

Affinity: Chaos #Chapter 81 - Black Metal Warriors - Read Affinity: Chaos Chapter 81 - Black Metal Warriors

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Two days later...

The group continued heading forward, they encountered more beasts on the way, only they were not as strong as the horned snake they had faced previously. They had also encountered more people throughout the journey, but they focused on the task ahead of them without getting involved with anyone.

...

"Look"

Klaus pointed towards their right with his mouth wide agape.

When the others stared in the direction, they couldn't help but suck in a cold breath. An Azure Palace could be seen, floating midair.

"How's that even possible?"

Reynolds asked in a dumbfounded manner.

The others couldn't answer since they were just as shocked as he was. Looking closer, they noticed there were already about eight people who were gathered outside the palace. They walked in the direction and soon got close to it.

They hadn't seen these people before so they knew they were most likely from another empire, but it didn't stop them from approaching the palace though, they only increased their guards against the new people.

On getting close, they all saw steps that led to the huge golden door of the palace. There were about forty steps in total which were all at least forty inches in length. The group who were gathered there all looked at the new group who were making their way towards the palace.

"What do you think is inside the palace?"

"Well, we won't know until we enter"

A youth gathered courage and took the first step on the steps. The moment he placed his foot on the step, he suddenly paused, his body shook a little before he took the second step. On seeing one person take the first step, another person also went forward, and then a third. But something strange happened when the fourth person placed his foot on the steps, he was suddenly sent flying.

"What happened?"

Someone suddenly asked with surprise. Nothing like this happened when the others all took the first step. The other youth who was about to step forward immediately stopped on his tracks, an unknown fear suddenly gripped him. He looked in the direction of the youth who was sent flying.

"Could it be some sort of test?"

Grey stared at the steps trying to comprehend what just happened.

The youth who was sent flying stood up from where he landed with a shocked gaze, he still didn't understand why he seemed to be rejected. Seeing the youth was fine, the fifth person summoned up the courage placed his foot on the step. His body shook a little, but after that, he was okay. He heaved a sigh of relief before he ascended the step like the others who had also climbed up the steps.

'Seems like it's a test. If one can't withstand the pressure, then one would be rejected'.

This was the only thing he could surmise from what took place on the first step, but he still didn't know what the energy was searching for on their bodies.

Seeing Grey successfully passing through the first step, the others all took their first steps, and they successfully passed just like Grey. One more person was rejected from the previous group which meant in total, only ten of them were able to make it to the door. But now, they were faced with a new challenge, getting the door to open.

They had all tried pushing the door, but it didn't budge, it didn't even make any sound. They sent out different attacks, but it still didn't budge, the attacks didn't even leave a single scratch in the golden doors.

While the others were still thinking of ways to get the door to open up, something by the side of the door caught Alice's attention. She walked towards the side of the wall and saw some instructions on the wall. Presumably, it was the instruction used for opening the door.

Three minutes later...

Boom!

"F.u.c.k! Why won't it budge?"

Klaus cursed out in frustration, he wasn't the only one who was starting to get frustrated. Given the fact that they experienced what seemed to be a small trial at the first step, they all had huge expectations for what might be inside the palace. They had even used their strongest attacks, but the door still didn't budge.

After reading the instructions, Alice looked at the group who were all almost out of breath before calling them over

"Hey dummies! Come over here"

On hearing the call, Grey, Reynolds, and Klaus all looked in her direction. She pointed at the walls. The trio curiously walked over, they were not the only ones though, the other six also walked over. On seeing the instructions, Grey couldn't help but ask,

"When did you see it?"

"Just now"

Alice replied with a slight smile.

The trio looked at her with suspicious gazes, they felt she had seen it for some time now but just wanted them to suffer a little before she called them over. Well, they were right, she had seen it for almost three minutes now. She just wanted to watch them suffer a little. They helplessly shook their heads before once again turning to the instructions.

The method of opening the door was actually quite simple. The door had a mechanism installed in it, there was a small hole at the side of the door where one places their hands and channels their elemental essence. Only then would it open. There were ten holes which meant ten people would have to do it simultaneously.

"Well, that's easy"

Creak!

The door slowly started opening on its own. Some moments later, the golden door opened wide and a cold ancient breeze blew in the faces of everyone as they stood in front of the door. They looked at the dimly lit palace before staring at each other, they all steeled their minds and walked into the palace, as soon as the tenth person walked inside,

Bam!

The door suddenly slammed shut.

