

## Affinity 171

### Chapter 171 - The Pants Thief

On a mountain, Grey could be seen with an annoyed expression while walking in a somewhat awkward manner heading towards a building that looked like a temple situated at the top of the mountain. He was about fifteen to twenty minutes away from the top of the mountain if he continued walking at this pace.

'Why are you walking like that?' Void couldn't hold it in anymore and asked.

He noticed that for some reason, after leaving the corpse of the youth from the Starlight Academy, Grey's walking movement changed, it was like he was almost forcing himself to walk, and he has been grumbling all through the journey. Even when he was fighting against the magical beasts on the way, he was particularly more violent compared to before.

"Damn it! These pants are annoying!" Grey said through gritted teeth while moving his hand behind him towards his b.u.t.t.

At first, when he took the pants from the youth, he thought he could manage it even though it was a little too tight making it uncomfortable, but then, the discomfort increased and the pants kept getting into the middle of his b.u.t.t.

He didn't know how many times he had removed it since he started the journey, and whenever he was fighting, it was worse. He couldn't help but regret the fact that he discarded his old pants when he took this one.

"I didn't think I'll ever say this, but, I miss my old pants." Grey said with a sorrowful face.

Void who was on his shoulder disappeared and appeared behind him, observing his b.u.t.t.

'They look perky!' He exclaimed.

"Huh! What?" Grey asked as he turned around to look at Void.

'Your b.u.t.t, this pair of pants is very tight, keeping it firm.' Void said seriously.

"..."

Grey's mind went blank, he didn't expect Void was talking about his b.u.t.t. He opted not to reply, he was already irritated by the pants, if he were to reply Void, then he might just explode and pull off the pants!

The duo continued walking forward with Void talking about the pants, and Grey moving his hand behind him every five minutes or so to remove the pants that had gotten into the middle of his b.u.t.t again.

Presently, the only thing in his mind was to find a guy he could rob of his pants, and it has to be one his size!

With a goal in mind, Grey walked as fast as he could, although his movement was quite strange due to the fact that he was walking in a somewhat bent position while occasionally stretching his legs.

Void on the other hand was having a good time laughing at him, seeing Grey's discomfort was quite entertaining.

'Imagine Klaus sees you in this condition.' Void suddenly thought of Grey's friends.

When Grey heard this, his body jolted, and for the first time since he knew Klaus, he was praying not to see him. Even though it had been a while he saw his friends, and he'll like to see them before leaving this place, but not like this. Given Klaus' personality, he'll mock him to no end.

Grey's movement speed suddenly increased, and he soon got to the building. He looked around, and other than some statues, an array at the middle which he guessed was the way out, he saw nothing else.

"That's it? No rewards or anything?" He asked while still looking around, hoping to find a reward with one of his hands going towards his b.u.t.t again.

On the castle he entered with his friends, after every trial, one would naturally get a reward, although, he remembered the last trial there was no reward. He couldn't really say there was no reward in that one since they found a bunch of things inside, not only that, but they got to hone their fighting skills through the repeated battles while searching for the exit.

Void looked around as well, 'No, there's nothing here other than the statues and this array.'

"Damn it! Such an annoying place! Let's go." Grey said upset, not wanting to spend one more minute in here.

They got to the array, and just like what happened in the hall, they were s.u.c.k.e.d in with a flash of light, disappearing from the temple.

The moment Grey appeared outside the castle, he noticed there were still a few beasts from the ones who chased him here around, he immediately turned tails and ran, after dodging the tail of a lizard that was swung in his direction.

"Void, let's go rob some pants." Grey said as he jumped over the walls surrounding the castle.

Void instantly got excited when he heard they were going to rob, this was different from when he stole from the Lightning Apes, and he couldn't help but think of how thrilling it would be to rob someone.

And so, two pants robbers were let loose in the trial land. In two weeks, they have robbed eight different people, with two of them being from the Qilin empire, of course Grey covered his face from them so as to avoid unnecessary trouble. Of the eight people robbed, six were beaten for refusal to comply with the demands of the pants thief.

Another two weeks passed, and it didn't take long for the tales of the pants thief to spread in the trial land, it was quite unbelievable that in a place as big as the trial land, of the small number of people who entered it and were still alive, at least seventy percent of them had heard a thing or two of the pants thief, whole a stark few of them had encountered him.

It was unimaginable that a single individual would be so famous amongst all the people who entered this place, and what made him famous was not because he was strong or anything, rather it was all because he robbed pants! Grey was currently the most talked about individual in the trial land and was also the one hated by people from all four empires, luckily, he covered his face whenever he was robbing people.

The only thing that kept everyone from ganging together to find him was that he didn't kill any of his victims, and he only occasionally took the items in their bags.

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Somewhere in the trial land.

"Hey bud, why don't we also go around robbing people?" A young man said with a hint of mischievousness.

Another young man could be seen with him with his brows knitted.

"To be honest, the thought truly is tempting. But... What if the real pants thief comes for us?" The second young man asked.

"We'll run." The first young man said nonchalantly.

The two young men were none other than Klaus and Reynolds, after the group separated, they accidentally encountered each other five days ago, and decided since they would be leaving the trial land in a month, they should stick together till they leave the place. They had been searching for Alice and Grey, but they had unfortunately not found them.

They had been hearing about the pants thief even before finding each other, and just a few hours ago they bumped into someone who said he was robbed not too long ago. Klaus felt it would be exciting robbing so many people, not just him, even Reynolds felt it would be an entertaining experience.

They had also heard that the pants thief was able to defeat someone in the Fifth stage of the Origin Plane easily, so they knew he was someone they couldn't defeat individually. Although, they felt there was a chance if they teamed up, but they couldn't be so sure.

"Okay, we'll do it. I've gotten bored here, this should be able to thrill me till we get out of here."  
Reynolds accepted Klaus' suggestion.

The thrill they felt the first time they entered this place was gone, so seeing an opportunity to have fun, Klaus took it without blinking. They soon started planning out how they speak to their victims.

"I have a suggestion, why don't we rob ladies as well?" Klaus suddenly said with a grin.

Reynolds gasped as he looked at Klaus with enlarged eyes.

"That would be even more thrilling! But... Wouldn't that leave the ladies n.a.k.e.d?" Reynolds asked.

"They should have spare clothes, have you seen any of the people robbed by the pants thief n.a.k.e.d?"  
Klaus asked after some time.

"Besides, we're only doing this for fun. If the ladies truly don't have spare clothes, we would leave them alone." He added.

After their discussion, another set of pants thief was set loose on the trial land, and this group even robbed the ladies! Within one week, this group of pants thief grew even more famous than the first one, and many believed that the pants thief found a companion.

Grey who had stopped robbing people was dumbfounded by the news of another pants thief and the only people who came to his mind was actually Klaus and Reynolds, he didn't think there would be anyone who would be that bored to start robbing people, and given the fact that they were robbing ladies, he felt there was a sixty percent chance he was right.

Chapter 172 - This Wasn't Part Of The Plan!

"Run!" A loud shout was heard from inside a building that was surrounded by trees.

Boom!

The shout was followed by an explosion, and the doors of the building were blasted away with dust rising into the air.

"Shit! How could someone in the Fourth stage be this strong!?" A young man's shout could be heard from inside the building.

Soon, two figures who covered their faces leaving only their eyes open could be seen sprinting out of the building through the damaged door. The figures were none other than Klaus and Reynolds, and behind them, silhouettes of two people could be seen coming towards them, fast.

In the past week, they had always ensured they didn't rob anyone who might be stronger than them, although fighting was quite exciting, getting beaten up wasn't. The duo was still in the Third stage of the Origin Plane, with Klaus being the most likely one to break through to the Fourth stage first. He had been in the Third stage a little longer before Reynolds caught up, and he could already tell that there was a high chance he might break through before leaving the trial land.

"Stop there pants thief! I've been searching for you two for a long time now!" A young man's voice could be heard coming from behind them, soon, the figure of a dashing-looking young man appeared.

The young man was handsome, although not at the level of Grey and Klaus, compared to others, he was very handsome.

The young man was putting on a righteous expression that one would think he couldn't condone anything evil, and behind him, was a stunning young lady.

