

## **Chapter 371 - Dark Elf and Dwarf**



Whirlpool Forest of the Demonic Fog.

Two people were fighting in the garden where Sol and Shuuya had squared off against each other in the past. One was a dark elf, and the other a dwarf.

The dark elf held the word of Ancient Evil Dragon Gadorices in her right hand, pouring mana into its hilt with the sword's point lowered.

Having absorbed the mana, Gadorices's sword instantly expanded a thin film colored like fire from its hilt. That film spread from her hand within milliseconds, wrapping up her whole body.

Usually the dark elf had silver hair and bluish-white skin, but...with the protective field, the film of flames, having coiled itself around her body, she now looked special.

She was a Light Demon Lucival <Head Servant Leader>. Golden threads twined themselves around Rasheena's Bracelet which she wore on her left arm. She tightly grasped a jade snake bow (Vajura) in her slender hand which was likely wrapped up by golden threads. And a snake katana with a green blade was pierced into the ground right beneath her left arm.

The instant she laughed with her silver eyes trembling, she placed a foot on the katana, and kicked so powerfully off its hilt that it allowed a peek at the hilt's tang, jumping high up into the air.

She attacked the dwarf, who had been facing her, from above. The silver flash she energetically swung down from the right was aimed at the dwarf's shoulder tip. Following the silver flash with a slight delay, the green light of the beam-like bowstring, which was connected to both ends of the snake bow, was also swung down as if to pry through the median line of the dwarf's left body half.

This technique was called 『Mad Swiftess - Bow Slash』, an improved version of the Azmail Sword Style's 『Madly Swift Blade』.

Of course that magnificent two-chained sword slash technique of hers had its power drastically boosted in all aspects, including speed, thanks to her having evolved into Light Demon Lucival.

But that wasn't all.

After all, her childhood experience in the 12th Sorcerer Noble Azmail Household played a big role. That technique was clear proof of her finesse as someone who had been hailed as sword genius to begin with.

The dwarf answered with a steel-like, sharp glare even while hearing the weapons tear through the wind. Within the combined flashes of silver and green, the small man shifted sideways, and lifted the adamantine wood ax in his right hand.

Following that, he twisted the adamantine wood ax in his left hand while holding up its blade diagonally to the left to use it as a shield.

The dark elf's twin slashes were magnificently parried by the two ax blades at different angles.

This was an practical application of a Budant Clan's technique called 『Mountain Stabber』 for defense. Metallic screeching reverberated as blades clashed against blades, creating and scattering many stripe-shaped flashes.

The dwarf's onion-shaped hair got scorched as the flashes hit his head.

"Hot——," the dwarf croaked, but he had fully blocked the dark elf's 『Mad Swiftess - Bow Slash』. And then he screamed, "Nuoooh! <Great Battle Wave>!!"

At the same time, he sliced both his axes outwards, repelling the dark elf's sword and bowstring to the sides. Next he used the heel of his short, stout left leg as a firm axis, shifting from powerful movements to motions that would give anyone the impression of nimble attentiveness, and quickly rotated his body to the left like a spintop.

He, who was teased by everyone over his onion head, continued to rotate as if capitalizing on his small build, and distanced himself from the dark elf. After having created some space between himself and her, the dwarf stopped.

He slowly extended one leg to the front...and crossed the blades of his axes in front of his chest, glaring through the gap between his weapons at the elf.

Even that dwarf with the sharp glint dwelling deep in his eyes was anything but normal as obvious from him having parried a chain attack by the Light Demon Lucival in front of him. His two magic axes were weapons of Legendary rank. Moreover, earth-attributed magic gems had been embedded in his body through a special, secret enchantment art. He belonged to the Dwarf Clan Budant.

In the past he had participated in the independence from the flourishing elven 【Great Befaritz Empire】 together with his comrades from many different races, including humans and dwarves. During that independence war he accumulated experience on many battlefields, and obtained many military achievements, earning him the position of a general who led the special Black Thousand, a part of his dwarf clan.

On the other hand, the dark elf twisted her body diagonally with a calm expression even after having her weapons repelled by the dwarf, while killing the momentum of her attack with a sublime braking technique and lightly landing on the ground, starting with her toes.

Her beautiful, glossy hair fluttered.

The elf didn't try to pursue the dwarf.

While staring at the elf's toes through his axes, the dwarf praised, "That was a superb Magic-Combat-Style-based technique."

A significant amount of mana had been amassed in her model-like legs.

"...The same can be said about you as well, Hankay-san. Your rotational evasion looked just like Master's." The elf answered with a smile.

And then, after tilting her head as if to put her disheveled hair in order, her smiling expression shifted into one of grief. She lowered her hands, obviously releasing her battle stance...and looked up to the sky. Her silver pupils quivered as tears welled up within her eyes.