'Well, there's no turning back it seems'

Grey looked at the current closed door. He stared around to see how the place looked, he noticed they were all in what looked like a huge spacious hall, he couldn't see the walls of the palace due to the dim light. They all stood on the black and gold floor, which was made of a hard material, which gave a cold feeling. With the groups' strength, they couldn't even damage it.

A voice suddenly rang out in the palace,

"Trial: Metal Warriors, Objective: Survival, Time: Four hours"

The voice suddenly disappeared after this.

"What was that?"

A boy spoke out with a tinge of panic.

"Sounds like we're in some sort of trial palace"

"What are these metal warriors the voice spoke of?"

"I have no idea" magic

The youth wasn't the only one panicking, some others also had panicked expressions.

Dang! Dang! Dang!

From the dimly lit side of the palace, a soul-shaking sound appeared. At the same time, a strong aura spread forth.

"What is it?"

Everyone turned towards the side of the palace, but could only see five blurry figures slowly walking out of the dark place.

They all looked puzzled, but the metallic footsteps behind them became closer and closer. The aura from it also pressured most of them, with only Alice and another youth being the ones who didn't feel pressured in any way.

Dang! Dang!

In the darkness, five black metallic warriors three meters tall appeared, they all had a pair of green eyes that were opened. There was also a pair of dark green wings on the black metal warrior's back which had a two-meter span.

"What is that thing?"

The hearts of everyone trembled.

"Oh my God!"

Klaus's mouth was agape. He wasn't the only one though, almost everyone else stood stunned.

"The monsters auras all seem to be in the peak of the Ninth stage"

Alice said after sensing the exact strength of the monsters.

The hearts of everyone tightened, including Grey. Among the group who entered the palace, only Alice and one other youth were in the Ninth stage, the rest all ranged within the Sixth and Eighth stage with Klaus being the only one at the Sixth stage.

Bang!

Grey slammed into the ground heavily. They had been battling with the metal warriors for over two hours now. Since there were five metal warriors, they fought them two against one. Klaus and Alice teamed up, given he was the weakest, while Grey and Reynolds teamed up against one of the warriors.

The others also teamed up, for now, they put down their guards against the other since if one of them died, it would spell disaster for the others. They had only been able to barely hang on against the metal warriors, if they were to attack each other, they will all die for sure.

"These things seem indestructible" magic

Reynolds used his movement technique to dodge the fist the construct sent towards him.

"It's not them being indestructible, it's just our attacks not being strong enough"

Grey rolled to the side while still on the ground as the monster stomped towards his head with its right foot.

He suddenly had the urge to try using elemental fusion, but given the current space, it might probably affect them all. If he was able to do it, the attack should be strong enough to destroy these things. Only, they might also die in the process.

For things made of metal, they were surprisingly very agile. Paired with the wings on their backs, they were difficult to deal with.

Although the group hadn't been able to cause any major damage, they had been able to at least leave some dents on the body of the metal warriors.

They were all starting to get tired since they had been expending energies since the battles started. The metal warriors on the other hand, seemed perfectly fine, except for the dents on their bodies. While the battle was still ongoing, Klaus suddenly realized something, one of the hands of the warrior they were battling seemed slower compared to the other one.

'How come that hand seems slower?'

Klaus asked himself.

Of the ten people fighting, he was the one who was having a relatively easier time since Alice was able to hold off the warrior. Although just barely, but it was enough for Klaus to think and move more freely. Once he gets an opportunity, he attacks the metal warrior. And whenever he notices the pressure on Alice was getting too much, he would distract the warrior to relieve the pressure.

Twenty minutes later...

"Shit! We can't go on like this"

Reynolds said in frustration, they almost couldn't hang on anymore. He already had some slight injuries, luckily, the warriors were only using their fists. If they had been equipped with weapons, they would have definitely been in a more difficult situation.

"That's it!"

Klaus suddenly yelled after he sent an attack towards the metal warrior.

"What?"

Alice who was once again pushed back by the warrior asked.

"The reason one of its hands is slower than the other one"

Klaus gave a slight chuckle.

With this discovery, they would be able to defeat the metal warriors before the time is up. Well, given the way things were going, they might not be able to last that long if they didn't defeat them.

"I don't understand"

Alice said as she sent out an attack towards the incoming warrior. She couldn't be blamed for not noticing it, she was already having a tough time keeping herself alive, there was no way she could notice the slightly slower hand.