The young lady had a slender body with almost perfect features and a round pretty face that would stand out even when placed in a crowd. Unfortunately, she was almost robbed by Klaus and Reynolds who didn't give a damn if she was pretty!

Just as they were about to rob her, the young man appeared out of nowhere trying to play hero. When the duo sensed his stage, they didn't bother about it too much since he was only a stage above them,

and the young lady was in the same stage as they were. Being people who were confident in their abilities to fight across stages, they engaged in battle, hoping to rob the young man as well. Only, things didn't go as planned.

The young man soon overpowered Klaus, putting him in a tough position, when the duo realized what was happening, they instantly decided to flee. Although, if things were to get serious, Reynolds would instantly summon his Elemental Warrior to end the battle quickly, but since they didn't want to kill anyone and were just having fun, he decided against it.

"I order you to stop!" The young man said while chasing after the duo.

"Is he normal?" Klaus who was running asked Reynolds who was by his side.

"I don't think so." Reynolds replied while sprinting into the forest.

Their voices were very loud, so the young man, as well as the young lady, heard them clearly.

"Damn it!" The young man exclaimed in a low and annoyed voice.

He was trying to put up a good image in front of this young lady so as to catch her attention, yet these two kept abusing him. When the battle was going on previously, he was unfortunate to battle Klaus, who would haul insults at him from time to time.

He had been trying to contain his anger so as not to show his real image in front of the young lady. But Klaus was driving him to the brink of exploding, given Klaus' use of words, it's quite amazing that the young man had been able to hold himself back till now.

"Hey, this wasn't part of the plan!" Klaus suddenly yelled.

"Huh!"

Reynolds, the young man and the young lady all wore a confused expression.

"Hey bud, what are you talking about?" Reynolds asked Klaus in a low voice.

"Just play along, I'm trying to make him look bad in front of the young lady." Klaus said with a cunning grin.

"What are you talking about?" The young man asked.

"Stop playing dumb, I only agreed to the plan because you said you'll give us some treasures, yet you're overstepping the boundaries." Klaus said in an angry voice.

If one who didn't know the truth heard him, they would truly feel he was annoyed because of how the young man was treating him, and the young lady was starting to have some doubts.

Hearing what Klaus said, she couldn't help but feel that what he was saying might be right, although, there was also a possibility that Klaus was only trying to separate them. But the moment doubt came into her mind, she'll naturally not trust the young man anymore, after all, the way the young man appeared seemed quite rehearsed, and even the line he said when he appeared was also quite captivating.

"What is he talking about?" The young lady immediately questioned.

"I don't know what he's talking about." The young man immediately denied it, and it was the truth, only, it didn't sound convincing in the ears of the young lady.

Anyone caught stealing would naturally deny it, so there was no way the young lady would accept it instantly, and he didn't know him in the first place.

"Stop denying it! You said after we allowed you to show your strength a little you'll let us go, but now, you're pushing us too far!" Klaus yelled, feeling wronged.

But he had a wide smile plastered across his face, it was just that there was no way for the young lady and young man to see it.



"Yeah, don't push us too far!" Reynolds added with a wronged voice.

"What are you saying!?" The young man yelled almost on the verge of tears.

He didn't know what they were talking about, he was only following the young lady, and he couldn't help but feel happy when he saw Klaus and Reynolds robbing her. He instantly stepped forward and said a cool line he read from a story when a hero was rescuing a beauty, and he felt great.

He even saw a glint flash past the eyes of the young lady, and he felt he was getting close to his target. But now, a single statement from Klaus had ruined everything.

"Stop!" Klaus suddenly yelled and everyone, except for him and Reynolds stopped.

When they saw that the young lady and the young man stopped running, they both stopped and turned around.

"I don't know them." The young man tried explaining once again.

But the doubt in the young lady's mind already overshadowed her.

"Thank you for your help, goodbye." The young lady said and left.

Although she didn't know if Klaus was lying or not, but she felt thanking him was a must since even if it might be a ploy, he did help her.

The young man's eyes turned red from anger and he looked at Klaus and Reynolds with annoyed eyes, he was incensed!

"You bastard! I'll kill you!" The young man yelled and charged at the duo.

"Okay, enough." Reynolds said calmly and his Elemental Warrior appeared behind him.

The young man who was charging towards them immediately stopped, and a look of dread appeared in his eyes. He didn't imagine the duo were actually hiding their strength.

"Why did you say that?" He questioned angrily.

"You're a moron, why did you keep chasing us?" Klaus asked.

"You've already gotten her attention, yet, you wanted to do more. If I may ask, what did you plan to do to us if you caught us, kill us? beat us? I'm really curious to know." Klaus asked while smiling but all the young man saw were his eyes.

"I... I...only wanted to teach you some lessons." The young man stuttered.

He knew any wrong words from him and he might lose his life to the duo.

"Oh really? Bud, why don't we do to him what he wanted to do to us?" Klaus looked at Reynolds, squinting his eyes.

Reynolds nodded with a chuckle, he also felt like teaching someone a lesson, and the young man volunteered himself.

Before long, screams of pain could be heard resounding in the forest, luckily, the young lady had left or the young man would have been badly embarrassed. After being taught a thing or two by the duo, they went on to rob him of his pants.

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"Haha, that was fun!" Reynolds said laughing.

"Yeah, if only we can get someone to teach a lesson this frequently, life would've been great." Klaus said with a smile on his face.

"Okay, now, where next? Should we continue with it?" Reynolds asked.

"It was fun, but, I'm already tired of it. Let's find the others." Klaus said.

They've already had their fun, now it's time to regroup with the others and possibly leave this place early.

### Chapter 173 - A Strange Reunion

One week passed, and the genius' who entered the trial land who were still alive had only two weeks left before leaving the trial land. The struggle for treasures intensified as everyone wanted to increase their strength even if it was by a small margin before leaving, so whenever a treasure was found, as long as there was another person in the vicinity, then there would be a fierce fight for it, there had been multiple cases where the fights ended with one of the parties suffering serious injuries, and in some cases, losing their life.

Even the pants thief who grew famous during the past month and a half had been almost completely forgotten, and since no one was being robbed anymore, they were slowly forgetting about them and all their focus was placed on finding treasures.

On different parts of the trial land, fights could be seen breaking out every now and then. Had it been when they first entered the trial land, then the genius' would try to keep their distances from each other, but now, some people were actively getting closer to others with the hope of stealing something from them. In the next two weeks, they will all use one week to search for treasures, then the last week would be used to travel back to where the formation was located in the trial land.

Every single individual in the trial land was searching for treasures, except for Grey, Klaus, and Reynolds. Unlike the majority, they were actually searching for each other. Even Alice was searching for treasures, so it was quite strange that there were three people here who weren't too interested in increasing their strength.

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On a rocky path, Grey could be seen gradually heading to the top of a mountain with Void sitting on his shoulder like usual. He had been tracking the pants thief for a few weeks now, and about a week ago, he felt he was pretty close to the duo, but then, he suddenly stopped hearing rumors about them, making locating them harder.

He had seen multiple battles start because of a treasure during this week, but he didn't even spare a glance at it. It wasn't like he didn't want to increase his strength, it was just that he hadn't seen any treasure that had piqued his interest, nor had Void told him about there being any good treasures.

"\*Sigh\* If I don't find them here, I guess I'll have to leave this place on my own." Grey sighed as he gradually climbed the rocky mountain.

He had been searching for the pants thief for a while now, and there was also the possibility of them not being Klaus and Reynolds, so there was a chance he was most likely wasting his time.

'How does the outside world look like?' Void asked curiously.

"Well..." Grey went on to tell him about the outside world.

And before they knew it, thirty minutes went by, and they were at the top of the rocky mountain. On getting to the top, it was empty.

'Looks like our search is in vain.' Void looked around trying to see if there were any signs of people passing through here.

But he unfortunately didn't find anything.

Grey also looked around, and shook his head in disappointment, "Guess we'll be leaving on our own then."

They started their descent, only, Grey decided to pass through the other part of the rocky mountain.

Two hours later, six kilometers away from the foot of the rocky mountain.

Two young men could be seen on a rocky plain, they were Klaus and Reynolds who were searching for Grey and Alice.

