

Agnes fixed her gaze upon Darx, who stood amidst the chaos with an eerie calmness. His eyes devoid of life but burning with an intense red glow, a stark contrast against the backdrop of dark energy enveloping him.

Agnes stood there for a moment, analyzing the situation before her. Despite showing a calm and confident expression on the outside, inside, she is perplexed, trying to understand how something like what is happening to Darx is even possible. Agnes was trying to remember her old confrontations against demons, but in none of those instances did those demons make her feel that sense of danger that she was feeling now. What was even more perplexing was that Agnes knew Darx was human. There should be no conceivable way for a human to generate such an amount of demonic energy, even if by some means of possession. Yet someone who was challenging her logic and everything she knew was standing in front of her.

Agnes approached Kase without taking her eyes off Darx. Given the situation, she knew Kase was angry and with his pride wounded, but she also needed Kase to regain his composure so they could figure out what to do next. With a deep sigh, Agnes turned to Kase and spoke calmly, "Kase, you need to calm down. We're facing an enemy unlike any I've faced before. It's time to put aside your emotions and focus on the fight."

"W-What? I know what I'm doing! I'll take care of him, so stay out of it!" Kase said, sounding frustrated, "I'm an S-Rank! I'm not going to lose to trash like that!"

"Seriously... That's why I don't like dealing with children," Agnes responded without taking her gaze from Darx, "Do you think S-Ranks are invincible beings? If that were the case, S-Rank wouldn't need a party. S-Ranks are incredibly powerful adventurers, but they are not omnipotent. Your rank is useless if you can't keep a cool head and analyze any situation you find yourself in, in order to use your skills to the fullest while relying on your companions," Agnes continued in a calm but firm voice, "Believe me when I tell you that your ego and overconfidence are your worst enemies."

The frustration still etched on Kase's face revealed his inner humiliation, yet Agnes's words succeeded in calming down his agitation enough for him to regain composure. Surveying the scene, Kase beheld his wounded teammates. Gin was still reeling in shock from the loss of his skill while Arthur bled from his efforts to shield Celeste, who, in turn, was healing Gin and Diva, both more grievously injured than Arthur.

Kase hesitated for a moment, his anger subsiding slightly, "I guess there is no option..." He took a deep breath, looking at Agnes, "You can do whatever you like, but I will do things my way."

Agnes sighed. She had seen Kase's potential, but it seemed he still had to learn some things the hard way. Unable to waste any more time, she tries to explain the plan of action, "...Darx is clearly not the same person you think he is. Whatever is happening to him, there is no way a human can withstand that level of demonic energy without damaging their body for long."

"Are you suggesting we keep him busy while he destroys himself!?" Kase asked.

Agnes nodded, "Let's let Arthur, Diva, and Gin entertain him while I cover them, preventing them from receiving critical damage, and you..." Agnes paused what she was about to say momentarily and looked at the destroyed wall from where Syvis was also looking at her. Just by seeing Syvis, Agnes understood the desperation and anguish that Syvis was feeling, not knowing what to do. Without taking her eyes off Syvis, Agnes finished her sentence, "...And you find any chance to deliver a fatal blow. Kill Darx if you find the opportunity."

"You don't have to tell me that," Kase replied, "It's what I planned to do anyway."

"Only act if you are sure you will succeed. There is no point in risking your life otherwise. If you don't find the opportunity, we can just extend the fight until Darx destroys himself." Agnes said while returning her gaze to Darx.

For some reason, Darx had not attacked, but they couldn't waste any more time. They needed to act fast if they were to have any hope of overcoming this menace. Agnes gave a signal to Arthur, and he started the attack, leading the way. Diva and Gin followed behind him while Celeste, at a safe distance, buffed his teammates. Simultaneously, Kase vanished into the shadows, employing [Silent Death]. Despite his frustration, Kase was determined to prove to himself that he was better than Darx. Agnes held her ground, locking eyes with Darx. As Agnes locked eyes with Darx, she felt a chill run down her spine, sensing an unsettling intensity akin to a predator fixated on its prey. Despite her long experience and formidable skills as an S-Rank Gunner, she couldn't shake off the feeling of unease that Darx's presence instilled in her.

