined my side. This was doubtlessly a turning point in the battle.

At this moment, the Demon Lord Ladvioka who had been remaining abnormally silent finally raised his head. The hatred contained within him transformed into corporeal poisonous flames. He suddenly swung a giant battle hammer containing abyssal flames, causing an orange-red firestorm to begin covering the entire world.

In the air above Ladvioka's battle hammer, the flames transformed into an angry Inferno Demon roaring in the void. It seemed to be roaring and struggling in anger. The next instant, an orange aura began spreading. This seemingly harmless orange wave passed countless warriors, directly igniting the weak who could only watch themselves being burnt to ash. The strong simply imploded suddenly.

"Such a powerful wavelength? The purest fire magic? A forbidden spell?"

That's right, countless howls and sparks flew together with all the mushroom cloud explosions. No matter if you looked at the large-scale area of effect or the individual attack power, this forbidden spell far surpassed any limits that a mortal could cast.

The Demon Lord had successfully cast a forbidden spell in less than two minutes!

"I never expected that the rumors about Ladvioka formerly being an Inferno Demon were true. His fire magic mastery has probably far surpassed that of any human mage in existence. However, while his fire may look pretty, it's all meaningless!"

That's right, it was meaningless. With regards to fights between top-level existences, large-scale AOE forbidden spells wouldn't have enough attack power against individuals. And, my ace card against Ladvioka was a bone giant Transformer. It would be impossible for Ladvioka to survive if the bone giant got close to

him.

The flames from the forbidden spell covered the bone giant's entire body. However, the flames were then quenched in the next instant. I didn't even try to move or dodge the attack. While Ladvioka's death-bringing flames would perhaps easily slay any ordinary giant, there was an absolute difference in energy level that made it difficult to even scratch Envy's defenses. It would be impossible to even kill my incarnation.

What happened next was also within my expectations. The white snowflakes that fell from the sky helped the warriors who died in the flames just now to obtain new physical bodies. As long as the entirety of Hell's dimensional laws wasn't shattered, it would be impossible for the dead to truly die here. Even a forbidden spell would only slightly slow down the undead and demon mob's attack against Ladvioka.

Considering the fact that many living demons on Ladvioka's side had just perished to his forbidden spell, the second charge against him would only be even more vicious with more demons that newly joined my side.

But, something unexpected then happened...

The tremendous bone giant suddenly stopped and tilted, almost falling over on the ground.

"What's going on? The undead being reborn?"

Countless undead souls from the Mountain and Thieves' Infernos were gathered within the bone giant's skeleton. They were basically a portable battery for the bone giant. And right now, many of these souls were currently being reborn.

The bone giant itself wouldn't take much damage from the flames, but those dangerous flames successfully slew the ordinary undead within the bone giant. Although the undead would soon revive, this naturally meant that there would be a short period of

insufficient energy, just like a machine that wouldn't work when there was a temporary power outage. Naturally, this caused the bone giant to stop.

Since the fiercest warrior leading the vanguard suddenly stopped, it became unavoidable that the undead army's attack became disrupted.

And the next instant, Ladvioka actually opened up a pair of fiery wings on his back, one of the signature characteristics of Inferno Demons. These wings carried his fat and gigantic body into the air.

Perhaps everyone in the world had underestimated this Demon Lord who always kept a low profile. Although Ladvioka had seemingly retreated from the frontlines and adopted an army-based fighting style, he had never abandoned his Inferno Demon foundational instincts. No matter if it was in melee fighting or fire magic, he would still be the strongest Inferno Demon in existence.

A fire-wreathed greatsword suddenly appeared in the air which Ladvioka then grasped in his hands. He then suddenly threw the sword, directly aiming for the bone giant's heart, the Borealis. As long as the heart was destroyed, even though the Borealis could be revived, this bone giant would collapse on itself and it would be impossible to put it together again in this fight.

"Should I say that it's to be expected of a Demon Lord Main God? He actually found the weak spot so quickly, but..."

In just a short few minutes, the Demon Lord who had experienced uncountable battles already found the critical point of this battle! Even I now felt that I had previously underestimated Ladvioka. If I had forced him into a physical fight under normal dimensional laws, it was highly likely that I would be on the losing end.

"...But, aren't you underestimating me too much, Ladvioka!? Turn upside-down, Mountain Inferno!"

I reached out my hand and gathered the shape of the Mountain Inferno within my hands. The blueprint for the mountains covered half the sky, together with a compass and direction symbols.

And as I turned my hand, the compass's directions started turning around as well. The directions of north and south switched as the entire Mountain Inferno was suddenly turned upside-down. The original sky became the ground, while the ground became the sky.

Gravity changed directions as well. Ladvioka who was flying in the sky suddenly found that he was hurtling himself towards the ground. Countless living or dead were all directly tossed into the "former sky".

Compared to the other Infernos, the Mountain Inferno's sky wasn't high at all. If you flew up high to the very limits of the sky, you would be able to see a ceiling... or more accurately, a second Mountain Inferno constructed out of countless additional mountains.

That Mountain Inferno was an exact mirror copy of all the snow mountains, sword mountains, volcanoes, and so on.

This wasn't because of my personal interests. Nor would I be capable of modifying the Mountain Inferno on such a large scale after its creation. This was simply a vicious trait of the Mountain Inferno.

"Pride stems from levels and status. Since you all love to climb up, then climb as much as you want. I even remembered to design infighting and obstacles, favorites for those who possess too much Pride. And if any of you actually succeed in reaching the top of the mountain, that means it's time for you... to start climbing all over again from the very beginning! Ha, did you really think that I would allow any of you to enjoy a relaxing rest?"

Until an individual finished their punishment and achieved

salvation, how could the Mountain Inferno's punishment possibly end? There was no limit to the mountain climbing punishment for the Mountain Inferno of Pride. If someone truly managed to climb to the top, then they would get to enjoy a short moment of respite before the entire world turned upside down and made everyone start over again from the very beginning.

However, that short moment of respite would then become motivation for them to continue climbing yet again. I already expected that once the Mountain Inferno's design became publicized, I would receive countless praise. This was one of the Inferno designs that I was the proudest of.

And right now, I suddenly activated this mechanism, which became the most despairing nightmare for Ladvioka's demon armies.

Including Ladvioka himself. All the demon armies dropped down into the new mirror Mountain Inferno, with countless demons burning, freezing, or being impaled and dying. Of course, the most common death was the simplest one of simply being smashed into a meat pie by the impact.

Their just-finished abyssal fortress became completely meaningless. The portion of the Mountain Inferno that was corroded by Ladvioka's twenty-plus Dimensional Descents was completely replaced by the mirror Mountain Inferno. The denseness of Hades Mist instantly multiplied several times over. Of course, only the demons that still managed to survive could complain about the conditions that suddenly worsened so much for them on the battlefield.

The sudden upside-down change of directions caused the frightfully heavy Ladvioka to suddenly transform into a flying meteor that crashed into the mountains. When he dizzily got up again from a volcano that he had crushed under his body, he then discovered that his armies had almost been completely annihilated. Except for the few that were lucky enough to have

wings, the great majority of his demons and dimensional creations had all become dead souls in the River Styx or revived undead that were now mortal enemies with their former master.

When the bone giant stood up again, the only opponent powerful enough for it was now the dark green Demon Lord.

"Ahhh, Roland, you scammer!"

As for a certain unlucky Main God twin brother of mine who just got out of his volcano and jumped up and down in joy too early? He directly fell into yet another volcano. Let's just pretend that we didn't see anything.

Chapter 466: Sudden Change in the Situation

The more primitive the battle, the simpler and more violent it would be. Battles purely for the sake of survival or revenge would always be the cruelest and bloodiest. These battles would be far simpler and more direct compared to barbarians' fights against wild beasts. The primitive rules of blood revenge dictated that cruel battles between barbarian tribes would have no innocents surviving.

Yet, in modern warfare of my original world, battles actually had both international rules and unstated rules, such as normal scale warfare, forbidding the use of large-scale AOE weapons like nuclear bombs, limited-fly zones, international treaties, and so on...

"So that civilians won't be accidentally harmed? What a joke, isn't war all about surviving and killing the enemy? Who would worry about killing enemies too slowly? If people were truly worried about ordinary civilians, why not just abandon the thought of warfare in the first place, abandoning the benefits obtainable through war? These limitations are purely because people are worried about going overboard and causing their own self-destruction!"

Modern warfare in my previous world had all sorts of rules and limitations imposed upon it. In my opinion, this wasn't because humans had become cultured or friendly at all. It was simply because both sides in most wars already possessed Armageddon-level weapons capable of destroying the entire enemy side, making total world annihilation and achieving an Armageddon far too easy. These limitations were set in place so that wars wouldn't endlessly escalate, so that the overall victor wouldn't only helplessly receive a living hell on Earth filled with nothing but

rubble.

It was the same in the world of Eich with the wars between powerful Gods. Forbidden spell attacks were quite insignificant to them. Wars between Main Gods would always be fought cautiously, carefully testing the waters, carefully accumulating small advantages and carefully wiping away the enemy's advantage. Aces wouldn't be used until the very final moment, because they meant the enemy would also use all their aces and go all out in an attempt to survive. The final result in such fights would be unpredictable. Still, no matter how one looked at it, casually slaughtering the enemy's believers and destroying the overall environment would obviously end in a major loss for both sides.

"If Ladvioka hadn't insanely gone all out, I wouldn't have gone to the extent of using Envy's still incomplete final form..."

From the very start, I hadn't intended on forcing the Main Gods to the very brink, because that would mean extreme danger for us at all. However, there were no "ifs" on the battlefield. Since the situation already developed in this manner, the only final result available now would either be Ladvioka's death or ours.

The tremendous bone giant didn't attempt to hide its intention to slaughter Ladvioka at all. Ladvioka was forced into a corner, and it seemed that it was now time for the final reckoning. Yet, I didn't dare to let down my guard for even one bit.