"I knew finding them would be difficult. Why don't we head back to where the formation is located, if we don't see them on the way, then we'll wait for them outside." Reynolds said while staring at the sky with squinted eyes.

Klaus nodded, he knew finding either Grey or Alice in this large place was going to be difficult. Of all the times that they had encountered each other, it was due to pure luck, and he didn't expect they would always be that lucky.

"What's that?" Reynolds pointed at a large dust cloud that suddenly rose into the air behind them.

"Seems like people are fighting again." Klaus said not really interested in it, after all, they had seen different battles over the past week.

"But not at this scale, maybe what they found is something good." Reynolds said after a brief silence.

"We passed through there a few hours ago, why didn't we find anything?" Klaus asked trying to dissuade Reynolds.

He didn't really want to go back, although, if Reynolds said they should head back he would agree to it since he couldn't allow his friend to head back alone. What if it was too dangerous? Wouldn't that put Reynolds' life in danger? At least if they were together, the chances of any of them dying would be minimal, unless the opponent was at least four stages ahead of them.

"We should check it out, you never know what we might find there." Reynolds said while heading back in the direction of the rocky mountain.

Klaus could only grumpily follow behind him, he knew if he were the one who suggested anything, even if Reynolds didn't want to do it, he would still agree to it, although not immediately, but he would definitely agree to it.

At the foot of the rocky mountain.

Beads of sweat could be seen dripping from Grey's face, and his back was soaked. Even Void had a serious expression.

They looked around vigilantly, but they didn't see anything.

"What was that?" Grey asked still not sure of what he saw.

The thing suddenly came out of the ground, with the body of a worm, a big mouth filled with rows of razor-sharp teeth, what looked like tentacles around the mouth, only, they were short given the size of the worm, and it also had a fin on its back.

'I have no idea.' Void shook his head.

The creature appeared and disappeared like it was never there. Grey's fast reflexes were the only thing that saved him, or else, he might have been in the stomach of the giant worm by now.

Creak...

Grey immediately turned when he heard this sound, looking in the direction of the sound, he saw the ground was a little higher than its previous state, it was like something was pushing it from below.

'There.' He informed Void.

'I know.' Void also heard the sound, so he was currently staring at the ground which had a bump.

The bump on the ground suddenly started moving in their direction.

'It's the creature.' Grey immediately attacked the bump on the ground, but it didn't stop it from moving towards them with increased speed.

With the rocky ground as a shield, the creature was almost untouchable.

'F.u.c.k!' Grey cursed and immediately tried escaping.

If he stayed in the same position, that meant the creature could easily come out of the ground and swallow him up, even if he were to die, he didn't want to die in this manner!

Grey was running as fast as he could, heading towards the rocky plains as he would need to pass through there before getting into a forest. He had tried turning the ground to mud, but because of the rocky ground, he couldn't, and that was the only way he could stop it since once it comes out of the ground, it immediately gets back in once it realizes it missed its target.

Unknown to Grey who was running as fast as he could towards the rocky plains, Klaus and Reynolds were sprinting through the rocky plains, heading in his direction.

One minute later.

Grey who had already gotten into the rocky plain was surprised when he saw the silhouettes of two people heading fast in his direction.

Klaus and Reynolds also saw the silhouette of Grey who was running towards them, but due to the distance, they couldn't get a clear view of each other.

The moment they got within eight hundred meters away from each other, Grey was the first to recognize the duo, and he couldn't help but feel a little elated since he had finally found his friends, but the constant creaking sound of something racing through the ground quickly took the smile away from his face.

"Run!" He yelled while waving his hands.

Klaus and Reynolds didn't hear him properly, but they saw him waving his hands, on getting a little closer, they realized it was Grey, and a smile spread across their faces. They even increased their speeds trying to get to him sooner.

But then...

"Run you morons!"

They were currently within four hundred meters away from Grey who was getting closer to them.

"Wait, why is he running?" Klaus asked.

Because of the joy of seeing their friend, they forgot one thing. He was running away, given Grey's strength, even if he was in the Third stage of the Origin Plane, only those at or above the Fifth stage could beat him.

"I don't know, but run!" Reynolds turned around instantly, heading back to where they were coming from.

Finding Grey turned into a somewhat bittersweet moment since they were most likely in danger, the funny thing was, they hadn't even seen what was chasing after Grey, and they didn't plan to.

Chapter 174 - Making Lava

'\*Sigh\* Once again, I'm running away.' Grey sighed, a little dejected.

If anyone asked him what he did the most in the trial land, then his reply would definitely be 'running away'. He had been chased so many times now that his physical speed had unknowingly increased by a lot. He's currently faster than his stage, that was without using any movements techniques or boosting his speed with the elements, if he were to use either one, then his speed would increase by a great margin, he might even become faster than people who are four stages ahead of him. That kind of speed was unheard of!



Grey has unknowingly started to grow accustomed to running away, but getting used to being chased wasn't a great feeling, other than the few Lightning Apes he killed alongside Void, he had not been able to get back at any of the beasts that had chased him.

Void looked at Grey and he couldn't help but shake his head, finding their current situation very familiar.

'I must say, you're quite good at escaping.' He said mockingly.

'You think?' Grey asked with a self-depreciating smile.

'I really need to get out of here.' He thought internally.

If he stayed here any longer, he was afraid he might get into another situation that would require him to run once again, and that was something he didn't wish to happen.

"Guys, run faster!" Grey said as he gradually closed the gap between himself and the duo.

Klaus and Reynolds who were previously over three hundred meters away from him were now only within fifty meters of him, and from the look of how things were going, it wouldn't be strange if Grey were to breeze past them.

"You bastard! What did you do?" Klaus asked.

"Nice to see you too buddy." Grey said with a smile while waving at him.

"What's chasing after you?" Klaus asked hastily.

He had sensed Grey's stage and knew it would be difficult for anyone or any beast even in the Sixth stage to cause any harm to him. But what he found strange was that he hadn't seen anything behind Grey, anybody not for the serious expression Grey had on when he told them to run, then he would have thought he was only messing with them.

Grey went on to describe the beast to the duo.

"Have you seen a beast like this before, or even heard of it?" Grey asked, hoping to get some information about the beast from either of the duo since he was clueless about it.

"No, this is my first time hearing of a worm with fins." Klaus said looking back at the fin which was visible in the moving bump on the ground.

"Actually, I've heard about a beast similar to this." Reynolds who had been quiet all this while spoke up.

"Oh, really?" Grey and Klaus turned their attention to Reynolds simultaneously.

"Yeah, it's said to only be found in the Southern Desert, ruling the sands there. But according to its description, the one found in the Southern Desert doesn't have a fin like this one." Reynolds told them what he knew about it.

Grey and Klaus fell silent, they had also heard that there were a lot of rare beasts that were only found in the Southern Desert. Unfortunately, it was a place they couldn't head to because it was located in the Azure empire.

Soon, Grey had caught up with the duo, creating a good distance between them and the beast that was chasing after them.

"So... What have you been up to lately?" Reynolds asked after the trio fell silent for some seconds.

"Nothing much, just, you know, running here and there. How about you guys?" Grey glanced at the bump that was slowly getting smaller, before switching his attention back to his friends.

Before he caught up with the duo, he had sensed the stage they were in and discovered they were both in the Third stage of the Origin Plane, with Klaus' aura being the stronger of the two, which indicated that he would be breaking through to the Fourth stage anytime soon.

'Since Rey is in the Third stage, that means his Elemental Warrior will be at the Fifth stage now. Amazing!' He exclaimed inside.

The sooner one becomes a summoner, especially in the case of an Elemental Warrior, the better. Had Reynolds become a summoner at the time he was in the Fusion Plane, then his Elemental Warrior would have been three stages ahead of him now. Even Grey felt a little envious of Reynolds, but since he had the Fusion State as well as elemental fusion, he wasn't too bothered. Not just that, but there was also a slim possibility that just like Reynolds, he might be able to become a summoner someday, although, the chances were very slim.

"Well...we've actually been..." Reynolds paused and took a glance at Klaus.

Grey looked at the duo and laughed, "Stealing pants?"

Klaus and Reynolds were taken when they heard him, not expecting him to easily guess they were the ones who had been stealing pants.