(It has been many years since I felt intimidated by an opponent.) Agnes thought, (Something tells me that this is not all the power that Darx boy has. We have to eliminate him as quickly as possible.)

As the trio closed in on Darx, Arthur unleashed a devastating series of powerful [Rampant Cleave], his greatsword cutting through the air. However, Darx remained rooted in place until the last moment, when Arthur's attack was about to reach him. Then, his body became enveloped in crackling dark electricity using Gin's stolen skill. One second, Darx was in front of Arthur, and in the next blink, Darx disappeared from Arthur's sight, leaving an area of electricity in his place. Darx moved at a speed almost imperceptible to everyone's eyes, using [Thunderstride] even better than how Gin used to use it. None of the three managed to react when Darx reappeared beside Gin, his sword aimed at Gin's neck.

BANG

A gunshot shattered the tense silence, followed by the unmistakable whizz of a bullet slicing through the air. The projectile found its mark, piercing Darx's hand and forcing him to relinquish his grip on the sword before he could complete his attack. Despite her age and illness, Agnes'

skills as a Gunner were unmatched. The bullet hit right where she aimed, giving the others the chance to counterattack.

Taking advantage of the opportunity with a roar of defiance, Arthur unleashed a devastating overhead strike, his greatsword cleaving through the air with unstoppable force. Diva followed suit, her katana slashing toward Darx's side with lethal intentions. Yet Darx reacted with lightning-fast speed. Darx dropped his sword to the ground, the clatter of metal against stone echoing faintly amidst the turmoil. Despite the bullet piercing through one of his hands, he still retained his other sword.

Diva couldn't see, much less have the speed to keep up with Darx while he used Gin's skill, but her instincts were her strong point, and she bet that Darx would attack her from behind, so she used [Dance Fury] behind her and her gamble paid off as Darx appeared in the path of her attack. With a howl of fury, Diva thrust her energy-laden katana forward, but Darx was too quick. He parried her attack with speed born of his stolen skill, and as the blades clashed with sparks of electricity flying in all directions, Diva lost the sword duel. Still, once again, Agnes, with incredible precision, shot, and the bullet passed through Darx's other hand, causing him to throw his remaining sword to the ground.

"[Rampant Cleave]"

"[Dance Fury]"

Both Arthur and Diva seized the opportunity presented by Darx losing his swords while Agnes's bullets found their mark, piercing both of his hands.

Darx's agility, fueled by [Thunderstride], enabled him to evade both attacks by leaping high into the air. However, while still in the air, two colossal bolts of electricity thrown by Gin and enhanced by Celeste's buffs hurled toward him at alarming speed. Reacting swiftly, Darx summoned his [Water Barrier], encasing himself within a vast sphere of water. The collision between the electricity bolts and the water barrier resonated with a loud boom, unleashing lightning in all directions, destroying everything in its path; the sheer force of the impact destroyed many windows in the guild building and neighboring structures. Despite the onslaught, the water barrier held firm, enduring the assault at least until two more shots echoed through the air.

Those two bullets passed through the water barrier as if it were nothing. One of the bullets went straight to Darx's head, but thanks to his increased reflexes, he managed to move his neck enough so that the bullet would only miss him. Little did Darx know that that bullet was a distraction so that the other bullet would hit him in the thigh. Arthur, Diva, and Gin surged forward when Darx fell to the ground. In response, Darx conjured two water summons to intercept their assault. Arthur's expression tightened with concern, well aware of the formidable strength of those summons. However, two more shots were heard. The bullets pierced through the water summons, tearing gaping holes through their forms before they dissipated into water, unable to withstand the impact.

One of Agnes's special skills which was the terror of many magicians who faced her. [Witchbane Bullet] A bullet infused with anti-magic properties. When fired, the bullet emits a crackling energy field that disrupts magic, allowing it to easily penetrate any magical barrier or dispel spells upon impact—a bullet capable of destroying anything created with magic. Added to that, Agnes is using [Royal Eagle Eye] at all times, a skill that honed her vision to razor-sharp precision. With enhanced clarity and acuity, she can see long distances even at night with unparalleled clarity, making distant targets appear as if they were within arm's reach. This skill dramatically improves her accuracy, allowing her to land shots with pinpoint accuracy.