And even though Karwenz just fell into another volcano, this wasn't much to him at all. He instantly appeared again, and directly... went back to cooking his fish soup. Let's not think too deeply just how he managed to bring out his fish soup again. Karwenz was making it obvious that he didn't intend to help either side. Still, I didn't believe that this was because of our family relationship at all. It was more likely that he was more than happy to watch Ladvioka simply die here.

Ladvioka only glared angrily at Karwenz for a moment but didn't say any wasted words. After all, in demons' dictionaries, "friends that help each other out in a time of need" was a synonym for "naïve idiots that are easy to scam." A demon that didn't kick another demon while he was down could already be considered unbelievably friendly in the Chaos Abyss.

It would seem that ignoring Karwenz would be the best choice for me right now. Yet, I unhesitatingly ordered my new subordinate, the pale white Insect Mother to ambush Karwenz!

"As expected, he's only an illusion!"

Indeed, the Karwenz that she pierced through was nothing more than an illusion created out of shadows. His real self had completely vanished. I was already wondering why he had been so slow to exit the volcano he was trapped in. It would seem that he had already started acting independently starting from that time. Yep, I definitely wasn't curious at all why a single-celled organism like him would suddenly stop attacking. Nor was it because of anything like a mysterious connection between brothers.

"Could it be that the Dimensional Door portal I sent him through just now helped him to learn the secrets of moving between the Infernos? Damn it! Find him, no matter where he is!"

I highly doubted that any ordinary Main God would be able to learn the secrets of Hell so easily. However, I sent out my senses and found out that Karwenz wasn't anywhere within the Mountain Inferno at all. Considering who Karwenz was, and the fact that Cynthia was probably hiding within his body, an ominous premonition sent chills down my spine as I considered the possibilities.

A freely acting enemy Main God would obviously be a major threat. While I sent my Wumianzhe incarnations to find Karwenz, I still had to concentrate mainly on Ladvioka who was right before me. That was because Envy's bone giant body might collapse at any

moment. If I could first kill a Main God and scare all the rest, that was likely to greatly increase our odds of overall victory.

"I doubt that Ladvioka has any more subordinates to send out. Since Ladvioka was originally an Inferno Demon, let me recall the Inferno Demons' most common abilities... Greatsword, Inferno Demon Whip, Meteor Shower, powerful melee fighting abilities, immolating self-destruction... damn it, a self-destruction technique? Ladvioka still has an ace as insane as self-destruction up his sleeve? A self-destruction from a Main God? If he truly kills himself in self-destruction, this Mountain Inferno, no, will the entirety of Hell even still remain standing?"

However, information that one of my incarnations suddenly sent to me made it so that I had to give up on inferring Ladvioka's possible remaining aces up his sleeve. Due to this sudden incident, I didn't have much time left.

"Omar, how much longer are you going to pretend to sleep for! It's light outside already, get up out of bed!"

While Roland was using his aces in an attempt to kill off the Lord of Putrefaction, the combat situation was secretly changing within the other Infernos.

The furious hound of Wrath was becoming ever larger and stronger as he continued fighting against the icy silent Chaos War God Donatis. But, even though Bastian's energy level had multiplied by more than one hundred times since the beginning of battle, there was still no difference in the fight at all apart from the fact that Bastian could now last several seconds instead of being slain instantly.

And right now, Donatis wasn't having an easy time, either. His constantly strengthening and reviving opponent was one issue, but the worse part was that reinforcements suddenly arrived for Bastian, making the fight two against one, changing the entire situation.

Hell Devil Marshan arrived together with a trident containing mystical energy that transformed into a meteor-like strikes, which kept aiming for vital areas. His devil claws that could easily tear through mountains became a weapon that could forcefully clash against the Chaos War God's greatsword. Plus, with his powerful physical body and the benefits of being buffed by Hell, even if Marshan's physical fighting abilities were slightly inferior to Donatis', Marshan actually possessed a physical body with better attributes. This caused Donatis to have a really hard time.

The Fourth Hall of Hell's Four Halls was the Hell Hall (Hall of Law). This was the headquarters for the Hell Devil's nobility, and the Hall Leader was the currently sleeping Little Tias.

Devil General Marshan was the first ever Hell Devil noble of Hell. Although Marshan wasn't at a Main God's level, he was still a warrior from Ayer's generation. With so many accumulated generations, Marshan had at least surpassed the so-called level of being a powerful God. And now that he obtained the Hell Devil nobility's responsibilities and Concepts of "protecting Hell" and "punishing villains", his power level improved even further.

Although Marshan wasn't a Main God, he was still an immemorial devil. As the guardian species of Hell, the devils would become unable to leave this dimension, but also gain the same undying trait as the dead souls here. This was why even Donatis started feeling fear—because he now had to face an additional opponent who was also undying and almost at his level.

Unlike Bastian who was still young and inexperienced in comparison, this wasn't the first time that Marshan had fought with Donatis. Demons and devils were mortal enemies, after all. Although Marshan was still somewhat weaker than Donatis, the fact that Marshan was undying more than made up for this difference. As long as Marshan continued trading injuries with Donatis, the Chaos War God would definitely die in the end.

Marshan's leader, Kamiltias, was still in a deep sleep. This was in

order to completely transform him into a Hell Devil. And as long as Kamiltias completed his transformation, without even mentioning the other benefits, just the fact that devils were already undying, plus an undying Main God joining the battle on our side... If Kamiltias finished his transformation, the entire combat situation would likely be changed.

This was no idiotic manga where the antagonist who was undying ended up mysteriously becoming super dumb, randomly being sealed away by the main character somehow in their confusion. When this former Devil King, who was now the leader of all the Hell Devils, finally woke up, an undying and incredibly sly Main God would become the greatest calamity for all the invaders.

"We just need to stall for time. Protect all the Infernos and the Four Pillars, and we'll be the victors..."

This was also why I had set most of the battles' objectives in Hell as stalling for time. As long as time passed, Hell would become more complete, thus strengthening the Hell Gods in turn. That would naturally be the best time to counterattack. If it wasn't for the Lord of Putrefaction going far too overboard, I wouldn't have used my aces.

However, it was precisely because Main Gods were so overly powerful that even though I gave all my transformation resources to Kamiltias, the speed of his transformation into a complete Hell Devil still remained ridiculously slow. Seeing how his boss Kamilitias showed no signs of waking up, Marshan, who was originally guarding Kamiltias, came out to help in the battle instead.

Even Donatis was starting to have difficulties against Bastian and Marshan that stalled him by taking full advantage of their undying bodies. If this situation continued, it was likely that Donatis would soon be forced into using his aces.

Meanwhile, Harloys and the God of Wisdom Kalumandas were currently sitting at a negotiation table in a scene that didn't seem to fit the battles happening everywhere else. They had such a wonderfully friendly atmosphere, and had just finished shaking hands after signing a five-hundred-page long contract... They actually used a magic spell to accelerate time in order to swiftly negotiate and determine the conditions of a contract!

And in the Gluttony Inferno, two gigantic beasts were currently tearing at each other. Both of them had their mouths on their enemy's body. They were both devouring each other and being devoured.

All magic spells and supernatural abilities were forgotten. Pure desire to eat ruled over everything here, fitting the basic dimensional laws of this Inferno.

An endless amount of life force constantly replenished both sides' physical bodies as they were devoured. Both Ah Dang and Garr constantly tried to open their mouths wider than their enemy, along with trying to create more mouths than the enemy. Both existences' countless eyes only saw each other. It would seem that neither of these monstrous beasts intended to leave the Gluttony Inferno before one completely devoured the other.

In a corner of this Inferno, the Queen of Temptation Ilmisya sighed helplessly as she watched this battle which only involved mutual devouring with no beauty or grace to it at all. She decided to change to a different battlefield that was slightly more cultured to support the fight.

But suddenly, a young-sounding and anxious voice spoke up in her ear. She immediately thought of the young individual who had now become the master of Hell. However, his voice currently sounded panicked and hurried, a rarity.

"Ilmisya, go to the Pillar of Ice and stop that person!"

Chapter 467: Lover

Hell's Seven Circles were now embroiled in an utterly chaotic battle where nobody would be able to predict what would happen next.

"How did he know...?"

When one of my incarnations informed me that Karwenz was actually right before the Pillar of Ice, I felt that it was inconceivable after my first reaction of shock.

The Four Pillars were the core support for Hell, along with being Hell's only weakness. The main reason why all our dead individuals and existences were able to fight evenly against the Main Gods here was all because of Hell's dimensional laws supporting us. The simplest and most direct dimensional law of being undying gave us the confidence to fight on no matter how many times we were killed.

However, becoming undying obviously had its price. Hell's own support would also expose its secrets. Still, I intentionally concealed as much as I could, and I highly doubted that the Main Gods trapped within the Seven Circles would be able to find out about the true foundation of the dimension of Hell—the Four Pillars.

The Seven Circles of Hell, also known as the Seven Infernos, were sub-dimensions of Hell. Although they were all important, it would still be alright to sacrifice these sub-dimensions and reconstruct them if necessary.

The incredibly powerful and ridiculously difficult to kill Seven Kings (the Seven Sins) of Hell would doubtlessly be some of the best fighters in Hell. But if you looked at their overall strategic objective, they were nothing more than red herrings to mislead the Main Gods.

The Four Halls were the operating system for Hell. It would seem that the Four Halls had many functions, and the Hell Gods and devils were guarding the Four Halls, plus the Four Halls would be quite obvious to look at since they were connected to the Seven Circles. But, actually, the Four Halls could also be reconstructed if they were lost. Plus, the Four Halls supported and covered for each other, making them into the strongest fortress in all of Hell.

But, the Four Pillars...

"...Hell is still currently under construction. The Four Pillars right now are basically the providers for the four elements of hell (the construction materials). The Four Pillars are the source of all materials in Hell, along with being the core control panel. It will be possible to replace a destroyed Pillar after Hell is complete, but if we lose one right now, that will unbalance the elements, which will quite likely result in destroying the entirety of Hell that's been created so far."