"What I don't get is why you actually decided to start stealing pants? And even from the ladies as well." Grey looked at the two curiously.

"We got bored, so when we heard someone was going around stealing pants, it sounded fun, so we decided to join in as well." Klaus explained.

'Tsk, if only they knew why you started stealing pants.' Void said with a chuckle when he recalled the way Grey walked after stealing the pants of the youth from the Starlight Academy.

On hearing Void, Grey also remembered that day and he couldn't help but feel grateful that he didn't encounter Klaus and Reynolds then, even Void was still mocking him about it, so it's easy to guess what Klaus and Reynolds would do to him.

While the trio was speaking about the pants thief, Grey suddenly heard the usual creaking sound that the ground makes when the beast is speeding through it. He couldn't help but turn to the source of the

sound and realized it was coming from their right, and he recalled the one chasing after them was behind them.

"Guys, there's another one." Grey quickly signaled the others about the arrival of the new beast.

"Oh shit! How could I have forgotten about that." Reynolds suddenly exclaimed.

"What?" Grey and Klaus asked at the same time.

"Wherever there's one of this particular beast, there's bound to be more, a lot of them." Reynolds said with a serious expression.

The trio was already over seven kilometers from the rocky mountain and was currently within two kilometers of the forest that was ahead of them. But they soon started seeing more bumps chasing after them, with some being faster than others. There were even two charging at them from their front.

Boom!

Grey immediately slammed a two meters earth mace on one of the bumps.

When the mace slammed into the ground, it sent a shockwave into the ground which easily hit the creature that was moving below it. The creature was only about half a meter in the ground, and although the shockwave couldn't kill it, it didn't have a problem hurting its soft body.

Seeing that it was effective, Grey quickly did the same thing to the other one that was in front of them, thereby clearing the way for the trio to make a getaway.

By the time they got to within a kilometer of the forest, there was already more than ten bumps behind them, all the ones that had appeared ahead of them had been taken care of by Grey, although, there was a time when one got close to them and came out of the ground with its mouth wide open, trying to eat one of them. But unfortunately for it, the only thing that went into its mouth was Klaus' huge ice needle and Reynolds lightning bolt.

When both attacks connected, the creature was fried by the lightning from the inside out, but it quickly cooled down from Klaus' ice needle, before turning into an ice sculpture.

Klaus had gotten increasingly better at using the ice technique 'Sub Zero' he got from one of the fifty-four paths, now he could even occasionally get the ice needle to the freezing level.

With the trio working together, they were able to fend off the beasts while edging increasingly closer to the forest.

Grey initially planned on using mud to stop the beasts before killing them, but then he remembered something, Klaus and Reynolds didn't know of him having the water element. Stuck in a dilemma, he quickly improvised.

'Instead of making mud, I'll try making lava instead, it shouldn't be too hard.' He thought.

"Once we get into the forest, keep some distance away from me." Grey ordered as they were about to enter the forest.

'You too Void.' He transmitted to Void.

Immediately after giving out the order, they entered the forest, the others immediately created a small distance between them and Grey.

"Phew... Here goes nothing." Grey breathed out heavily as he channeled his fire essence to his leg, then into the ground.

The others all watched him curiously, waiting to see the outcome of what he was about to do.

Chapter 175 - Change Is Constant

The bumps on the ground were moving quickly towards the forest, not showing any signs of stopping, and Grey estimated they will get to the forest within at least eight seconds.

Grey felt a little pressured since he had never tried doing this before, although it would be the same process just like when he created mud, the outcome would be different. If the heat generated from the fire essence is not enough, then he will be unable to form lava.

While everyone was waiting patiently, Grey focused his mind and channeled more of his fire essence into the ground.

Just as the beasts were about to enter the forest, Grey tried to turn the ground into lava. But things unfortunately didn't go as planned.

The ground heated up, before gradually drying up, all the grasses in the area instantly died, but other than that, nothing else happened.

'What's going on, why didn't it work?' Grey's mind went into turmoil.

He expected at least the same result as when he tried creating mud, but the results were far from what he wanted.

Screech!

A loud screeching sound filled with pain came from the ground, but it was a little muffled so the group didn't hear it properly.

"How did he do that?" Reynolds pointed at the parched up ground.

Klaus shook his head, indicating that he had no idea how Grey did it.

'I get it now.' Grey thought as he went closer to his friends, vigilantly staring at the bumps on the ground.

The reason he didn't get the same result as when he tried making mud was easy, mud was created using soil and water, but lava was made using rock and fire. He was currently in a forest, and the ground was made up of soil, not rock.

'I should've tried it while we were still in the rocky plains' Grey thought with a little remorse.

Luckily, the heat seems to be able to hurt the beasts, thereby making it hard for them to come any closer to the group.

When Grey was previously trying to create the lava, he channeled his fire essence to cover up a width of about twenty meters, and the beasts were gathered in a width of just over ten meters, so even after they moved a little further, they couldn't get to the trio. Before long, the bumps on the ground disappeared.

A minute later.

"Are they gone?" asked Klaus.

"It seems like it." Reynolds replied after looking around.

"I'm not too sure, we should stay alert." Grey added.

Compared to the duo, he could be said to have more experience when it came to these beasts since he encountered them before the duo.

They decided to stay for another minute, but when they saw nothing, Grey finally decided it was time to leave.

After the group turned around and started heading deeper into the forest, unknown to them, on the ground thirty meters in the west, a bump was silently moving towards them. This worm in particular took a detour around the heated soil, not just this one, the others as well.

The bump on the ground slowly retracted, leaving the surface flat again, but the worm was still headed in the direction of the trio.

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One hundred meters into the forest.

"How did you do that?" Reynolds asked.

"Just a little trick I learned here." answered Grey who was still vigilantly looking around.

He felt that his previous attack shouldn't be able to stop the beasts since it didn't cover a wide range.

"A trick, you call th.."

"Get back"

Grey held Reynolds by the hand and pulled forcefully, Reynolds who didn't expect Grey would pull him was unexpectedly sent flying by the pull. Just as he went airborne, the ground he was previously standing on cracked, and a worm sprang out from the ground with its mouth wide open.

Bam!

Reynolds landed on his b.u.t.t, but he didn't have time to complain about the pain, not Grey's freakish physical strength. He immediately stood up and seeing that the worm who wanted to turn him into dinner still haven't gone back into the ground, he attacked along with Klaus and Grey.

"F.u.c.k you! I don't even taste good, why would you want to eat me?" He cursed as he continued attacking the worm violently.



Before the worm could get back into the ground, it was unfortunately bombarded to death by the assaults of the trio, especially Reynolds' crazy attacks.

"Hey bud, it's dead, you can stop attacking." Klaus stopped Reynolds who was still attacking the worm, even though it was dead.

"Hmph! Ouch!" Reynolds snorted angrily, before crying out in pain while holding his left shoulder.

"Shit! Grey, how the hell are you so powerful?" He asked while rubbing his shoulder with a painful expression.

"Sorry, I didn't... Stay close to me." Just as Grey was about to explain, Void told him about more worms that were coming their way.

The trio stuck together and Grey channeled his fire essence into the ground again, heating up the soil around them.

Screech!

A screech of pain was heard once again as one of the worms was unlucky to be in the area Grey heated up. By slowly expanding the area, he gradually drove the worms back.

Twenty minutes later.

"That should do it." said Grey.

Although he didn't kill all the worms, the pain they felt from the heat should be able to keep them away.

"So where are you guys headed?" He asked.

"We were initially searching for you and Alice, since we've found you, I guess Alice is our next target. But if we don't find her within the week, then we'll have to leave this place without her. How about you?" Klaus explained

"Same as you guys." Grey said.

"Okay, let's go find Alice, and then leave this place. I've missed the Academy so much." Klaus was the first to start heading deeper into the forest.

"Yeah, me too." Grey and Reynolds said at the same time.

"I wonder if the empire would change after not seeing it for so long." Reynolds suddenly asked after they caught up with Klaus.

"I don't think so, we've lived in the empire for so many years and it didn't change, why would it change in a short six months." Klaus replied, he didn't feel there would be any changes in the empire.