Darx's expression remained stoic. Still, with his hands and thigh now pierced and bloodied, Darx fixed his gaze on Agnes, who was in the distance. He seemed to understand that as long as Agnes was present, his chances of mounting a counterattack and utilizing his restorative abilities remained slim. All of a sudden, Darx surged forward with scary speed using [Thunderstride]; Arthur realized Darx's intentions and swiftly attempted to thwart his advance with a provoking skill, yet to no avail. Agnes, witnessing this, and with her rifle ready, she aimed at Darx. With a steady hand, she fired a shot, her bullet speeding toward its target with deadly accuracy.

Agnes took a deep breath. No matter how strong he was, she wouldn't let herself be intimidated by a kid. Still, she was aware that she needed to end this quickly. She knew that in her condition, her abilities were far from what they were in her prime due to her age and illness, and her body would not be able to withstand an intense confrontation for long.

"I won't let you destroy this guild," Agnes whispered to herself, fingers tightening on the grip.

BANG

Even though Darx was approaching her at incredible speed, Agnes hit every shot, no matter if Darx was trying to dodge. One bullet hit Darx in the shoulder, and another, more worrying, hit him on the left side of his stomach. However, Darx didn't show pain or was affected by those wounds that would be fatal to other people. Darx threw water spheres at Agnes as a distraction, but Agnes destroyed each one with precise shots.

Darx finally reached Agnes, who was standing still, almost as if she was waiting for him. Darx formed a dark sphere in his hand, which elongated, looking similar to a sword with which he tried to lunge at her. But Agnes was prepared, swiftly drawing her revolver from her side holster. Her secondary weapon then used another of her skills.

"[Rapidfire Barrage]"

A quick draw followed by a lightning-fast sequence of six shots unleashed in rapid succession.

Two of the shots managed to hit Darx. Still, Darx tried to fight back, yet before he could strike, a sudden dagger plunged into his back. Just as Agnes told him, Kase patiently awaited the opportunity, and with calculated precision, he lunged forward, aiming for Darx's exposed back. This time, the damage inflicted by Kase was considerable, forcing Darx to attempt to get out of his vulnerable position. But Arthur and the others had already closed in around him. As the others charged at Darx, Agnes knew she had to act fast. She pulled the trigger, and the bullet hit Darx's chest, tearing a hole and leaving a smoking wound. Despite the pain, Darx tried to get out of that ambush, but Arthur caught him with his skill, throwing him through the skies and then falling spectacularly to the ground covered in blood.

The battle appeared to draw to a close, with Darx now sprawled on the ground, bloodied and weakened. Despite his efforts to rise, his body convulsed strangely, forcing him back down. As Darx knelt there, his demonic energy waning with each passing moment, the members of Oblivion approached cautiously, encircling him. Victory seemed within their grasp. Agnes positioned before Darx and stared at him. Agnes's face didn't show joy for having won, but on the contrary, it appeared that she felt pity for Darx.

"N-Now what?" Celeste asked.

From the shadows emerged Kase, a smirk playing on his lips, "Isn't it obvious?" He remarked, walking at an accelerated pace, approaching Darx, "It's time for him to die," With his dagger gripped tightly, he halted beside Darx, his grin widening, "I'll admit, you gave me more trouble than I'd anticipated. But a loser will always be a loser. That's where you belong! You're inferior to me! I've taken everything from you! I won! I WON!"

"Arthur, clearly upset, walked up to Kase and grabbed him by the clothes, "Stop this! What are you trying to prove?"

"What the fuck do you think you're doing?" Kase said, sounding annoyed, "If you don't let me go, you'll be next after I kill him!"

"Darx is no longer a threat," Arthur interjected, attempting to appeal for Darx, "We can't just kill him! We need to understand what happened to him. If he was being controlled or possessed, we must uncover the truth or..."

Kase slapped Arthur's hand, getting rid of his grab, "You are so stupid... I don't care what happened to him! I was going to kill him sooner or later anyway, so stop meddling."

"Arthur, reaching the peak of his anger, says, "Kase, you are a despicable person!"

Kase just smiled cynically.