Even without considering the chain reactions that were sure to occur, if we lost the Pillar of Ice, our undead would lose their physical bodies, greatly diminishing their combat strength. If we lost the Pillar of Death, our undying natures would be gone. If we lost the Pillar of Law, perhaps all of Hell would start collapsing as Law was the equivalent of Space in Hell. Since these Pillars were our greatest weakness, of course I would try to protect them.

Of the Four Pillars, the Pillar of Holy Light was at the very top of Hell. I had special arrangements there. Although it appeared defenseless, it was actually one of the safest. I wasn't worried about that one at all.

The Pillar of Death was the very source of the Hades Mist, as well as the greatest foundational block of Hell. It would be impossible even for me to locate it unless all the other three Pillars were destroyed. This was by far the safest Pillar.

The Pillar of Law was surrounded and protected by the Four

Halls. If this Pillar was lost, that would mean that the Four Halls and Seven Circles had all been broken through already. Trying to hold on anymore then would be meaningless.

It was only the Pillar of Ice that I needed to worry about... this Pillar was located deep within the Inferno which I presided over, the Indifference Inferno of Sloth. This was the fourth layer of the Seven Circles, the central layer. Every undead in all the Seven Circles would be given new lives and physical bodies by this Pillar of Ice.

Each Pillar had its own function. The Pillar of Holy Light was at the top of Hell, guiding the living and the dead at the boundary between life and death. The Pillar of Law illuminated the Four Halls, overseeing and ensuring a just enforcement of the laws. The Pillar of Ice gave lives and physical bodies to the undead in the Seven Circles. The Pillar of Death was the very foundation of Hell. These Four Pillars were just like different supports that created a house. It would be impossible to change their locations even if I wanted to.

By now, it should be apparent that I was able to arrange highly safe locations for three out of the Four Pillars. However, the Pillar of Ice was destined to be exposed on the battlefield.

I placed the Indifference Inferno of Sloth as the fourth and central layer, meaning that I would personally guard it. This would decrease the chances of exposing this weakness. And, I also intentionally changed locations to the Mountain Inferno because I had hoped that this would lower the chances of Karwenz discovering this weakness. Yet the Pillar of Ice was mysteriously exposed to him after all. Obviously, I would be shocked by this.

"...A traitor? That's almost impossible because so few know about this. In that case, does that mean that Karwenz is capable of instantly analyzing the foundational workings of Hell? That's even more impossible—just how would he have so much knowledge on how dimensions function? Hell even involves my knowledge from

Earth, which he couldn't possibly know about."

Schemers always had a bad habit. If anything went wrong with their plans, they would always overthink things. And, thinking too much on the battlefield would not only cause suspicion to be directed at one's allies—even worse was that fact that overthinking would weaken one's combat capabilities.

"Forget it, there's no time to worry about that now! Ilmisya, go to the Pillar of Ice and stop that person!"

Apart from the Hell Gods and Devil King who were all currently sleeping and completing their transformations, one of the only high-level-combat-strength individuals left who was free was the Queen of Temptation and Allure Devils, Ilmisya.

As I was the master of Hell, only I possessed the ability to freely allow others to teleport as I wished. With one snap of my fingers, a teleportation portal appeared right before Ilmisya. She would easily be able to reach the Pillar of Ice before Karwenz as long as she stepped through this portal.

Of course, I didn't count on her being able to truly stop Karwenz at all. I had given most of my Hades Mist to Kamiltias to help him complete his transformation from devil to Hell Devil. So, unfortunately for Ilmisya, she hadn't transformed into a Hell Devil yet. That meant she could only be revived as an undead if she died in battle here.

The undead bloodline was definitely weaker than the devil bloodline. Plus, if anyone was forced into a transformation where your very traits, body, and bloodline were changed into a completely different type, that would obviously decrease one's combat strength even further.

I had completely zero hopes for how long Ilmisya would be able to stall Karwenz, as she was well known already for being sly, unreliable, and never sticking to her promises.

"I can't rely on others, so I have to deal with this enemy before me as quickly as possible... Omar, just how long do you intend to sleep for!"

My angry roar echoed throughout the Inferno. The danger to the Pillar of Ice put me on a time limit in the battle against Ladvioka here. By now, I absolutely wanted to kill the Lord of Putrefaction more than anything. I also mentally prepared myself to sacrifice the entire Mountain Inferno if need be. I didn't have any free time to drag this fight out any longer.

"Love and peace! That's what I believe in!" a thick masculine voice responded to my roar, arriving together while flashing his disgustingly shiny muscles.

Omar showed off his muscular body which resembled Hercules from my original world. He constantly flexed all the muscles on his chest, performing exercises to perfection. After Omar became a Hell King and gained the buffs of Hell, it could be said that he had changed both the most and the least.

Omar was now significantly taller, and his physical appearance became even more handsome and beautiful. He even wore a pair of gold-rimmed eyeglasses now, and his eyebrows gave him the scholarly aura of a literary girl... But, what didn't change about him was his abnormal view of beauty, his even more ridiculous muscles, and how he loved to make all sorts of poses in nothing but his underwear! The abnormal fitness exercise routines he showed off as he twisted his body would make anyone witnessing the sight incredibly frustrated to the point where they would only want to throw a fit.

I had always felt that the unfortunate ones who were tossed into the Pride Mountain Inferno would be the unluckiest of all of Hell's sinners. That was because these sinners would have to undergo a double punishment—the punishment of climbing the mountains and also being forced to witness such a Hell King's antics. I felt that the second punishment was probably far harsher than the

Mountain Inferno's own mountain climbing punishment.

I felt stomach pains upon witnessing my Hell King suddenly jumping out of the mountains while loudly singing about love and peace. I took two deep breaths before I managed to calm myself. Only now did I learn that even the master of Hell wasn't immune to the effects of wanting to vomit.

"How can this be?"

Ladvioka was astonished to see that Omar had broken free. While Ladvioka's dimensional sealing spell wasn't as strong as the Seal of the Four Elements, his dimensional sealing spell wouldn't be weaker by much at all. Ladvioka even sensed that his seal hadn't been broken, so just how did Omar come out of the seal?

"Kill Ladvioka!"

Of course, I wouldn't be telling my enemy the answer. Since Ladvioka no longer had any subordinates, this was the best opportunity to kill him while he was down.

Ladvioka's attacks and even seals were ineffective. He could just die for me while being afraid and confused.

"Ha, you fool! This is a wondrous strategy by my Father. He already knew that all of you would know how to use seals, so how could he possibly not be prepared? Right now, this is a special stage of Hell's creation where we are in charge of guarding the Infernos. We are all a part of our Infernos. As long as we leave the Infernos for a certain period of time, our physical bodies will naturally collapse and die. After that, a new physical body for us will be born again within the Inferno! We are eternal, we are unstoppable, we are... Ouch! Father, why are you hitting me?"

Alright then, if it wasn't for the current situation, not only would I be hitting him, I would even want to kill him.

Should I say that it was to be expected of the incarnation of Pride? He was definitely an expert on how antagonists always died

because they talked too much. Not only did he explain the reason why he wasn't afraid of seals, he even revealed his weakness that he wouldn't be able to leave his Inferno for an extended period of time.

But judging from Ladvioka's expression of shock, just knowing the reason and weakness alone wouldn't mean that he would be able to deal with the threat before him. Since it was shockingly impossible to seal away his undying opponent, that meant he was being forced to the very brink.

"It's time to connect. Let this idiot know just how amazing you brothers are."

Of course, I didn't wake Omar up just to listen to him revealing all his own weaknesses. Envy and Pride were a pair of unique Concepts where the former stole from others to power up himself, while the latter ruled over others, strengthening himself and his subordinates. Their abilities weren't contradictory at all. In fact, from the very start, they would be able to complement and power each other up!

The bone giant lowered his head and swallowed Omar whole. The next instant, mysterious changes started happening within the bone giant as the Envy Transformer evolved once again!

As Roland went all out, intending on making Ladvioka become the first Chaos Main God to die here, Karwenz was currently smiling as he walked on a snowy path in the Fourth Circle of Hell, the Indifference Inferno of Sloth.

"This time, I've finally succeeded in scamming him!"

That's right, when Roland tossed out a teleportation portal in an effort to fool Karwenz into entering, Karwenz hadn't entered the portal at all. Instead, he only had an incarnation enter the portal, while his real body was traipsing through the endless amount of snow and ice in the Indifference Inferno, searching for the Tower of Ice.

Roland hid things quite carefully. The Tower of Ice was deep within the snow mountains, where the ice and snow were the thickest. Even if one had internal information from a spy guiding them, it would be quite difficult and time-consuming to locate the Tower of Ice in the incredibly large Sloth Inferno. This was all the more so with the fact that the Indifference Inferno's dimensional laws were highly unfriendly towards finding your way.

The Indifference Inferno, just as its name suggested, was a place to punish sinners who were overly cold, slothful, unfilial, and ignored their friends' and families' feelings, causing others to feel pain. The punishment that Roland set for the sinners here was incredibly cruel—to find one's own heart in their confusion.

"You don't understand how to love others or accept others' love. Then, what need do you have of memories and your heart?"

This entire Inferno was a snow-covered land with plains, snow mountains, and hills. However, the entire environment and scenery was all of one color. No matter where you looked, you would only see snow white. This was a natural maze.

And, the sinners' hearts would be cut up into countless tiny pieces that the devils would then randomly throw into different locations. The souls that lost their hearts would also constantly lose their memories. They would have to locate all the pieces of their heart before they completely forgot who they were. Only then would they be able to recover their past memories.

As for whether anyone ever managed to find all the pieces of their heart? That would probably be no one.

This punishment didn't appear to be that cruel at all. But in the future, it became known as the cruelest punishment in the Seven Circles of Hell. For now, there was no need to go into its cruelties and the designer's vicious intentions, since that wouldn't be the focus of the story right now. Just this natural maze alone made Karwenz, who had poor sense of direction, have great difficulties.