"One of... *Sigh* Forget it"

Klaus wanted to explain, but it would take too much time. He decided to try out his hypothesis.

While Alice was entangling with the warrior, he carefully aimed for the space which was in the shoulder of the warrior. Since it was a construct, there was no way it would be fully covered like humans were. He carefully manipulated the water he created and tried to put it in the space between the shoulder. But he unfortunately, failed that attempt.

It was expected though, given the fact that the construct was moving.

"Try to keep it still"

Klaus said to Alice.

"It's not going to be easy"

Alice replied.

"I know, just try. Even if it's for two seconds"

Klaus urged.

"Okay"

Alice continued battling with the construct.

She was able to keep it still sometimes, but Klaus wasn't able to hit it.

"Klaus whatever you want to do, do it fast"

Now she was facing more pressure since she had to face the construct alone.

Two minutes later...

"Success"

Klaus said in glee.

He was able to finally get some water into the space in between the shoulder of the construct. When the water entered the space, he froze it.

The right hand of the construct suddenly stopped moving. Since one of its hands was incapacitated, the pressure reduced greatly.

"So that's it"

Alice was quite impressed with Klaus's quick thinking.

They were able also to immobilize the second hand shortly.

"Yes"

Klaus and Alice said simultaneously.

The shout from them drew the attention of the others. Well, the ones who could afford to be distracted, that is.

"Good job buddy. Now try to get that done and get your a.s.s over here"

Grey yelled in excitement when he saw the construct Klaus and Alice were battling was unable to move either of its hands.

Klaus told the other two Water Elementalist in the group. On hearing the way to defeat the constructs, they all quickly put it to use.

Thirty minutes later...

Boom!

The last construct fell on the ground, immobile. The group all sighed in relief. Although they were unable to destroy the constructs, they were able to immobilize them. At least now they could take a rest. They were still trapped in the place though since the time wasn't over yet.

They all took the time left to recover their essence.

One hour later...

A door suddenly opened up at the other side of the hall.

They all looked at the door which opened up. It was the only door they could pass since the one they used in entering the place was still shut. They didn't go in immediately though. It was only after another hour did they all stand up and walked towards the door.

The youth who was injured was carried along by his friends he came with since he couldn't be left in the hall.

After passing through the door, they entered a room. Inside the room, three boxes were lying on the floor by the side, there was a bed, and also a door which led outside the room.

They all stared at each other with cautious eyes. They knew the rewards for passing the hall were likely to be in those boxes.

Grey looked at the others before dashing towards one of the boxes. He wasn't the only one who made a move, the others all made a move as well.

Now the group who fought as a team moments ago were against each other.

Chapter 83 - Simple And Effective!

"Grey, the box on the right, get the box on the right"

Klaus exclaimed from behind.

On seeing the boxes, he suddenly had a gut feeling about the one on the right. His gut feelings weren't usually wrong as it always tends to bring something good.

The trio who were already aiming for the one in the middle quickly changed their direction towards the one on the right. Since Klaus said they should go for the one on the right, then they'll do just that.

Of the ten people in the room, only the injured youth stayed in the same position. Klaus was the one who moved last, but he set his sight on that particular box. He knew given his speed and strength, there was no way he could get it. That was why he quickly told the others to help him get it.

"F.u.c.k off"

Grey sent a lightning orb towards the youth who was about to reach the box Klaus told them to acquire.

The surprise attack stunned the youth as he didn't expect the trio who were already moving towards the box in the middle to suddenly aim at the one he wanted.

"What's the meaning of this?"

The youth yelled in anger.

"That box is mine"

Three people suddenly moved in the direction of Grey and his group.

They were already in front of the box and Klaus had also caught up with them.

Currently, there were three different groups in the room. Grey's group had the highest number with them being four, the group who just spoke consisted of the other youth in the Ninth stage and two youths who were in the Eighth stage. They had already acquired two of the boxes, but their greed was getting the better of them.

Given the fact that they had one person in the Ninth stage, they had no reason to be wary of Grey's group since they felt the only person who would give them a tough time was Alice who was also in the Ninth stage.

Although they didn't know the strength of Grey and Reynolds, but since they were in a higher stage compared to the two, they felt they would be able to easily defeat them. Unfortunately, they didn't even add Klaus to the fray. Even though he was the one who came up with the idea of how to defeat the constructs, they all felt he wasn't strong since he had to rely on Alice during the battle.

"This box is ours. Besides, you guys already took two of the three boxes in the room"

Klaus stepped forward and said.