"...Is something wrong for you to suddenly look at the demonic fog's canopy, Viine?"

Viine and Hankay had been doing an intense martial arts training session. Viine had suddenly directed a sad look at the sky, but hearing Hankay's question, she first nodded, and then shook her head, "...No, thank you very much for teaching me how to counter ax wielders."

"Gahaha, no need to be so formal with me. I've pledged an oath of allegiance to Shuuya. In other words, I'm someone similar to a retainer for him."

"Master has..." Viine started with a quiet tone, revealing an expression close to crying.

"Hmm..."

"...left me behind and gone on a journey."

"At first I had planned to accompany Shuuya everywhere he'd order me, so I can understand your feelings. But, pulling such a face isn't good."

"...I know, but I feel lonely." Viine replied while baring her unfiltered emotions on her face.

"...He's family with whom you share a blood relationship. Aren't your eyes simply clouded, despite being a proud dark elf and his bloodkin, by experiencing a loneliness that seems to scorch your chest which is thirsting for his affection?"

Viine was shocked after having this pointed out to her by Hankay with a stern expression. She repeatedly blinked the eye that peeked out through her silver mask.

"...W-What do you mean?"

"You should put more effort into understanding a man's way of life."

Viine lifted an eyebrow at Hankay's comment and continued to blink, answering, "...A man's, you say? That only makes me worry more," while putting a lot of effort into returning her voice to normal.

"Gahaha, well, don't say that. I don't know whether it'll be much of a reference, but let me tell you something."

"Okay."

"...I'm repeating myself, but I've sworn my allegiance to Shuuya. I'm his retainer. But it's not like I

want to stick to Shuuya all the time because of that...he's got his own desires. Well, this also stems from my feelings having changed partially after having spent some time together with him, though."

"For them to have changed..."

"It's his martial arts. The martial arts that try to conquer their respective field. His universal attitude of genuinely pursuing strength...I think it'd be no exaggeration to say that he's seeking strength to become the strongest in this world." Hankay explained while holding an ax up diagonally. "Besides, do you know of any lords who would bow their heads at their retainer each and every single day before a training session?"

"Haha, no, he's unique in that."

"Right? Well, I think that's just another proof of his seriousness. I was deeply impressed by his attitude. Influenced by that, it made me want to get even stronger than I am now as well..."

"So you're influenced by him as well..."

"Yes. You saw that I refused Shuuya's invitation to become a Lucival when we had our ax training session, didn't you?"

"...That was unexpected. I had thought that you'd become a new blood family member like Kaldo."

Hankay consented to Viine's remark.

"Immortality is certainly tempting. But, I'm a dwarf of the Budant Clan. A special dwarf who had magic gems embedded in both his hands and belly...an abnormal dwarf. I possess this power because of that abnormality, and it also allowed me to rescue my friends. But, although I was able to save them...my pride is based on having been able to survive the war for independence by slaughtering elves. That's why I have no intention to change my ways. I probably won't forget my hate towards the elves either. However, when getting in contact with Shuuya's martial arts and nature, I also feel that it taught me the mettle to forgive my opponent sometimes...though if Shuuya heard this, he'd immediately refuse any participation in this."

"...Pride and forgiveness..." Viine muttered while looking at the golden titan threads coiled around her palm and wrist.

She revealed an expression clearly saying that her hands had been dyed in blood as well.

"Don't look so gloomy. It's not like I'm denying your dark elf society that's always engaged in a bloody feud. It might just look like that because of the bluish-white..."

"I was born with this. Still, I feel lonely."

"...You've been exchanging messages with him through those blood letters, haven't you?"

"...Yes, on that occasion, the presence of a woman..."

"Pfft...Shuuya sure is a sinful man..."

Seeing the chilly expression of Viine, Hankay felt how his spine froze over. With his face having become pale, he whispered, "There's a lot to be said about the way of men as well...", while placing his axes on his shoulders, and walking away towards the shed as if to run away.

"Anyway, I've left the materials from the game in the shed without sorting them, so I'll head back there." He said to Viine without turning around.

"You might get scolded by Mysty, you know?"

"I know. Mysty is quite picky after all... From the way I divided the feet of the white-footed foxes to the way I stripped the tree ogre's skin, she apparently couldn't stomach any of it... She bitching about it each and every single time...then again, recently her grumbling has decreased, I guess...she seems to be enthusiastic about the research of the epitaph."

The raw materials, which they had obtained through hunting, were strewn all over the shed and laboratory.

"Mysty seems to have fun. Well then I'll go have some fun as well and explore the forest while training myself by hunting."

"Roger. Please tell me more about the dwarves of the underground society when you come back. Also, since the stories about the strife over the huge underground lake Adoban were interesting, I'd love to hear some more of those."

"...Okay."