Right before he exploded in anger due to the constant unchanging snow before him, Karwenz finally met the first person who voluntarily greeted him. The tall Queen of Allure Devils smiled and waved at him. Just the waves she sent out from her hand waving dispelled the ice and snow that was present everywhere.

"Ha, I've finally met someone. Could you please take me to the Tower of Ice, dear beauty?"

As I watched this scene through an incarnation, Karwenz appeared to be smiling quite foolishly. His words sounded like a taunt that would certainly earn him Ilmisya's ire. However, what happened next made me feel like I was the true idiot instead.

Ilmisya, the Queen of Temptation, answered quite directly. She directly jumped on Karwenz, but in a gentle hug of his shorter body. She then directly lowered her head and kissed him.

I was shocked by the amount of tongue they shared with each other in that passionate kiss. Ilmisya's next lovey-dovey response made me almost choke to death.

"Of course I can. I'm waiting here just to show you the way, my dear prince, my most intimate boyfriend, my cutest lover."

Chapter 468: Beast of Armageddon

"Boss Ayer, you left me a pitfall!"

Of course, I wouldn't suspect Ayer. He had already sacrificed everything for the sake of our grand scheme. But now, I knew who had leaked Hell's secrets to Karwenz.

"Ilmisya! You dare to betray me?"

I was filled with regret, but there was no such thing in the world such as medicine which could cure regrets. Perhaps I had overly believed in Ayer's abilities. I never expected that even Ayer would misread someone. Not all of the four Devil Lords he brought were solidly allied with us. There was actually a traitor among Ayer's allies!

Even without Ayer's promises, the other three Devil Lords had all shown their utmost sincerity.

The most ancient Devil Lord, the Devil King Kamiltias, Lord of Lies, as well as Marshan, the Devil Lord of Rebellion, used concrete actions to show their sincerity. They already transformed themselves into Hell Devils, meaning that they were now the protectors of Hell and the new Cycle of Reincarnation. This was the equivalent of tying their future to Hell for all eternity. It would be impossible for them to betray Hell.

Heimor, the Lord of Despair, was still in the mortal plane and hadn't come to Hell. However, he had given me the Queen of Storms' divine power—the best sign of his loyalty as this meant he was directly betraying the Chaos Faction. Ayer even personally handed over some major tasks to complete in the mortal plane to Heimor. Evidently, the Lord of Despair was trustworthy as well. These three Devil Lords' sincerity and Ayer's trust in them caused me to forget about the lack of sincerity shown by the fourth Devil Lord.

Previously, I had been under the impression that there wasn't enough Hades Mist left to complete Ilmisya's transformation into a Hell Devil. But now, it would seem the truth was that she had been intentionally stalling her own transformation. In that case, her loyalty was suspect from the very start.

But upon closer analysis, it was also impossible for Ilmisya to be a loyal member of the Chaos Faction and a supporter of Goddess of Chaos Cynthia. That was because as long as she directly revealed our grand scheme to the will of the Chaos Abyss, it would have been impossible for us to even achieve this much or succeed in the first place. From the moment that she knew about our plans but didn't report them to the Chaos Abyss, she had already betrayed the Chaos Faction.

"Benefits? Faction? Just what side is she on? Or, is she on her own side?"

Unlike demons that were always in frenzied chaos, devils were sly and highly skilled at scamming and scheming. Since she simultaneously betrayed Ayer and me, as well as the Chaos Faction, the only reason could be a sufficient amount of personal benefits. Ilmisya wasn't a Main God, so the amount of benefits she could obtain was limited. She would definitely need a more powerful supporter as a shield to protect her. And, any person backing her up would need to be powerful enough to give her a sufficient amount of benefits and support... I understood everything as I watched Ilmisya and Karwenz kissing passionately.

"Karwenz! You dared to set such a pitfall for me! Ilmisya was loyal to you from the very beginning!"

Karwenz, who was currently using a normal-sized body, lifted his head out from Ilmisya's breasts. First, he proudly gave my incarnation a big thumbs up as if he was saying "Are you envious of me since you're forever single?" And then he changed his hand gesture to show me the middle finger as my incarnation instantly exploded and I lost vision of them.

"...I was actually fooled by a single-celled organism! I was actually scammed by a pig!"

I was now ridiculously angry, yet this only helped me to calm down inside. Seeing how proud Karwenz was made it obvious that he had planned all of this from the very start.

"Just what does he intend to do? So he's not solidly allied to Cynthia? What can he obtain from betraying her?"

Ilmisya knowing about our plans for Hell and not telling Cynthia meant that Ilmisya had betrayed the will of the Chaos Abyss. Naturally, Karwenz must have known about Hell and also not said anything, meaning that he also betrayed the Chaos Faction. The Abyss Prince betraying the will of the Chaos Abyss? This was such an unbelievable scene... Too much information and too many possibilities flashed through my mind. I had no idea what he was up to for now, but there was something I was certain of.

"No matter what he intends, I absolutely can't allow him to succeed!"

Sending more incarnations to follow them would be meaningless. I would have to bring sufficient strength to the Pillar of Ice to suppress a Devil Lord and a Demon Main God. But right now, I was still busy with the Lord of Putrefaction, who was no longer strategically important at all.

"Omar, use the chain mode. We don't have much time at all. Go ahead and overload. Stomp this worm who's lost his courage to death."

That's right, in my eyes, the current Ladvioka wasn't much at all anymore. Perhaps he still had a Main God's power level, but he definitely was no longer that former fierce warrior who was courageous and decisive on the battlefield. The most ancient Inferno Demon who had once ruled the battlefields of the Holy War had lost the courage to personally enter the battlefield. From the moment that he changed his style five thousand years ago to

start raising subordinates, he had denied everything about his past and started all over again.

Perhaps Ladvioka believed that he now possessed armies which would more than make up for the commander's personal weaknesses, but my opinion was that he had split his efforts in half. Not only that, half of his efforts now concentrated on something completely unrelated to his natural talents as an Inferno Demon. Perhaps his dominating power level and the long amount of time indeed helped him to obtain bountiful harvests from raising his armies, but taking such a path that would clash with his natural talents would definitely have lower efficiency.

It was meaningless to comment on right or wrong for the paths others took. For instance, elves typically studied both magic and physical combat, and were more than capable of easily defeating ordinary human mages and warriors, thanks to the elves' natural talents and long lifespan. But right now, Ladvioka had been cut off from all the dimensions under his control. His armies had all been killed by the Mountain Inferno and the dimensional laws of Hell, with many former subordinates even willingly joining my side. Now, Ladvioka was indeed the weakest Main God in all of Hell. He could be killed!

"Don't mind any consequences or how high of a price we have to pay. Kill Ladvioka!"

My order surprised Omar, but he didn't hesitate at all as he jumped within the bone giant.

"Slaughter! Destroy... I've never felt so powerful before."

The bone giant's pure desire to slaughter was now under the control of logic and reason again. The bone giant with Marsolit at its core would only be capable of maintaining the most basic desire to do battle. But once Omar entered, he took over the bone giant's thoughts, while Marsolit was able to concentrate entirely on the body. This helped the bone giant to be reborn.

Omar was an emperor to the undead to begin with. All the undead connected to him would become a part of him. It was impossible for Marsolit to compare to Omar in calculation abilities. To use an analogy that might not necessarily be accurate, if I compared the Seven Original Sins and their complete connections to a person's body, then "Envy" Marsolit would be the spine and nerves acting as connectors, while "Pride" Omar would be the brain controlling all of the body's actions.

The haphazardly put together bone giant was only capable of instinctive movement. But now that it had a brain controlling its body, it would become capable of expert movements for its slaughtering. Perhaps Omar himself wasn't strong enough to support such a powerful physical body, but "the stronger and more numerous the undead that he ruled over, the more powerful Omar himself would become" was his natural talent ability. This made Omar into the strongest possible CPU and stabilizer.

But, just this alone would still be insufficient to kill a Main God. He would have to become even stronger in order to win!

There would be no time for idle thoughts when facing a Main God level opponent. I got rid of all idle thoughts, lowered my head, and softly touched where I was currently standing—the bone giant's skull.

"Envy."

"Pride."

"Oh, I almost forgot. Sloth..."

A tremendous amount of Hell's divine power transformed into actual "Concepts" that were purple, green, and blue. These three colors represented three different aspects of the soul, three sides of my own soul. These three aspects all joined within the bone giant.

The bone giant's entire body distorted and changed; thick bone needles began growing out of the limb bones, the right fist became

distortedly sharp, while the legs began to lighten. A tailbone began growing, while wings appeared on its back. This monstrosity was now different from how it previously put itself together through instincts alone. It was now perfecting its own physical body, or perhaps more accurately, evolving!

Previously, I'd mentioned how power levels represented how much of one's own potential a person had made use of. Saint rank represented a clear personal path and a "perfect future"—the Soul World. The next rank up, Myth rank, represented being able to project one's personal concept into something physical and real, perfecting one's own path in reality.

This was something incredibly difficult. The great majority of swordsmen would choose to project their own concepts into their personal weapons. This would help to concretely increase their combat strength as well as continuously improve one's own understanding of their personal "Concept". The end result was that large amounts of powerful weapons were created—the so-called Myth rank weapons. And as the weapons' masters progressed in power level, the weapons were also capable of evolving to reach SemiGod rank.

Of course, projecting one's personal Concept wasn't limited to only weapons. Some Myth-ranked individuals would even choose to project their personal Concepts into their own physical bodies, strengthening themselves and improving their supernatural abilities. Others melded their personal Concepts with their Soul Worlds, greatly magnifying their Soul Worlds' effects. Still, the publicly recognized safest method with the least side effects was to imbue one's personal Concept into a personal weapon... the main reason for this was that if one made any mistakes, it would be possible to start over again.