"Because there are times when change happens instantaneously, without any warnings, it just happens. People who love you will hate you, and those who said they would die for you, would try to kill you instead. All these will happen in the blink of an eye." Grey joined in the conversation as well.

He continued, "It's not that they didn't like you before, it's just 'change'. That's why it's said, change is constant, you'll never know when someone or something will change, they just do."

"Well, I can't say you're wrong about that. But, I still believe even if the empire does change, there wouldn't be much of a difference." Klaus said.

"We all do." Grey replied.

The group fell into silence as they all thought about 'change'. What if the empire does change, what would they do? And how can they adapt to the sudden change?

"Hey Grey, you spoke like an elder just now." Reynolds decided to break the silence.

"Yeah, are you sure you're not over fifty?" Klaus added while laughing.

The trio soon broke into laughter at the expense of Grey, but he didn't mind since he joined them in laughing as well.

"But seriously, where did you hear that?" Reynolds asked after their bout of laughter.

"From a book I read." Grey replied after some time.

"It's a nice book." Reynolds said before keeping shut.

The trio continued with their search for Alice, but even after six days passed, they didn't see any signs of her. Although they were confident in the ability of their friend, they couldn't help but feel a little fearful, after all, they knew there were dangerous places in the trial land that even if they all grouped together and entered, they would still most likely die.

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In a mountain range deep in a forest at the Azure empire.

The compound belonging to Quinn's family could be seen standing proudly.

In a study room.

Knock! Knock!

The middle-aged man who was sitting on the chair raised his head, a hint of tiredness could be seen on his face.

"Come in." He said in a dignified manner.

The door of the library was opened slowly and the butler of the family walked in with his heads down.

"You summoned me, my lord." The butler knelt in front of the desk before speaking.

"Are they back yet?" The middle-aged man asked.

"No, my lord." The butler shook his head.

"You can leave." The middle-aged man waved him away as a hint of grief flashed through his face.

'Could it be that they faced a mishap?'

Chapter 176 - Delia's Choice

'Could it be that they faced a mishap?'

The middle-aged man felt a little worried, Quinn and the others were supposed to be back by now. Yet, there was only a week left before the trial land closes, but they're still not back.

Quinn was his only child, and he treasures him a lot. After Quinn's test, on seeing that he had three elements, and one was the darkness element, he felt the fate of their family lied in the hands of Quinn.

'He shouldn't have an equal in his generation.' The middle-aged man tried consoling himself.

And he wasn't wrong about it though, Quinn naturally doesn't have an equal amongst his generation in the Azure continent. Grey was the one who killed him, and his parents weren't from the Azure continent, so technically, Grey wasn't from the Azure continent.

The middle-aged man picked up a book from his desk but threw it to the floor in annoyance. Even though there was still a week left, he didn't feel optimistic about Quinn's return.

Slowly, the thought of Quinn possibly being dead started to creep into his head.

'He's smart, so he wouldn't go to areas which would put his life at risk.'

With an unsettled mind, he started thinking of multiple possibilities.

Qilin empire, Lunar Academy.

The Academy was quite peaceful with students occasionally walking in and out of the compound. Most of the students didn't look as cheerful as they usually did, the reason for that was because, one week ago, the principal announced that he'll be stepping down from his position once the students get back from their special training in a week time. Surprisingly, he was not the only one who would be stepping down, after hearing the principal's announcement, the other head instructors, as well as a few high leveled instructors also decided to step down.

Over the years they've worked with the principal, they've developed a form of attachment to him. Not just that, but they didn't see themselves working with anyone else.

Even the emperor wouldn't have expected all the head instructors, and most of the old instructors in the Lunar Academy to step down just because Oliver was stepping down, this was a blow to the empire's strength since all the instructors that stepped down were all in the Overlord Plane.

Blake's office.

Blake was currently pacing around in his office, apparently thinking about something.

"\*Sigh\* We'll be leaving soon, and Senior Chris isn't back yet. He doesn't usually take this long whenever he disappears."

"Also, what will I do with Delia? She didn't say you'll step down as an instructor, so that means she'll be staying here. But, I can't let her stay here and be controlled by the emperor."

He quickly decided it was better to meet up with Delia and have a chat with her. Just as he walked up to the door, he heard a knock. He hastily went back to his chair and took a seat.

"Come in."

The door opened, and a delicate-looking young lady walked into the office.

"Delia!" Blake raised a brow, not expecting Delia to come to his office.

"What? Am I not allowed in here?" Delia looked around before taking a seat opposite him.

Blake looked at her and smiled wryly while shaking his head. Even after their frequent encounters, she still speaks in this manner sometimes.

"Of course you are. What brings you here?" He asked.

The only time Delia had come to his office was when Grey just entered the Academy, since then, she had not stepped into the office again.

"I just came to check up on you." Delia said blandly while staring at the bookshelf that was close to the desk.

"Oh!" Blake was slightly taken aback by her statement.

"Yeah, so how are you?" Delia said in the same bland voice.

"I'm fine. How about you?" Blake asked while wearing a surprised expression.

"Fine." answered Delia before falling silent.

Blake stared at her, a little dazed by the fact that she came to his office just to ask how he was doing. That shouldn't be all, right?

A minute went by and the office was still quiet, with only the sound of the duo's light breathing being heard in the office.

"Seriously, why did you come? It can't be that you only came to ask how I'm doing, right?" Blake broke the silence, still staring at the almost fairy-like young lady sitting across him who was staring at the bookshelf by the desk.

Delia continued staring at the bookshelf without replying. Just as Blake was about to question her once again, she opened her mouth, "When are you leaving?"

"I'll be going with the principal." Blake replied in a low voice.

"I see. Did you plan on leaving without saying goodbye?" Delia finally stopped staring at the bookshelf and gazed right into Blake's eyes.

She could feel that after they've left the Academy, then getting in contact with them would be extremely difficult. Although she didn't know much, she could tell there was something wrong.

"Was about to come to your place and talk to you." Blake answered staring back into her eyes without blinking.

Delia didn't speak any further and dropped her head, seemingly waiting for something.

"Do you want to come with us?" Blake finally asked after brooding over it for some time.

He didn't think the chances of her following them was good, given the fact that her father was a high ranking official of the empire, even if it wouldn't mean much if she left, Blake felt her father wouldn't approve of it.

Delia's eyes turned watery, and she kept her head down.

"I can't."

She stood up and walked in the direction of the door.

"Are you afraid of what your father would say?" Blake asked when she got to the door. He got on his feet and approached Delia.

"Not what he would say, but how he would feel. Just like you don't want to disappoint your Teacher, I also don't want to disappoint my father." Delia said with one of her hands holding onto the doorknob.

"Even at the cost of your freedom? I know I always do things according to Teacher's demands, but there are times I did things for myself, for you." Blake said, standing behind her.

"I know, but we're two different people. If I decide to leave with you, father would be heartbroken." Delia said while slowly turning the doorknob.

"And me? How do you think I'd feel?" Blake asked in a low voice.

The turning doorknob stopped with a 'click' sound, and Delia turned to look at him. When he saw her eyes, he felt sad inside. He could see the pain in her eyes, yet, there was also a resolution, she wouldn't change her mind, not so easily.

Blake continued, "What about you? Will you be able to live comfortably with this decision? Don't ruin your life for someone who had already lived his."

"I'm sorry, goodbye Blake." Delia opened the door and exited the office, closing the door behind her.



After closing the door, she dropped to the floor with her back against the door, and tears poured down her face. Luckily, Blake was the only instructor in the Lightning Hall, so there was no one else in the building.

Blake who was on the other side of the door could hear her sobbing, he wanted to open the door and go out, but he sent out his spiritual sense outside to see where she was. He heaved a sigh when he saw her, the reason was that, if he opens the door, Delia who had her back against it would lose the support of the door and fall to the ground.

Standing at the other side of the door, and hearing Delia's sob, Blake shut his eyes and remained motionless.

"Don't hurt yourself just to please someone else." Blake said from the other side of the door and walked back to his seat.

He couldn't force Delia to agree to come with them, since she's decided that her father's feelings are more important, then so be it.

Delia stayed outside the office for some time before leaving, she felt like she was a little boat caught in a storm in the sea. Her heart was telling her to go with Blake, but her head was telling her not to hurt her father's feelings.