Before things could get any further, Agnes intervened, "Arthur, stop!" She interjected firmly, "Regardless of Kase's motives, we can't overlook what Darx has done. Darx's actions are serious, and I'd rather not take the risk of letting him recover and strike again."

"But, Agnes..." Arthur tried to speak but was cut off by Diva.

"Shut up, Arthur!" Diva spoke, "I want to see that son of a bitch dead too! If Kase doesn't kill him, I will!"

"Enough!" Agnes said, sounding annoyed, "I already made the decision, so there is nothing more to discuss. Kase..." Agnes turned to look at Kase, suggesting that he continue.

Arthur had no choice but to look down and see how Kase, smiling, held out his dagger, looking eager to finish Darx. But just when Arthur had lost hope. Fire fell upon them, forcing everyone to move away from Darx. When the inferno subsided, Syvis emerged, standing before Darx with his three elemental summons encircling him protectively as if guarding him from harm.

"I won't let you kill Darx!" Syvis stated, looking at Agnes.

"I was wondering when you would intervene," Agnes remarked, her smile tinged with sadness, "It took you a long time to make a decision. If you're not going to let us eliminate the person who attacked our guild, what do you plan to do? Attack me? Kill me?"

"A-Agnes, you know very well that I don't want to do that, so don't force me," Syvis said, looking almost as if she were about to cry, "I'll take Darx with me and make sure he doesn't cause any more damage so please let us go."

"Syvis, What are you doing?" Kase intervened, "You had already agreed to stand by my side and lead Oblivon together."

Syvis ignored Kase's words and focused on Agnes, "Agnes, if you let us go, I will keep my word. I'm going to come back and fulfill what I promised you," Syvis said almost pleadingly, "Please... It's all my fault. I've already hurt Darx so much," She murmured, tears welling in her eyes, "Too late, I realized I loved him more than I thought. That's why if you don't let us escape, I'll choose Darx this time over you, Agnes, and I'll do whatever it takes to keep him alive."

"This bitch!" Diva yelled, "If she wants to be with him so much, we will kill them both!"

"I've had enough!" Kase exclaimed, frustration and anger evident in his voice.

At that moment, Kase vanished using [Silent Death]. Syvis panicked, not knowing where Kase went. But it is evident that he would go for Darx, so Syvis swiftly turned around to see Darx. To her horror, she saw Kase behind Darx, his dagger poised to strike the back of Darx's neck.

Syvis reached out her hand, attempting to intervene, but in the blink of an eye, blood splattered across her face, obscuring her vision.

"DARX!!!" Syvis screamed.

"WAAAAAAAAAAAA!!!!!!!"

A terrifying scream pierced the air. When Syvis finally managed to wipe the blood from her eyes, she saw Darx standing tall while Kase was on the ground, kneeling and covered in blood, without his right arm.

"Wh-at..." Syvis murmured.

Agnes and the others attempted to react, but they were paralyzed with terror as Darx lifted his head. In that instant, everything changed. The demonic energy emanating from Darx surged to an unimaginable level, far surpassing anything felt before. The ground trembled, reminiscent of the earthquake in the cave. A crushing wave of demonic power overwhelmed them, surpassing their wildest expectations. Darx unleashed a torrent of dark energy, his aura pulsating with an otherworldly intensity. Everyone's instincts screamed for them to flee, but their bodies refused to obey.

Darx, who had been silent since he was absorbed by the darkness, let out a scream that was more like a roar. With that, a horn began to emerge from his head. As the horn emerged, the demonic energy increased more and more as if it had no limit.

At that moment, Agnes grasped a chilling realization. Darx wasn't merely possessed, nor was he an ordinary demon. Only one entity could wield such overwhelming demonic energy. Yet, it should have been impossible.

Whether it was due to fear or her sense of survival, Diva was the only one who managed to move. However, she made the worst possible mistake. With katana in hand, she intended to attack Darx, but as soon as she took a step, Darx disappeared from her sight. Agnes was the only one capable of seeing Darx, using his hand as a sword, cutting Diva's neck, and decapitating her without Diva even understanding what happened.

Agnes understood her mistake in not killing Darx when they had the opportunity because it was too late now.