I was someone who had previously achieved the rank of SemiGod. Back when I was at Myth rank, the Concepts I had greatest mastery over would be "Death" and "Soul". That was how

the now famous "Staff of Yongye" came to be. And this time, when I entered this power level and above again, the "Seven Original Sins" became the Concepts I chose to emphasize the most here in Hell.

"Imbuing my 'Concept' into my personal weapon? That would be such a waste. Take a look at my children. They're the best vessels for accepting my power. My children, I give you the blessings of Envy, Sloth, and Pride. Evolve! Surpass the limits of this world!"

The undead creations of the Seven Original Sins combined with the Concepts of the Seven Original Sins. What better combination could there possibly be? The three powers of Envy, Pride, and Sloth began to strengthen and distort the bone giant monster. The overly high speed of evolution still didn't satisfy the bone monster, as its abnormal bones suddenly wrapped around itself and the bone giant became a bone egg as it continued to greatly evolve itself.

Ladvioka didn't have the habit of simply idling while watching his enemy finish their combat preparations. He once again attacked with his greatsword and Inferno Demon whip. However, his Inferno Demon whip was suddenly grabbed by a large hand that appeared from nowhere, while his greatsword was unable to even shatter the bones surrounding and protecting the egg. The egg then cracked and revealed a single eye that glowed red while staring at him, causing Ladvioka to feel a mysterious fear as if his death was staring at him.

The bone egg creature tugged, flung, and hit. The gigantic Ladvioka didn't even have time to let go of his Inferno Demon whip before he was flung onto the ground as if he was nothing more than a clumsy and pudgy chicken.

"Envy, I bless you with the ability to be compatible with all energy types and biological structures. Your path of evolution is pathless. You are destined to become the very top of the food chain. You shall toss the so-called theory of evolution into the trash heap!"

What monstrosity revealed itself from the bone egg? Its entire body was crafted out of bone. However, its left bone wing resembled a dragon's, while its right bone wing resembled a demon's. Its tiger-shaped skull had a single horn that was gathering a frightening amount of energy. The flames within its eyes possessed the power of a forbidden spell that could steal one's soul. One incredibly distorted arm was shaped like a hammer, while the other arm was simply a dragon's head that desired to tear into meat. And if it wasn't for its tremendous dragon tail that swung between the mountains, it would probably be impossible for such a creature to maintain its center of gravity.

"Pride, I bless you with the steadiest soul and greatest physical body. You are the amalgamation of countless souls and physical bodies. Only the will of the very highest level will be able to rule those countless souls, allowing this monster that shouldn't possibly exist to act according to an individual's will. Omar! My undead child, I have given you the greatest stage to show your talents on. Show me, prove to me that you are my most outstanding child!"

Soulfire lit up within the tremendous beast, which actually managed to move as dexterously as a martial arts master. With one sidestep, it arrived next to its prey, and the next moment, it lifted its hammer arm and smashed viciously at the Demon Lord collapsed on the ground.

"Ahh! Damn it all!"

The venerated Demon Lord showed us all just how a ball-shaped object would roll. The heavy hammer arm didn't hit its target, simply brushing by Ladvioka instead, causing him to howl in pain as he lost his right hand. But, this was only the beginning.

"Sloth, I bless you with the memories and soul to heartlessly slaughter. You shall become the purest slaughter and judge of all."

A silver holy light descended upon the tremendous beast. By only

pointing, silver chains suddenly bound Ladvioka who was attempting to escape. As the greatest Judge of Law, this tremendous beast was using the power of Law to judge this evil invader from the Chaos Abyss.

"You are judged to be guilty!"

The energy level coming from the silver chains had already surpassed any so-called True God. Ladvioka kept howling as he discovered that he was actually unable to break free from these chains.

"I shall name you... the Beast of Armageddon!"

Names represented power. True names represented the universe and the dimension's recognition of an existence. At this moment, the Beast of Armageddon suddenly flew over. Its terrifying imposing manner actually created a difference in power level that directly froze Ladvioka completely.

The Beast of Armageddon who would bring Armageddon to the Gods roared fearsomely, causing the entire dimension to be afraid and tremble.

This beast was no longer a hastily assembled byproduct. The energy level it possessed was incredibly destructive. Every single body part it had was all for the sake of battle. No, the most foundational change was that just earlier, it had been a temporarily assembled machine, but now it was a truly powerful individual that seemed like it had flesh, blood, and soul!

"Originally, there were 578 seconds remaining until its collapse, but now there's only 167 seconds. It's going to collapse even faster...? Still, what's mass-produced absolutely can't compare to custom-made. This investment was worth it!"

I just calculated the amount of time left before the Beast of Armageddon collapsed, and the resulting number of seconds was actually less than three minutes. This silent bone beast wouldn't be

wasting a single second. Since it would completely collapse soon, it would be fine as long as it killed a Demon Main God before it collapsed!

Even though Ladvioka was forced to the brink, he still didn't give up. But, the Beast of Armageddon before him was now beginning to enjoy its meal...

With 124 seconds remaining, Ladvioka lost his left arm, and his greatsword was devoured by the Beast of Armageddon.

With 79 seconds remaining, Ladvioka's head was twisted 180 degrees for the second time. He was no longer able to regrow his head this time, and he was truly forced to the brink.

With 46 seconds remaining, Ladvioka's gigantic body was ripped apart into 16 pieces. It became impossible to put him together again.

With 37 seconds remaining, Ladvioka's final Inferno self-destruction ignited the entire Mountain Inferno. This entire sub-dimension would have to be reconstructed. And, the Chaos Faction finally saw the first demise of a Chaos Main God in this Holy War!

Countless meteors streaked through the mortal plane. Ladvioka's final death screams caused countless dimensional masters to tremble in fear. The other Main Gods in the other Seven Circles of Hell continued fighting their enemies while in confusion.

Perhaps Ladvioka had one last trick up his sleeve, or perhaps a new Tiny Demon popped out somewhere. His soul didn't appear anywhere in Hell or the River Styx. But even if he was able to revive himself somehow, he would be forced to start over from zero again, making it certain that he would no longer have anything to do with this Holy War.

Meanwhile, in the Indifference Inferno of Sloth, Karwenz was laughing as he flirted with Ilmisya as they headed directly towards the Tower of Ice. Even Ladvioka's death screams didn't cause him

to turn around. But right now, a familiar yet also unfamiliar person appeared before him and blocked his path.

"The Marchioness of the Flame Sea? I never expected that my brother who's always so soft on his own people would allow you to enter Hell. Nor do I believe that you're capable of stopping us... Fine, don't glare at me like that, Sister-in-law Eliza. Don't you agree with me? My brother treats you so terribly, doesn't he?"

However, the person who appeared just like an "ordinary maid" gently shook her head as she picked up the hems of her skirt and smiled while curtsying.

"This is my personal choice. This time, I shall stand next to him for all eternity."

Chapter 469: Fire and Water

Inferno self-destruction was the most disgusting ability that Inferno Demons possessed. That was why adventurers would hate dealing with Inferno Demons more than any other demon. It was common to spend so much effort on defeating a high-level Inferno Demon, only to die as the Inferno Demon laughed maniacally and self-destructed.

In the battle between Chaos and Order, these red Inferno Demons that always charged forward in the vanguard, laughing maniacally while summoning meteor showers and hellfire on all the surrounding enemies were always a species that everyone would be afraid of. But, everyone would have an even deeper impression of how whenever an Inferno Demon was forced to the brink, a single Inferno self-destruction could create a gigantic crater out of any important strategic location, or transform an entire city into rubble, or destroy an entire army. Such self-destruction would kill all the heroes that had defeated him.

And the most disgusting part was that it was incredibly difficult to kill a demon. If the Inferno Demon self-destructed an incarnation, the self-destruction would have much less power, but the demon would only suffer light injuries to his true body.

And even if an Inferno Demon was forced to self-destruct his true body, it was possible for him to survive as long as the Inferno Demon made preparations beforehand. It was actually known that powerful Inferno Demons were capable of transferring their souls onto their descendants. Although this meant they would have to start all over from the power level of zero again, it wouldn't be that hard for them to become powerful again with their previously accumulated treasures and connections. Typically, an Inferno Demon would only require three or four hundred years to reach a powerful level again.

However, only incredibly few existences knew that Inferno

Demons would never choose to self-destruct unless they were forced to the very brink or had gone insane. That was because their self-destruction carried far more of a price than even losing an incarnation.

Self-destructing wasn't an ability limited to Inferno Demons at all. Plenty of elemental creatures, especially fire elemental creatures, had such abilities. In fact, many mages also loved to self-destruct if they were in an absolutely unwinnable battle. Out of all the self-destruction magic spells out there, a spell known as "Archmage's Final Attack" was ranked #1 in power for all self-destruction spells. After all, a mage's magic self-destruction wouldn't attack with only the power of their life force, it would also include the power of their soul that had gathered so much magic power over the years.

An Inferno Demon's Inferno self-destruction would probably be similar in power to "Archmage's Final Attack". That was because Inferno Demons also weren't self-destructing only their life force. They were also using their fire mana and Chaos essence, which meant that even if an Inferno Demon self-destructed an incarnation, they would definitely lose that amount of Chaos essence forever, leading to a certain loss of power level!

A demon's Chaos essence was an absolute necessity for a demon to evolve. Chaos essence was the greatest reward that the will of the Chaos Abyss gave to demons. This would be the purest energy of Chaos, as well as the energy source demons possessed which was equivalent to the Order True Gods' divine power. Losing their Chaos essence would mean that the demon would lose all those years of hard work and have to start over from the very beginning again.

For True Gods and God Envoys, losing an incarnation in the mortal plane usually didn't affect them too severely. While they would drop in power level, this could be made up for with time. However, a high-level demon losing a power level would mean that

his subordinates and enemies wouldn't possibly miss such a chance. That was why most Inferno Demons were more willing to simply let their incarnations die rather than self-destruct as an incarnation.