That night, she couldn't sleep as she contemplated on the matter, over and over again.

Is her decision to stay because of her father really the right one?

The next morning, she silently left the Lunar Academy.

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Back at the trial land.

"This is the last day, if we don't find Alice today, then we'll see her outside." Klaus said while munching on the meat in his hands.

This was the thing he had missed the most, Grey's cooking. Like him, Reynolds was a terrible cook, and even though they liked good food, they couldn't make one, so being together with Grey was a blessing to them.

#### Chapter 177 - Terrible Cook

The trio was currently sitting in a field, and a fire was burning mildly, with a stake set up and what looked like the remains of a pig could be seen on it.

"I have to say bud, you're a great cook. Not like some people I know." While saying the last statement, Klaus made sure to stare at Reynolds.

Reynolds was left flabbergasted, 'Why is he looking at me?' He asked himself.

"Yes Rey, I'm talking about you, you're a bad cook. No, not bad, saying bad makes it sound good, you're a terrible cook." Klaus said looking at Reynolds in contempt.

"Like you're any better." Reynolds retorted angrily.

"At least my cooking doesn't cause diarrhea, even with our enhanced organs, your awful cooking is still poisonous. I'm very confident that your cooking can easily wipe out an entire town of people who are below the Arcane Plane." Klaus said still looking at Reynolds in contempt.

Hearing Klaus' statement, Grey, Void, and even Reynolds was taken aback.

"Is it that bad?" Reynolds couldn't help but ask.

He had tasted his food, and he could agree with Klaus that he was a terrible cook. But come on! His cooking could wipe out an entire town of people below the Arcane Plane, isn't that a little too exaggerated?

"You could try cooking for your parents, if they survive it, then I'll walk around n.a.k.e.d for a week!" Klaus was even ready to go n.a.k.e.d for a month because he was very sure that Reynolds' parents would die from it.

They might not even last two hours before dying!

"Okay Klaus, I get it, I'm a bad cook. But don't forget we couldn't eat anything when you cooked. At least there was something left in mine to eat, you, on the other hand, burnt the outer part of the meat, yet the inside wasn't properly cooked." Reynolds said laughing.

"That wasn't my fault, the fire wasn't properly made!" Klaus tried explaining.

"And who made the fire?" Reynolds asked with a sneer.

"I di... I meant to say that the wood was bad." Klaus said, trying to shift the blame.

"And... Who picked the wood? I remember you saying, and I quote, 'This wood is great! Grey always uses this type of wood!'" Reynolds said the last statement imitating Klaus' voice as much as he could.

And for the first time since Klaus entered the trial land, he didn't have a comeback. In this war of words, Reynolds was the victor, but he knew he'll come back again stronger!

'I'll accept defeat this time. But he should remember, he might have won this battle, but I'll always win the war!' He thought cheering himself up.

Grey on the other hand was enjoying the bickering between the duo, since they had grouped up, his journey had been very amusing, to say the least.

"Enough guys, you're both terrible cooks." He said chuckling.

"Hmph! Someday, I'll be a better cook than you are." Klaus declared.

"Haha, not a chance. But I'd like to see you try though, at least your cooking might get better." Grey laughed, and Reynolds soon joined in as well.

"\*Sigh\* Who am I kidding? I'm not patient enough to cook, I'll just find myself a wife that's a great cook, but until then, you will have to cook for me." Klaus immediately gave up on the idea of learning how to cook.

Eating good and tasty food was great, preparing one, was not so great.

"At least you know your limits. Wait, who's going to cook for you?" Grey asked looking at Klaus.

"You of course, do you think I'd eat whatever Rey cooks? I still want to continue living." Klaus said while throwing a disdainful glance at Reynolds.

The trio continued speaking about food until they finished their meal.

"Okay, now where to?" Reynolds asked.

"I don't know, you know we've been moving randomly all this while." Klaus replied.

"Hmm, let's head in that direction then." Grey suggested, pointing at what looked like the roof of a building from where they were currently sitting.

"Okay." Klaus and Reynolds nodded before standing.

"Such a waste of good meat." Klaus said with a sad look.

They weren't able to finish the pig, so there was still some left.

Grey walked closer to it and touched it. After touching it, it disappeared.

"Shit! Grey, since when can you make things disappear?" Klaus immediately yelled out, stunned by the fact that after Grey touched what was left of the pig, it disappeared.

Reynolds stood dumbstruck, looking at Grey like he was a freak.

"Wait, what?" Grey asked with a confused expression.

All he did was keep the rest of the meat in his spatial ring, what's so shocking about it? Besides, it wasn't like he hadn't told them about it before.

"Can you make humans disappear as well, if you can, I have a list of people I..." Klaus stopped when he saw the weird look Grey was giving him.

"I only kept it in my spatial ring." Grey said.

"Oh! You mean that spatial ring. Wait, what's a spatial ring?" Klaus said as a series of expressions appeared on his face.

Grey was once again left speechless, and he couldn't help but pull a long face. He didn't think Klaus would've forgotten about it so soon.

'Maybe he's forgotten about it.' Thinking of this, he decided to tell Klaus what a spatial ring was.

Just as he was about to speak.

"I'm joking, I remember what it is, I just wanted to see how you'd react if I said I didn't." Klaus chuckled after seeing Grey's reaction.

"You... Forget it." Grey could only shake his head at how playful Klaus was.

Now he knew how most of Klaus' opponents feels whenever he asks who they were. With nothing left, the trio started their journey.

'Hey, are you okay?' Grey transmitted his voice to Void.

'Yeah, why'd you ask?' Void stared at him strangely.

'Oh nothing, it's just that you've been a little quiet lately.' Grey asked a little concerned about his companion's behavior.

Void felt quite good on seeing Grey's concern towards him, and just as he was about to speak, Grey ruined the moment with his next statement.

"Or, are you pregnant?" Grey asked cheekily.

'F.u.c.k! How can I be pregnant, I'm a male!' Void immediately exploded out.

Grey who was walking suddenly burst into a fit of laughter.

Klaus and Reynolds who were both behind him looked at him not understanding why a normal person would suddenly start laughing.

"Do you think he's okay?" Reynolds leaned closer to Klaus and whispered.

"I'm not so sure." Klaus shook his head.

They couldn't be blamed, when Grey previously told them about the space element and spatial ring, he didn't tell them he could speak to Void in his mind.

"Grey, are you alright?" Reynolds poked Grey on his back as he asked.

"Of course I am, why would you even..." Grey who turned around when replying Reynolds failed to see the rock which appeared in his way and tripped over it, falling face-first to the ground.

The strange thing was, after he tripped on it, the rock disappeared like it was never there.

"Are you okay?" They asked simultaneously.

"Yeah, I just tripped on...a...rock." Grey said the last part looking at the place where the rock was supposed to be, yet he found nothing.

He looked around, and found Void not too far from where he was laughing.

'It's you.' He said.

'Yes, that will teach you not to mess with me.' Void continued laughing.

He knew Grey was only making fun of him, so he decided to play as well, and since he had the space element, making things appear and disappear was his specialty.

Grey squinted his eyes and a grin formed on his face.

Plop!

The ground Void was standing on suddenly went soft, and he fell into it.

Grey made sure to be secretive about it so Klaus and Reynolds wouldn't find out.

'Hehe, I won in the end.' He laughed before standing up.

The trio continued their journey with Void having to walk on his own, the reason for this was because he was covered in mud. And Grey refused to use the water element to wash him up.

Klaus and Reynolds were actually shocked when they saw the muddy Void, they knew they didn't pass any muddy place, so where did the mud come from.

When the group was about to reach the building, Grey finally decided to clean Void up, since he couldn't use the water element openly, he could only tell Klaus to do it.

Boom!

A loud explosion came out of the compound, accompanied by smokes and screams.

"People are fighting again." Reynolds said sadly.

He had seen more fights in this week than since he entered the trial land. He felt a little sad for the ones who lose their lives fighting for treasures, although one treasure could change their lives, if they die because they were trying to get it, what was the use?

Although he also wanted to grow stronger, he was contended with the pace at which he was improving. Sometimes, moving too fast in life isn't always the right choice.