He was actually quite upset with what the group was doing, they had already gotten two of the three boxes in the room, yet they wanted to take the last one. There was no way he would let that happen.

"Move aside ant, we're speaking with those three"

The youth in the Ninth stage said in disdain. To him, he felt like killing Klaus wouldn't even take much of an effort, so he didn't even put him in his eyes.

"Motherf*****"

Klaus immediately cursed out. He had never been treated in this manner before. And to think he even told them all the method of defeating the constructs. If he knew something like this would have happened, he would have preferred to let them die, it wasn't like he was a saint anyway.

Grey's eyes immediately turned cold, one of the people he hated the most were greedy people. You've already taken three boxes, at least let the others have a share. Even when he robbed...ahem took coins from the bandits, he left them with the copper coins.

Of the three people left by the side, one was injured, one looked at Grey with hateful eyes since he felt the last box was supposed to be his. The last one was hesitating if to help Grey's group or just see how everything played out. He was the one who was supposed to take the box in the middle, but he was attacked by the trio who were currently facing off with Grey's group. In the end, he decided to stay at the side since he didn't know just how strong Grey's group was.

Both groups attacked at the same time. Luckily, the room was spacious enough for the battle. Alice faced off against the youth in the Ninth stage, Grey faced off against the youth in the Eighth stage who was a Water Elementalist, while Reynolds faced off against the last youth who was also in the Eighth stage.

As the battle progressed, Reynolds immediately entered into a passive state. Seeing this, Klaus immediately jumped into the battle. He was already pissed off by the total disregard the youth in the Ninth stage showed him, so his attacks were fierce. The moment Klaus and Reynolds teamed up, the youth quickly fell into the passive state. magic

Klaus and Reynolds had grown familiar with each other's attacking methods since they spared a lot, so their teamwork could be said to be almost flawless.

Grey's opponent was shocked when their battle started. At first, he thought he would be able to easily take care of Grey, but as the battle progressed, he noticed he wasn't even able to fight Grey to a draw, rather, he was on the losing end. He was still able to hold at first, but it all changed the moment Grey started using his earth element.

Alice being the cute, violent girl she was, was already beating the hell out of her opponent. She didn't even give him a chance from the start and just pummeled him mercilessly.

Two minutes later...

"Hahaha, who were you calling ant? Grey, Alice, beat them up"

Klaus laughed out loud as he was enjoying the sufferings of their opponents.

The three people who were watching the battles were all stunned.

"Aren't they a little too strong?"

The youth who was hesitating asked in dread.

"Too strong, too strong"

The other youth said foolishly while nodding his head. He felt happy that he didn't recklessly attack Grey the previous time, else, he would have been beaten up badly. He was in the same stage as the youth Grey was currently beating up.

Of the three battles, Alice's was the most fearsome, while the battle on Grey's side was somewhat steady even though he's beating his opponent. The battle on Klaus's side was, well, somewhat odd.

"Arghh"

A scream of pain suddenly rang out in the room.

When the three spectators looked towards where the scream came from, their eyes opened wide, and they subconsciously held their crotch region with sweat unknowingly pouring out of their bodies. They saw a scene that will frighten every male in the world.

Klaus's leg was currently in between the crotch region of the youth they were battling. The youth's eyes rolled back after the scream, and he immediately passed out from the pain. This was the first time he felt something like this.

When Grey glanced in the direction, he caught sight of what happened and nearly tripped over in shock.

"What the hell!"

He immediately pushed his opponent back before calming his racing heart.

"Kekekeke"

Klaus's psychotic laughter rang out. He felt really good about what he just did. While they were battling with their opponent, okay, beating him up, an idea suddenly popped into his head which he carried out without hesitation. The idea was simple, 'kick your opponent in the balls'.

It was a simple and terrifying move. One attack was all it took to leave his opponent out cold. A sick smile appeared on his face after seeing the results of his attack.

The battle which was going on stopped with that scene. The trio was defeated, and they were defeated badly, to be honest. Grey's opponent was aching all over, so was Alice's opponent. The duo's opponent on the other hand was still out cold.

The other two retreated towards the two boxes they had acquired previously. They picked up their comrade, and just as they were about to leave,

"Leave the boxes behind"

Grey's calm voice rang out.

"You..."

The youth in the Ninth stage eyes bulged in anger and veins were already visible in the side of his head. He regretted his decision of wanting to acquire all the boxes.