Only in a "factional battle" like the Holy War would it be possible to see large-scale self-destructions from the Inferno Demons as this was a weapon that could easily tilt the scales of any battle. Under the command of the will of the Chaos Abyss, the Inferno Demons didn't have any right to choose for themselves. Naturally, the Inferno Demons were used for all they were worth.

However, even an Inferno Demon's self-destruction which could destroy an entire army wouldn't be anywhere near as frightening as Ladvioka's self-destruction. He was a veteran Demon Lord Main God who had experienced at minimum two Holy Wars. His accumulated Chaos essence and fire mana would be incalculable. If he ignited all of this and exploded, any forbidden spell would likely seem like nothing more than a tiny spark in comparison.

"If I had a choice, I wouldn't have wanted to force an Inferno Demon like him to the brink..."

But with the situation at the time, the Beast of Armageddon was about to collapse, and it was a battle where only one side could be allowed to live. This dictated that I couldn't possibly hold back against Ladvioka at all. Holding back would be nothing more than suicide.

After he was forced to the brink, the oldest Inferno Demon of all unhesitatingly chose the strongest counterattack remaining in his arsenal. At that moment, the entire Mountain Inferno was vaporized, while I, Omar, and Marsolit were all instantly killed and entered states of revival. All of Hell itself shook from the tremors of that frightening explosion.

And this was actually the result of me going all out and not hesitating to break past Ladvioka's defenses at any cost. I forcefully

tore off an incredibly important body part from the Demon Lord Main God. If it wasn't for this, if Ladvioka had successfully completed a full-powered self-destruction, perhaps the entirety of Hell would have been vaporized.

"Half of the heart of the most ancient Inferno Demon. Hearts are a special body part for demons..."

When I furiously tore off half of Ladvioka's heart, it wasn't actually to decrease the power of the Lord of Putrefaction's self-destruction. I already knew that Ladvioka's self-destruction would absolutely send me back to the Pillar of Law in a state of revival.

I did it all in order to take one final look at the pretty figure who stood protecting the Pillar of Ice by herself.

But, I was no longer able to send my present over to her, which was why I called out a name forgotten by everyone, hoping that he would help me—even if he had a grudge against me.

Right as my tattered body was vaporized into dust by Ladvioka's explosion, I gave my final blessing as I watched Elisa standing in the snow.

"...Live, Elisa."

Her long silver hair flowed in the wind, and she was still as expressionless as always under her gold-rimmed eyeglasses. However, Elisa was currently in a terrible condition. Her black-and-white maid attire was tattered all over, torn by a sword. She was unable to stop the bleeding from her mouth. Her right arm was also completely limp due to a large injury that obviously caused her to lose control of her right arm. And, this was all the result of Karwenz's single attack when he had gone easy.

"There's actually such a large difference...?"

Elisa's vision was now hazy. Her physical body's injuries were only minor compared to the damage inflicted upon her soul. In fact, the Demon Marchioness hadn't even had time to show her

combat form when the Abyss Prince seriously injured her with one swing of his sword.

Although she still had the will to fight until the end, the tremendous difference between their power levels made her willpower meaningless. At this moment, Elisa even considered using an Inferno self-destruction. But, the next instant, she discovered that Karwenz even sealed off this possibility.

That's right, Ladvioka wasn't the only Inferno Demon in Hell right now. Elisa, the Flame Sea Marchioness, had obtained her power level through absorbing the Fire Elemental God. She was the combination product of Chaos essence and fire mana, naturally making her an Inferno Demon as well.

But currently, Elisa was far, far weaker than Karwenz was. She was a Demon noble who had speedily obtained her power level with outside help, while Karwenz was the spoiled child of the Chaos Abyss, favored by the Chaos Goddess herself—one of the two highest-ranked existences in Eich. If it wasn't for the fact that Karwenz had gone easy on her, Elisa would likely have died already.

Karwenz simply smiled while proceeding onward, while Elisa blocked his way yet again. Her eyes were still filled with iciness and logical reason that represented her will to fight until the very end.

"...Sister-in-law, can't you just obediently stay there on the ground? Don't make things difficult for me, I have important things to be doing right now. And, if I really kill you, my older brother will probably come at me with everything he's got..."

Karwenz awkwardly scratched his head, but then he suddenly started smiling happily as if he had just come up with an interesting idea. The Abyss Prince smiled as purely as if he was a young child, a smile that was somewhat embarrassed, awkward, yet also excited.

"...Wouldn't that mean I can finally see my older brother seriously trying to take revenge on me? Ha, I'm really looking forward to it now just by imagining it. Don't tempt me into killing you."

Karwenz slowly reached out with a frightening amount of pressure. At this moment, he had suddenly become unexpectedly serious. This sudden flash of inspiration in his chaotic mind started blooming, making him want to act on his powerful curiosity and expectations.

He really wanted right now to see how Roland would react if he killed Elisa. Perhaps, the unknown was the most interesting thing in life.

"...If you die, he'll probably attack me no matter what the cost. He'll probably come swinging his sword at me while filled with regret and hatred. Perhaps I should eliminate you right now just for this reason."

Karwenz's calm words seemed to announce Elisa's death sentence. But even so, Elisa still coldly stared at him with zero intentions of stepping aside, as if Karwenz was the one who was about to die.

"My little lover, please don't forget our goal. Getting into unnecessary troubles is a bad habit..."

However, the Queen of Temptations suddenly walked over and used a gentle hug to obstruct Karwenz's killing intentions towards Elisa.

"...Besides, we have a new visitor. Don't let him view us as nothing more than joke."

The Devil Lord looked at the Tower of Ice which was now visible in the distance. An unignorable existence had suddenly focused his attention on them.

Before Ilmisya even finished speaking, a blue figure suddenly

appeared above everyone. He was gigantic and wore an exquisite crown on his forehead. His upper body was extremely well-toned and muscular, while his lower body was actually a colorful mermaid's tail. His face was very handsome, yet he had a bitter expression. His blue eyes were filled with sorrow, as if he had just experienced the worst fate in the world.

He was clearly standing there, yet he seemed to be flickering between being physical and ethereal, impossible to determine.

He lowered his head. His hand was currently holding onto a red shard which kept jumping as if it was a living heart.

That's right, this was Roland's present to him, half of the Inferno Demon Lord Ladvioka's heart!

Inferno Demons were immune to all fire magic. Hearts were the energy source for all demons, so of course their hearts would also be immune to their personal element. After that self-destruction which vaporized everything in the Mountain Inferno, this torn-off half a heart was all that remained.

This blue giant now shielded Elisa with his back as he handed this red shard... the half of Ladvioka's torn-off heart to Elisa who was astonished to see all this.

"That person wanted me to give you this. Originally, I didn't intend to help him. Even though he revived me, he forced my little mermaid to die so that I could be revived. I was intending on having a reckoning with him for this. But, when I saw how stubborn you were, I felt as if I was seeing my equally stubborn little mermaid. That's why I'm helping you, rather than helping that heartless bastard."

When this blue giant turned around, his melancholic eyes contained sadness as if he had experienced countless tragedies. The next instant, all his will to fight transformed into a pure desire to kill. This was a divine might that seemed like the fiercest tempest, a pure power that would cause anything to shrivel in fear.

"A Main God level True God?"

Karwenz was astonished at this scene. He couldn't recall such an unknown Main God existing anywhere. A suddenly appearing Main God would easily change the overall combat situation, so it would be impossible to overlook any Main God from the very start. However, Ilmisya inhaled a cold breath as she was a Devil Lord with a long history who recognized him!

"Sidunwar!? The immemorial Ocean God Sidunwar! How can you possibly be alive?! You should have died long ago!"

Chapter 470: Hostage

The immemorial Ocean God Sidunwar, husband to the Water Elemental Goddess Aylos. It was said that back in the immemorial generation, he was the strongest Main God at the time, and dared to challenge the Goddess of Order's authority.

Vague descriptions like "the strongest" would always be unclear. But back in his day, he was the leader of all the Sea Gods, and there were multiple Main Gods under him. His power was more than sufficient to challenge the Goddess of Order's authority.

Unlike Gods from future generations that gained their powers through belief, the immemorial Gods had all obtained their power levels through their own efforts, making them have incredibly solid foundational strength. Since Sidunwar had multiple Main Gods under his command, including even the Queen of Storms, who was his underling at the time, it doubtlessly meant that Sidunwar and his faction had astonishing power that gave him the mistaken impression that he could challenge the Goddess of Order.

Of course, it was also said that Sidunwar was supremely arrogant precisely because of his overwhelming power. This was what led to his downfall in the end. And when he ended up meeting with difficulties, almost nobody other than his wife remained by his side to help him. Not only did his past subordinates not help him, they even attacked him while he was down. Although the two major factions of Order and Chaos would be responsible for bribing and tempting the other Gods to do so, it was still rare to see someone unpopular to such a degree.

But, regardless of history or legends, no matter how badly he acted, every story would describe Sidunwar as incredibly strong...

"Perhaps I can make use of his strength."

Unlike most people that almost instinctively worshipped the strong, personal strength wouldn't obtain my respect at all. In fact,

it was rather the opposite. The personality defects exposed by one's strength were nothing more than weaknesses to be taken advantage of.

"Although most love out there is unequal, it's quite moving just how deep Aylos' love is. Perhaps... I have an excellent hostage."

Yep, from a certain standpoint, I had already maxed my skill points in "ruling behind the scenes", "using carrot and stick", "kidnapping, scamming, and extortion," and other such antagonist skills. It would seem that my original wish to be a good person had gone off track from the very start... By the way, if it wasn't for the fact that I was always mysteriously treated as a bad person, I probably wouldn't have wanted to be a good person in the first place.

From a certain standpoint, personality decided one's fate. Reaching my level today was no coincidence at all... perhaps I was born to be a natural antagonist.

"Elisa, don't listen to Sidunwar blathering on. He absolutely has to protect the Pillar of Ice, more than anyone else! He'll never abandon the Pillar of Ice even if he has to die again."