"Come on, let's check it out." Grey said in low voice.

He too, didn't get why most of these people were fighting to the brink of death just for a treasure. He moved his hand along Void's soft fur petting him, before entering the compound.

After staying with Void for some time, he found out that just like every other cat, Void likes it when someone pets him, so whenever he sees he was angry, he'll pet him.



The trio soon entered the compound, and what greeted them was just as expected, four people were fighting against each other, with three corpses on the floor.

#### Chapter 178 - Waiting For The Squad

The arrival of an unknown group immediately alerted the fighters, they stopped and looked in the direction of the gate where Grey and his friends were standing. And their hearts sank, the reason for that was because they realized of the three people who just arrived, one of them was in the Fourth stage of the Origin Plane.

The four who were fighting against each other were all in the Third stage, and after going through the gruesome fight, they weren't at their peaks, and since they didn't even trust each other enough to team up, there was no way these pair of two Third stage Origin Plane Elementalists could fight against Grey and his friends, even if they teamed up with the other pair, they still didn't have a chance.

'Void, anything good?' Grey transmitted his voice over to Void.

If what these people were fighting for was something that could catch Void's attention, then he wouldn't mind taking it from them. At least that way they would stop killing each other.

'No, I've already checked, it's not good enough.' replied Void.

After hearing Void's reply, Grey retracted his gaze from the tensed fighters and turned to his friends, "Let's go, there's nothing good here."

Klaus and Reynolds nodded, they weren't too attracted to the treasures anyway. After getting the Great Earth Essence Liquid, they felt the reason for coming here had been obtained. Not just that, but they knew even if there was another treasure at the same level as the Great Earth Essence Liquid, it wouldn't be acquired so easily.

The four who were fighting were taken aback when they saw the trio leave without even heading into the building, after their initial shock, they heaved a sigh of relief. Now, all they had to do was get rid of their opponents and they would be able to obtain the treasure.

---

Outside the compound.

"Hmm, where are we headed now?" Grey asked while looking around.

Searching for someone in this big place was almost impossible, there was no way to contact each other so how would they know where they were.

"Huh!" They all exclaimed simultaneously.

Seeing the strange reactions from everyone, they looked at each other before curiously checking their bags and the ring for the cause of the heat.

Klaus and Reynolds quickly brought out a wooden two inches object that was glowing resplendently and also slightly heating up their hands. They unconsciously let go, and to their greatest surprise, it didn't fall to the ground as expected, rather, it started floating, before heading in a specific direction.

"What the hell! What is that? And how did we end up with one each?" Klaus was left dumbstruck by the strange object.

Grey had also taken out the same wooden object from his storage ring, and couldn't help but look at it strangely.

'Where did I obtain this?' He asked himself.

It took only a few seconds and having to see Klaus and Reynolds' objects float in the air before he recognized them.

"Haha, they're the wooden objects I took from that Darkness Elementalist. Follow it, it will lead us to Alice." Grey said excitedly.

He got a lot of the wooden objects from Quinn's bag, and he was lucky enough to know how it was used from one of Quinn's companions, so when he and his friends were about to head their separate ways, he gave each of them one and told them how to use it. That way if any of them was in danger, they could call for assistance, well, that was on the premise that the person was close by.

Klaus and Reynolds had forgotten about the item, but hearing that it would lead them to Alice, they immediately followed it. Even Grey forgot he had something like this. Although the other ones in his ring were also heating up, it wasn't too bad.

The trio chased after the floating glowing wooden object, and they unsurprisingly attracted some attention from the few people who saw them chasing after a floating object. These people didn't know what it was, and seeing that Grey and his friends were following behind it, they felt it was leading them to some kind of treasure, or it was the treasure itself.

"Hmph! We need to get rid of these pests." Klaus snorted coldly, not entertaining the idea that they were being followed.

Presently, there were three people following behind them, and two were in the Fourth stage, while the last one was surprisingly in the Fifth stage. But it was of no concern to Klaus, he was confident in their abilities, well, in Grey's strength and Reynolds' Elemental Warrior.

He also had no problems with fighting against someone in the Fourth stage, they are only a few people in the Fourth stage that could defeat him, so he was still quite confident in himself. Although, the main basis of his confidence when he made that statement was Grey and Reynolds.

"Hmm, you're right. But we can't afford to waste time, so just let them be, for now." Grey said, after taking a glance at their followers.

They didn't know the situation of Alice, so they couldn't afford to waste time dealing with these people. Even if they could defeat them, it would still take some time. So, Grey decided it was best to head over to where Alice was located, if they find out she's not in any danger, then they'll attend to the people following them, they might be able to even resolve the matter without needing to fight.

---

Deep in a cave in the southern part of the trial land. About six kilometers away from Grey and his friends.

Alice could be seen hiding behind a rock, panting heavily with her hand bleeding.

"Come out, there's no use in hiding, and you can't leave this place since there's only one exit. I already promised I won't kill you, I only want to teach you some things." A voice could be heard accompanied by laughter.

Some distance away from where Alice was hiding, three young men could be seen smiling in a l.e.w.d manner. The one in the middle had a slightly average-looking face with a black mark just above his left eye, and the other two were identical twins who were relatively better looking than the young man in the middle.

'Hopefully, the boys aren't too far from here.' Alice prayed in her heart.

She was unfortunate to encounter these young men some hours back, and about two weeks ago, she saw the one with a black mark, and he made advances towards her which she rejected. Although she currently didn't have anyone in mind, it didn't mean she'll be with someone she didn't even know. Not just that, but she didn't like the way he was staring at her.

At that time, the young man was alone, so after being rejected by Alice, he left. Alice didn't try to attack him, after all, she couldn't just attack someone because he liked her, and the young man didn't do anything else, after being rejected, he left.

To her surprise, when she encountered him some hours ago, he once again tried making advances towards her. And just like the last time, she rejected him, but this time, after he was rejected, he became forceful.

All three young men were in the Third stage, just like Alice, so it was difficult for her to deal with them. If they were only two, then she was confident in being able to escape unscathed, but under the assault of three, her chances were quite slim.

The only reason she managed to hide was because of the speed the lightning element brings, yet, it was not enough to completely escape because she was injured during the first clash, hence greatly diminishing her speed.

"Come on, it's not like I'm going to be the only one who will enjoy it." The young man with the black man said again, and the twins by his side burst into laughter once again.

This wasn't their first time doing something like this, and it was unknown how many young ladies had fallen victim to their l.e.w.d nature in and outside of the trial land. Now, they've set their sights on Alice.

So she quickly shattered it, with the hope that the rest of the squad would come to her aid. She also knew that it would take them a while before getting here, that was why she was stalling as much as she could.

Since these three were already set on ensuring she could escape, she could only pray, and wait for the rest of the squad.

'Hopefully, they get here soon.'

Chapter 179 - Since When Are You So Nice?

"Shit! They're five now?! We have to find a way to stop them before they become too much for us to handle." Klaus said in dissatisfaction when he saw another two people started following them.

"Yeah, you're probably right about that. We don't know what situation Alice is in, but being followed by a lot of people wouldn't do us or her any good either. Given how desperate they all are for treasures, they'll do anything for it. That's what also makes chasing them harder. Even if we explain what this thing is, they wouldn't believe us, after all, only a few people know about it." Grey said.

"Explaining won't do any good, let's just beat the crap out of them. That way, they wouldn't dare to continue following us." Reynolds said impatiently.

'Yes, violence, let's use that.' Void said excitedly.

From how happy he was, it was easy to see he didn't like it when things are too peaceful. Since meeting up with Klaus and Reynolds, although their company was fun, Void preferred the time when Grey would either be fighting against a beast or running away. At least, he was always excited whenever they were doing those. But the most excited he had been all this while was when Grey started robbing pants!

'\*Sigh\* I miss those days.' He sighed at the thought of their pants stealing days.

'You've always liked violence.' Grey smiled wryly at Void's words.

"How long do you think it'll take to send the message?" He finally conceded to the group's plan.

"Two minutes at most, as long as we go full power immediately." Klaus calculated.