After leaving the boxes, just as they were about to leave, another voice rang out,

"And your clothes"

Klaus said mockingly.

The spectating trio almost fainted.

"Isn't this too evil?"

The youth who hesitated previously asked with fear.

"Too evil, too evil"

The other youth repeated the word twice in terror.

In the end, the trio left the place with only their u.n.d.e.r.w.e.a.r on. This was currently the worst day of their lives. The youth who was out cold would have a better time for now since he didn't know what was going on.

"What do you want to do with their clothes?"

Grey felt a headache when he looked at Klaus.

"Nothing, hahaha"

Klaus replied as he casually destroyed them.

After settling that issue, they all turned their attention towards the boxes once again...

Chapter 84 - Ice River Source

The group slowly walked towards the boxes. On getting there, Klaus hurriedly opened the box he initially wanted. He was quite curious about what was inside. He wasn't the only curious one, Grey, Reynolds, and Alice all looked towards it curiously. Even the spectating trio did the same.

When he opened it, he saw a smaller box carefully placed in the middle.

'Who puts boxes in boxes?'

Klaus asked himself.

He picked the wooden box which was roughly twelve inches long and eight inches wide. It had a height of ten inches. The box seemed to be made from an unknown wood, if one didn't look at it closely, they would think it was jade. He slowly opened the box.

On opening it, a bone-chilling coldness enveloped the entire room and Klaus who was closest to it felt like he was about to freeze. But that was not the only thing he felt, he sensed a terrifying amount of water energy from the box. He looked inside and saw a transparent blue tear-shaped crystal the size of an orange. But the crystal wasn't exactly 'solid' because its surface slightly rippled like a teardrop.

"What is that?"

Reynolds asked while shivering from the cold.

"It's an Ice river source"

Alice replied.

She was quite surprised seeing something like this was part of the rewards for passing the trial. She had only read about them in books before.

"Ice river source?"

The others all asked at the same time, among the spectating trio, only one of them didn't look confused, seems like he also knew of it.

On seeing the confused look on the faces of the others, Alice told them what she knew about it. Acquiring an ice river source was very hard since they only formed in the deepest parts of some mysterious rivers with temperatures below freezing point, yet they don't form any ice. These rivers could easily freeze Elementalists in the peak stage of the Origin Plane if they go within thirty meters of where the 'source' is formed.

Only powerhouses in the Overlord Plane could acquire them, and even then, it is a very difficult task to contain the energy. It is very beneficial to Water Elementalist due to the pure water essence it contains.

After hearing what Alice said, Klaus couldn't help but ask,

"If it could easily freeze those in the peak stage of the Origin Plane, how come we're all perfectly fine apart from the chilling cold?"

Given the fact that this was something so strong according to Alice's explanation, it was surprising they were all still okay.

"I don't know, but it seems like the energy inside was controlled, or tamed to the extent that it could be used by those in the Arcane Plane. If you could refine this, there's a high chance that you will break through to the Origin Plane within a month"

Alice smiled as she said.

Usually, due to the freezing cold, only Water Elementalists at the Overlord Plane could use it. But now, given the sudden gentler nature, Klaus could refine it without fear of anything happening.

"A month, that's unbelievable"

Reynolds replied in shock.

Klaus was still in the Sixth stage of the Arcane Plane. It would usually take at least eight months or one year before he should be able to break through to the Origin Plane. Given that they're in this place with much more abundant essence, it should take four months or so. But now Alice was saying all he needed was one month, it was shocking, to say the least.

"It's not unbelievable, that's just the minimum. Given the amount of essence in the source, he shouldn't have a problem with getting to the Second stage, or even the Third stage of the Origin Plane if he was lucky"

Alice added.

They all looked at Klaus with envy, it seems the reward was made especially for him, and the surprising fact was that Klaus told them to get that one initially.

"How did you know what was inside was beneficial to you?"

Reynolds couldn't help but ask. He was quite surprised that the box Klaus told them to get had something this good, and it was totally beneficial to himself.

"A gut feeling, haha"

Klaus answered with a light laugh. He didn't think it would contain something this precious. The thought of breaking through to the Origin Plane excited him also. He carefully closed the box before turning his gaze to the other two boxes. Now he was quite expectant towards what was inside the other two boxes.

Seeing the first reward, the others all looked at the two boxes with excitement. They all prayed it was beneficial to them all, unfortunately, their expectations were shattered when they opened the first box. Inside the first box, laid an odd-looking silver ring.

"That's it?"

Reynolds asked in disappointment.