Creating a physical body for one of the Gods of Hell would be no easy task. Right now, I was currently unable to move as I was still in the process of reviving. However, my will was able to transmit my words of consolation to Elisa, not even trying to hide my condescension and displeasure.

And I was indeed telling the truth. Since I knew from the very start that it would be possible to revive Sidunwar, of course I would account for him in my plans as I lacked top-tier combat strength.

In a way, perhaps I had indeed done something terrible. I made a trade with Aylos, having her sacrifice herself as the price to revive Sidunwar. And now, I created yet another unique situation where Sidunwar would be forced to fight for my cause... If he wanted

Aylos to revive successfully, he would have to protect the Pillar of Ice!

That's right, the Pillar of Ice was connected to Aylos' revival. By now, my plans should be obvious.

The Four Elemental Pillars were the equivalent of the Elemental Thrones in the Elemental Planes. Naturally, there would need to be the equivalent of Elemental Gods in order to control and adjust these elements. In the plane of Hell, that would be the Four Pillar Gods that I had previously emphasized.

It wouldn't be easy to reach the level necessary to be a Pillar God in Hell. As each Pillar God would be an existence controlling the entire Concept of one of the basic elements, the lowest requirement was that this existence must already be equivalent to Godhood in power, and also have his or her powers foundationally be about one of the four elements. The most important was that the Pillar God would need to be dead...

That's right, only a dead God or mortal who had an incomplete soul would be able to become one of the Four Pillar Gods of Hell.

This wasn't to force people down a thorny path; this was dictated by the most basic dimensional law of death in Hell. This was the same as how the Elemental Planes' Elemental Gods could only originate from elemental creatures. Only dead souls would be able to become a Hell God.

In my grand scheme, these dead souls would temporarily be stored in my soul ice crystals. They would then be combined and synchronized with the dimensional laws of Hell, finally reviving them as the Four Pillar Gods and becoming the undying Main Gods of the Hell Faction. And, the price for reviving them from death was that they would all be destined to only be able to forever remain in Hell.

This seemed quite simple, but would actually be quite difficult to achieve.

There wasn't a single God in the world which possessed the Concept of Ice. The God with the closest related Concept was the Goddess of Frost, who was a Chaos Evil God. She was the very incarnation of a blizzard, and her favorite hobby was to freeze travelers that dared to travel through snow mountains by themselves. She was an insane woman who had an evil reputation rivalling that of the Queen of Storms.

The Frigid Nightmares were of the ice element and met the power level requirement as well. However, since they were special soul existences, they didn't even have the Concept of Death. Any Frigid Nightmare that was seriously injured would naturally disappear and be returned to the snow mountain. It would be impossible to use a Frigid Nightmare for my Pillar God of Ice.

And so, my only choice was to either kill the Goddess of Frost or to use Water Elemental Goddess Aylos as water was the foundational form of ice. That was because the Elemental Gods were quite similar to the Pillar Gods to begin with. The water element also represented the power of life, similar to the intent of ice representing life in Hell. Plus, anyone who was killed off for no apparent reason would definitely have a grudge. If the Goddess of Frost became one of the Four Pillar Gods of Hell, it was highly possible that she would choose to rebel and take revenge, which would be a huge amount of trouble.

"I absolutely have to force Aylos to die in order to obtain her dead soul..."

That was the foundational reason why I had to force Aylos to suicide. And now, the current situation's development had proved that my choice had been correct. I could now heave a sigh of relief.

Yet, choosing the candidates was actually the easiest part to complete regarding the Four Pillar Gods...

There had been no other candidates from the very start for the element of Law in Hell. Wumianzhe was the only existence that

had achieved Godhood by using the power of Law. And, this prerequisite condition was the largest reason why Wumianzhe ascending to Godhood became the foundational first step of the grand scheme. It was when I successfully had Wumianzhe obtain Godhood that Ayer finally made up his mind to support me.

Improving the Concept of Law, spreading the teachings of the Church of Law, sacrificing my own soul shard of Sloth to create Wumianzhe's body, and thinking of all possible methods to have Wumianzhe obtain ever more Divine Concepts and divine power... only I myself knew all the hard work and schemes that happened along the way.

And as judgement and death were the most basic dimensional rules in Hell, the God of Law and the God of Death would need to be incredibly powerful. That was why the Ayer Faction had unhesitatingly supported Wumianzhe in becoming a powerful God while disegarding the price. And as Ayer was the only Death God in the world, there were no other candidates who could replace him.

Of course, it was unknown just when the Pillar Gods would be able to revive. No, I should say that it was impossible to promise that they could even be revived at all. That was because the forbidden spell to create the entirety of Hell was based on nothing more than a theory. The probability of success would be so low it'd be impossible to calculate from the very start. Nobody knew just what would happen, and even if they could revive, they would definitely only be able to remain in Hell for the rest of their lives. That would be a great loss for the overall situation.

"The success rate for Hell's construction won't be greater than 50%, and the Hell Gods' chances of revival are also no greater than 50%... You're asking how I calculated these odds? Since things will either succeed or fail, the odds are naturally 50% with only two options... Cough, okay, I'll be a little more serious. Anyways, I've already done my very best to do everything I could think of to improve the odds. However, there's still just too many unknowns.

It's impossible to even try calculating the odds of success. But, the more we do, and the better the conditions are, of course the better the rate of success will be."

While humans schemed, their schemes' success would depend on the heavens. This phrase was probably referring to such a situation. I was always someone who told the truth, even if the truth didn't look good.

Naturally, the Ayer Faction Gods didn't want to see their boss, the strongest Main God of all, to meet such an end. They also considered using some death-related Divine Concepts to replace Death itself, such as Destruction, Armageddon, Guardian of the Dead, and so on. There were True Gods that volunteered themselves, but Ayer rejected them all.

Yep, Ayer actually could have survived. Even if he personally shattered the Cycle of Reincarnation and River Styx, as long as he was willing to lessen the degree that he changed things, that would also lessen the backlash he would receive. For instance, he could temporarily take over some other Divine Concepts, which would indeed allow him to survive, even if that survival would entail a tremendous price to pay.

Yet, Ayer still chose to personally die and become the Pillar God of Death in Hell. Why? Of course, that was to increase the odds that Hell would successfully be constructed. Ayer was the only existence that would be capable of providing the purest power of death. And not only that, Ayer even gave me his corpse in order to additionally raise the chances of success. His corpse was actually Ayer's secret backup method to revive himself if he ever somehow died. So this meant that if we failed here, Ayer would meet a certain death forever.

"Ayer has gambled everything on Hell and our grand scheme. Not only has he given up on his chances of being 'eternal', he's even given me his trust. He believes that even if he's no longer here, we can still complete the grand scheme... We can't possibly let Boss

Ayer down."

As a leader, Ayer never said any grand speeches at all, asking others to sacrifice themselves. He sacrificed his own undyingness in order to maximize the chances of success. This was actually the foundational reason why I would half-jokingly and half-seriously refer to him as Boss Ayer, an honor I reserved for no one else.

As for the final Pillar of Holy Light, while it may seem that there were many powerful individuals with the Concept of Holy Light, there were actually no other possible candidates from the very start.

Previously, I mentioned how Holy Light job class members took shortcuts with their path to power. Those existences in the realm of Godhood had actually all borrowed from the God of Holy Light's gifts to them. "Holy Light, please grant me power" sounded like such a convenient prayer that would indeed grant them power, but from another level, these powerful Holy Light existences were nothing more than servants for the God of Holy Light. They weren't independent existences at all. How could these powerful Holy Light individuals possibly become the Pillar God of Holy Light which represented Salvation in Hell?

"The Holy Light requires salvation, so Estrada has to die."

The letter I sent to Estrada which contained a soul ice crystal forced Estrada to intentionally choose death. Estrada actually smiled and faced death head on when unreasonably requested to do so by the disciple he was the proudest of. Estrada met all the stringent requirements.

Before he died, he gave a new definition to the Holy Light. He allowed his power of Holy Light to be stripped from him, and reentered the realm of Godhood with his own personal strength alone. He became a completely independent powerful individual with the power of Holy Light. And so, the final condition was met.

By now, countless sacrifices had been made so that Hell could be

created. Three of the Four Pillar Gods' dead souls were now sleeping within the Pillars of Hell. When they finally awakened, the invaders of Hell would then face the true rulers of Hell, Main God level existences! Of course, Wumianzhe should have originally entered a deep sleep together with them, but I was sly enough to bend the rules by entering his body with my own soul. Of course, the current Wumianzhe Roland wouldn't be a complete Pillar God with full power.

Just how powerful would the Four Pillar Gods be as Main Gods? Since there were no precedents, it would be impossible to calculate their estimated power levels. But as they were the rulers of Hell, and each of them controlled an entire element of Hell, they would have boundless potential. The moment they awakened, they would naturally change the entire combat situation.

The main reason why I chose to stall for time in every battle was mainly to wait for the Four Pillar Gods to revive. Forcefully starting up the incomplete Hell and its operations would also give power and nutrition to the Four Pillar Gods, which would speed up their awakening.

The Four Pillars were the strongest weapon of Hell—as well as the only weakness. Of course, this would be the greatest secret of Hell. But unfortunately, Ilmisya was actually a spy that revealed this secret to Karwenz.

But luckily, I was accustomed to being as secretive as possible and only told my allies half of what I was planning. Although Karwenz learned that Aylos' dead soul was within the Pillar of Ice, he couldn't have possibly known that Sidunwar was about to be revived by me.

Although I clearly sensed that Sidunwar had been revived successfully, he had remained abnormally silent since his revival. It was quite evident that he didn't want to become an unpaid fighter working for me. But since his wife had become one of the Four Pillar Gods of Hell, Sidunwar would be forced into fighting

for our Hell Faction unless he was vicious enough to be willing to leave his wife.

His silence and refusal to appear was his way of expressing resistance and dissatisfaction. But in front of a veteran villain like me who "had a hostage", that would all be meaningless. I broke through his attitude of unwillingness with just a single statement.