They didn't want to kill the people following them since it was just a misunderstanding but they didn't want them to follow them either. After all, they didn't know Alice's situation. Also, there was the possibility of Alice finding a heaven-defying treasure that she wanted to show them. Although the chances are small, it was a possibility they couldn't rule out!

"Okay, wait while I get my inscription up, until then, we won't attack." Grey nodded.

Since they were going to deal with them quickly, he might as well use his inscription also. The only problem was, they didn't know if they were already close to Alice, or not, so if before he creates his inscription they get to where Alice was located, it would be quite sad.

Another minute went by before Grey completed the inscription.

"Okay, I'm ready." He said.

The trio stopped and turned around. Grey had already suggested they tried explaining to them first, only when the group following them refuses to heed their words before they'll attack. Although attacking will make the people following them feel like they were truly going to get a treasure, they didn't have much of a choice.

The people following behind them also stopped and looked at the trio, then they looked behind them, and saw that the floating object the trio was chasing after was currently stopped by an earthen hand that came out of the ground.

"Why are you following us?" Klaus asked apathetically.

"Nothing." The youth in the Fifth stage of the Origin Plane said.

Since he was the one with the highest stage, he became the default leader of the group. Of the four people, three were male, while the last two who joined recently were females.

"Then stop following us." Klaus said plainly.

"You don't sound convincing enough." Grey whispered in Klaus' ear.

He felt if he was the one following behind someone because of a strange floating object, and the person just turns around and says stop following us, he wouldn't stop. Besides, he was following them for a reason.

"Okay, let's cut to the chase. We want a share in the treasure." The leader of the group of five said.

"What treasure? There's no treasure, this is only a device used to locate a partner. If you notice there are three, which belongs to the three of us, we're only following it to our friend who has the last one." Grey explained.

It's not that he was scared of fighting, but he felt if they could settle this amicably, why fight?

"Heh! Do you think we'll believe that? Just continue heading forward, and we'll follow you, we don't care if you have any friend or not." The leader of the group said with a sneer.

The others in the group all chuckled, feeling Grey's explanation was stupid. 'Who would believe they were only heading to meet a friend, since when was a floating object needed before one can meet a friend?'

Thinking about this, they felt even more certain that the trio was going to a place where a rare treasure was located, and only that floating object could take them there.

'You see, if you had used violence from the start, you wouldn't waste so much time explaining.' Void said, edging to beat the crap out of some people.

'\*Sigh\* I hate to admit it, but you're right. We can't waste our time explaining to them.' Grey sighed.

"Well, I guess I tried. But just to be clear, we truly are heading to meet a friend. We can't risk allowing you people following behind us, so it's either you turn back on your own, or we make you." Grey warned.

"Heh! I knew there was a treasure." The leader of the group scoffed.

"I don't wa..." Grey was about to continue warning before he was cut short by Klaus.

"Stop preaching Mr goody two shoes. Attack!" Klaus ordered.

"So much violence, but I have to say, it's fun." Grey smiled and the inscription in the air lit up.

'Void, you'll have to deal...' Grey was once again cut short by a loud explosion.

Boom!

The attacker was none other than Void.

'Since when did you become so nice?' Void asked with contempt before attacking once again.



'Ah... This feels nice.' He thought to himself, relishing the feeling of getting to attack someone once again.

Grey smiled awkwardly, 'Yeah, I don't get why I'm being so considerate to them.'

After this thought, he joined in the attack as well.

Chapter 180 - Not In The Mood To Kill

Boom! Bam!

The fight quickly got heated, and Grey's opponent was none other than the leader of the group who was in the Fifth stage of the Origin Plane. He was a Water Elementalist, and he's quite strong as well. Well, that would be if he was facing someone else, in front of Grey, he wasn't much.

To the young man's greatest surprise, he was instantly put on the defensive when fighting against Grey, and the most annoying thing was that he could see that Grey wasn't even too focused on him.

'Who is he? How can he be so strong?' He thought to himself.

Although the geniuses here weren't from the same empire, there have been a few who had grown famous amongst the ranks in the trial land through battles. But the young man hadn't heard of anyone who had blue flames, and he also saw Grey using the earth element, which made him a Dual Elementalist.

"I don't know why I'm being nice today, but I'll warn you once again, turn around now before it gets too late." Grey warned again.

He didn't know what's happening to him today, but since he isn't in the mood to kill anyone, he thought it might be good to one the young man once again.

"And miss out on the treasure? Not a chance." The young man said determinedly, not backing down in any way.

"Fine." Grey's eyes went cold.

He didn't want to waste any more time.

"Rey, what the hell are you doing? Full power you idiot!" Klaus cursed out when he saw Reynolds was only fighting with his elements.

"F.u.c.k you! You moron!" Reynolds cursed out like always and immediately summoned his Elemental Warrior.

The duo fighting against Klaus and Reynolds initially thought they were about to start fighting against each other when they cursed at one another, but on seeing the Elemental Warrior, their faces turned pale from fright.

They sensed the stage of the Elemental Warrior and got an even bigger fright, it was a stage ahead of them. But they knew its real strength would be at the Sixth stage of the Origin Plane, on could they fight against it.

In a minute and a half, the group of five were all in their last legs. Grey was beating the youth in the Fifth stage while also using his inscription to assist the Elemental Warrior which was fighting against two people, although it was overpowering them, Grey felt the sooner they were defeated, the better. Klaus' opponent wasn't having it good as well, since he had to face two assaults, one from Klaus' element, and the other, from his mouth.

Just like always, Klaus had gotten used to cursing at his opponent while fighting. While the most pitiful was the young lady who was fighting against Void. At first, she found it strange that a cute little black cat wanted to fight against her, but now, she didn't see him as cute, rather all she saw was a little devil.

Unlike the others, Void wasn't holding anything back and was attacking at almost full power. Had it not been for Grey threatening not to give him food a few times, he would have already killed the young lady

multiple times already. But it didn't stop him from hurting her though, he was a magical beast after all, and it was his nature to be violent.

"I didn't plan for things to happen this way, but it was all because of your greed. Also, we truly are going to meet our friend." Grey said before turning away to leave.

After the group turned around, the trio continued their journey.

"What the hell is wrong with you? Since when did you turn so soft?" Klaus couldn't help but ask.

He found Grey's behavior quite odd, since he knew Grey, this was the first time he saw him behaving this soft to others.

"I don't know, maybe I'm not just in the mood to kill anyone today." Grey said with a faint smile.

"Oh, okay." Klaus nodded.

He knew there were also times when one wouldn't feel like doing something, since his friend didn't feel like killing today, then so be it!

"We should increase our speed, I think we're getting close." Grey said and tried to see if there was a way to get the object to move faster.

He held it in his palm while protecting it with the earth element, whenever he notices it wanted to turn, he'll let it go, after it turned, he'll hold it once again and continue moving forward.

"Looks like she's here." Grey said after seeing the wooden object float into the mouth of the cave.

"Yeah, guess she found a treasure after all." Klaus said with a glim flashing through his eyes.

If it truly was a treasure, then it wouldn't be an ordinary one. Since Alice wouldn't call them over because of an ordinary treasure.

"We can't be too sure yet, let's head in first." Grey said and walked into the cave.

The others followed suit.

Entering inside, they immediately saw a tunnel that led deeper into the cave, and walked in while cautiously observing the place.

'Anything good?' Grey asked Void.

'No, but I sense people up ahead.' Void said after a while.

"Hmm, let's pick up the pace." Grey urged the orders and quickly sprinted forward.

In the depths of the cave.

Alice was currently surrounded by the trio, and the young man with the black scar was laughing out loudly.

"Hehehe, I have you now, I promise, you'll remember this moment for the rest of your life." He licked his lips as he approached Alice.

"I have to say, you're quite strong, this will make the experience worthwhile." One of the twins said.

He still couldn't believe that it took three of them almost twenty minutes before they could beat her.

Alice who was currently sitting on the floor looked up and her eyes turned watery, she didn't think she will ever face a situation like this in her life. She felt like instead of something like this happening to her, it was better to end her life.

'Goodbye, guys. I hope you don't miss me too much.' She thought with a sad smile.

Just as she was about to control the lightning in her body towards her heart, she heard an all too familiar voice.

"Hey bud, are you sure you're not in the mood to kill today?"