"If any of the Four Pillars that contain sleeping divine souls are destroyed, even if Hell luckily manages to survive, the Pillar God within it will certainly die for real. We won't have any more chances at using Creation by the Four Elements..."

When my words echoed on top of the Pillar of Ice, Sidunwar who had been in hiding suddenly appeared!

"If Elisa dies, then Aylos... If I don't have a girlfriend, then don't think that your wife will survive!"

And so, Sidunwar had originally intended on simply watching Elisa die and only protecting the Pillar of Ice, but now he made his move.

My words were quite obviously a naked threat. If Sidunwar had been in his prime and someone dared to talk to him like this, he would have simply killed that person already. But now, he could only obediently fight for my cause.

As for his previous words which sounded so "tsundere" in trying to explain his own reasons, cough, let us forgive him for that. Since he was an immemorial God, of course he would want to save face. He would prefer to say some words that made it sound like "Hey, I came here of my own volition." Yep, at the very least, he wouldn't want to allow others to see that he had been forced into fighting for my cause.

As for whether or not I would be worried that he would take revenge upon me?

"Antagonize him? Who cares! His wife's life is in my hands. He'll

have to work for me for the rest of his life."

Cough, it would probably be impossible for Roland to whitewash his name for the rest of his life—no matter how noble his goals were in the end. With his style, he was definitely just like the major antagonist, not to mention the lowest of the low: someone who kidnapped a hostage to threaten others.

Now, Sidunwar brought out his full power. Even without that bastard Roland threatening him, Aylos' dead soul was within the Tower of Ice behind him. He had no path of retreat whatsoever.

"...So, relax, and have that employee of mine be your meat shield. Since you want to become stronger, accept this gift of mine."

I sent all this information to Elisa's mind as well. While she was angry that Roland had hid so much information from her, and how much of a bastard he was, the seemingly expressionless Elisa was also secretly pleased.

"At least he still remembers my ability. I think this is the first present he's given me..."

Alright then, from a certain standpoint, Elisa's difficulties in obtaining love and just how low her standards were could be considered worthy of crying over. But right now, Roland had indeed just given her a great present that would be supremely useful to her.

The dimming Inferno Demon Main God's half a heart was given over to the Inferno Demon Marchioness. All the conditions were completed. As if fate had started a new cycle, the scene from Sulfur Mountain City was about to be reenacted as a new record would be shattered for demon evolution.

"...Awaken, my Soul Imprint, Marauder!"

Chapter 471: Catfight

"Awaken, my Soul Imprint, Marauder."

Elisa's command awakened the Flame Sea Marchioness's hidden power. The next instant, the marked heart of Ladvioka split apart and shattered, transforming into fire crystals that Elisa directly absorbed.

Elisa's Soul Imprint—Marauder. This was her ladder to the top.

Elisa's Soul Imprint was rather unique. Typically, this Soul Imprint of two beasts fighting would always be in a deep sleep and do basically nothing for her at the moment. But right now, deep within her soul, a bleeding dragon head was currently fighting with a black beast. These two furiously fighting beasts were trying to kill each other as they fought over this fresh half a heart.

Soul Imprints were each individual's own personal path that they desired to take in life. Every person's path would be different, so of course their Soul Imprints would be as varied and numerous as the stars. However, the most common type of Soul Imprint would be regarding one's understanding and summation of their own job class. Typically, the Soul Imprint would strengthen a certain type of ability. This might seem simple, but it was a concrete improvement. All of my four Soul Imprints were this type of Soul Imprint.

However, I said "typically" because that was only the most common situation. There would always be people out there that took paths which were far from ordinary. While buff-type Soul Imprints were simple and practical, they would be unable to change one's foundation. Yet, some people's Soul Imprints were capable of completely changing their fighting method and power type. There were numerous examples of individuals instantly reaching top level through their Soul Imprints.

The Seal of Unlimited Courage allowed the holder to become

stronger and stronger as long as he believed that he would never lose. This Soul Imprint helped Karwenz to never fear any powerful enemy, basically making him into the main character of any hot-blooded story. A certain Beast Tamer's Soul Imprint of All-encompassing Love helped him to obtain countless followers as if he was the main character of a legend. Diana's "Anti-God Fool" Soul Imprint was something that had never been seen before in history. Her Soul Imprint directly created a new job class and generation, pointing her sword at the Gods as if she was a harem protagonist in a Chinese webnovel...

Alright then, I confess that I indeed held a grudge. Compared to them, my Soul Imprint had only simple buff effects. This was basically just like a mass-produced version compared to a custom-made version.

And, Elisa's Soul Imprint was the most unique of them all. It was typically inactive most of the time, with no buffs or benefits at all. However, her Soul Imprint gave her the opportunity to reach a much higher level. It could be said that Elisa's desire for strength had created such a miracle.

"My very soul confirms that I shall follow my instinctive desires and chase after my dreams."

Thanks to the Goddess of Chaos, all demons possessed the ability to devour and evolve. However, evolving through devouring had its limits. It would be wondrous enough already if a demon could improve by a power level through devouring, and two power levels would be the very uppermost limit. More would result in self-destruction. Elisa's Soul Imprint was obviously an offshoot of her demon bloodline, yet it gave her the possibility to reach the top.

The Marauder Soul Imprint had a ridiculous effect. Anything that she desired, as long as it matched her basic nature, could be devoured and used for her evolution. Back in the day, she had devoured the Fire Elemental God and the Demon Earl as one was of the fire element and the other was a demon. And now, this half of

Ladvioka's heart that she received was both of fire element and a demon's. This matched Elisa's requirements perfectly. This would be the best gift of all for her.

Demon hearts were some of the best magical catalysts around. Many special mechanisms also used demon hearts as their energy source. In fact, demon hearts were even an excellent currency in the lower planes. That was because demon hearts were the crystallization of a demon's lifetime of power.

Devouring and evolving would forever be the main concepts of the Chaos Abyss. Elisa, who was favored by the Chaos Abyss, was the very incarnation of such concepts.

The demon heart was instantly dissolved as red flames covered Elisa. The next instant, she transformed into an ethereal fiery figure that started flying. This newly-born Inferno Demon went right for Ilmisya. Any newly born powerful demon would require battling in order to consume and adapt to its new power. Since the two Main Gods, Karwenz and Sidunwar, had started their battle, of course that only left the Queen of Temptations for Elisa to battle.

"You always walk around almost naked! I've disliked you so long for this!"

Alright then, Elisa's angry howl didn't even try to conceal her personal grudge. It would seem that there were more reasons why she chose the Queen of Temptations as her opponent.

"Heehee, an excellent figure should be shown. You must be angry because your man always sneaks looks at me."

While giggling, Ilmisya even proudly made a seductive expression. But right after that, she was unable to laugh any more. The ethereal fiery figure tossed out a flame spear that covered the entire sky, forcefully grounding Ilmisya right after she started flying.

"Cough, cough, using your power in such a roughshod manner is

such a waste..."

Although Ilmisya was covered in dust, she was still uninjured. Even if she was the weakest of the Devil Lords, she was still an immemorial powerful individual who had experienced countless generations. Elisa's flames had been dispersed over too large an area and didn't even damage Ilmisya's defenses.

Ilmisya was unable to continue her complaints as she shut up due to several dozen flame spears aimed directly at her. Elisa was wasting her energy as if she was the spoiled daughter of a ridiculously wealthy family. Yet, there was something faintly hidden within the flame spears that caused Ilmisya to instinctively feel threatened.

"...Hiding the fatal attack within a seemingly harmless large-scale AOE magic spell? Such a simple tactic..."

Alright then, Ilmisya finally shut up completely even though she typically had the habit of talking to herself meaninglessly in order to distract her enemies. The green mist that spread out from within the flame spears was something that even she didn't dare to touch.

"...Ladvioka's chaos essence? You really are going all out."

Chaos essence was the gift of the Chaos Abyss—this essence was the very core of Chaos. Chaos essence would be the accumulation of a demon's entire life, as well as something absolutely required for a demon to improve in power. But since Elisa was sacrificing part of Ladvioka's chaos essence as a one-time consumable to attack, she was basically directly exploding Ladvioka's core essence. This seemingly harmless green mist would actually be fatal to the touch. Even Ilmisya wouldn't dare to come into contact with it.

Elisa didn't reply as she instinctively spread out this faint green mist. Now, not only was Ilmisya avoiding the green mist, even the two Main Gods started reflexively avoiding the green mist.

The flames and the poison mist changed this snow-white battlefield into a dangerous domain. Elisa unhesitatingly went all out, causing the Queen of Temptations who wasn't highly skilled at direct battles to feel some hardship. Ilmisya tried her best to dodge everything, attempting to use a battle of attrition to waste Elisa's energy.

What Ilmisya didn't know was that this seemingly important chaos essence was actually useless to Elisa. However, Ladvioka's heart and chaos essence was actually split up into two major portions: one part focused on his power of putrefaction, and the other part focused on his foundational nature of being an Inferno Demon. While his Inferno Demon chaos essence portion was the best nutrition for Elisa, the putrefaction portion was impossible for Elisa to digest, so she might as well simply use it as a one-time consumable attack item.

Currently, flames were erupting all over Elisa's body as she casually tossed out endless flame seas and flame spears at a forbidden spell level. Yet this wasn't exactly a good thing, as this was because she was unable to control her constantly growing power which needed to be vented through battling.

Of course, what she needed to do right now more than anything was to find a place to properly digest and organize her new power. Unfortunately, that would evidently be impossible currently.

And so, Elisa simply adapted. She directly decided to toss out the impurities and uncontrollable new power as consumables. This basically gave her temporary limitless firepower as if she was using Soul Immolation. Plus, Ilmisya was the cautious type who preferred to avoid direct fights, so Elisa actually gained the upper hand for the time being.

However, their ladies' fight seemed far gentler in comparison to the two male Main Gods' fight next to them which was so direct and cruel.

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