He looked inside to confirm if there was anything else, but he couldn't find any.

"Why would a ring be placed in one of the boxes?"

He asked again in frustration, he had high hopes for the boxes, but on seeing what was inside the first one, his hopes were crushed. Now all could do was pray the last box had something good.

The others were also disappointed by the outcome, they all expected something good. But seeing the ring, they were all crestfallen, except for Grey. He felt a weird energy around the ring, so he collected it since no one else wanted it.

They moved their attention towards the last box, with hopes not too high, Alice opened it. And just like the last box, what was inside wasn't anything precious, only this was something they could actually use.

The last box contained a tonic, from what they knew, it was used for healing. None of them were injured, so it was also basically useless for now. magic

Grey looked in the direction of the injured youth who was by the side before throwing it towards him since they weren't injured now, it was best they have it to the youth. Although they didn't know them, it didn't hurt to do some good sometimes.

The youth caught the tonic with a surprised expression, he didn't expect they would hand him the tonic. This was something that would be helpful during the time they would spend here since they didn't know when they might get injured. Although his injuries were severe, he should be able to recover within the next two or three months. It's just his chances of advancing in this trial would be shortened, and he might also die if faced with a dangerous situation.

"Thank you"

He tried to bow towards the group, but he couldn't due to his injuries.

His friend also showed his thanks.

"It's nothing. It would be bad if he stays in this state"

Grey replied with a small smile.

"Now that we're done with this, we should get going"

Klaus looked in the direction of the door. They still didn't know what awaited them there. But if he was given a chance, he would find a secluded place and immediately start refining the ice river source.

Grey and the others looked at the door before walking towards it.

"We'll be leaving now"

Grey said to the trio before they disappeared past the door. What awaited them was still unknown.

"Thank you"

The injured youth mumbled under his breath while looking at the tonic in his hands. This was a lifesaving grace he didn't know if he could repay. But he had already placed Grey and his friends in his heart, he will forever remember this kindness...

Chapter 85 - Lost Caves

After walking past the door, the group entered a large hall with two doors. One at the side, and one ahead of them. The door they used in entering the hall disappeared just after they passed through it.

"How mysterious"

Klaus looked at the hall in bewilderment.

"How was this palace even made?"

Reynolds couldn't help but ask.

After passing each door, it always felt like they were being transported into another place entirely. They get the same feeling they had when they passed through the formation to get here. So far, this palace was the most mysterious place they had been to since entering the trial lands, they hadn't been to a lot of places, so this place definitely takes the top spot in mystery.

"The door by the side appears to lead outside the palace. We're given two choices in this round, we can either choose to continue or exit the palace"

Grey walked towards the door by the side and said after inspecting it.

"What do you guys think?"

He asked the group. If he were alone, he would have definitely tried to see what the next round would be, but since they were a group, he had to know what the others all thought about it.

"I think we should continue, maybe we could get something good if we can clear it"

Reynolds was the first to speak up. magic

"You should also be aware that in any trial, the second round tends to be harder than the first. We would be in a tough spot if what we are facing is an opponent in the Origin Plane"

Klaus spoke up after a while.

The others agreed to what he said, trials were usually like this. But still, there was no way they would know what they were going to face until they entered the place.

"But... I still think we should continue since this is a rare opportunity for us"

He added.

"Alice"

Grey and the others looked at her.

Now, all they awaited was her decision, if she said they shouldn't continue, then they'll have to exit the palace.

"Of course we're going to continue"

Alice's lips curved upwards. She has always been one who liked challenges, so there was no way she was going to miss this.

"Great! Since we've all agreed to this, we'll continue the trial"

Grey exclaimed in excitement, he would've felt sad if they didn't continue the trial.

The group looked at each other before walking towards the door ahead of them. After passing through it, they appeared in a cave. The only thing different about this place was that the door they used in entering the place was still there, which meant they could leave the place at any time.

Ahead of them were three paths, now they had to choose which path to take.

On seeing they had to make a decision on which path to take, Grey, Alice, and Reynolds looked at Klaus concurrently.

Feeling their gazes, Klaus stared back at them,

"Why are you all staring at me?"

The puzzled Klaus asked.

"Well, which path do you feel we should take?"

Reynolds asked what was in the mind of the other two.

"Why are you asking me? I've not been here before, so how should I know?"

Klaus retorted abruptly.

"What about your gut feeling?"

Reynolds asked with a long face.

"Damn you! Do you think I can control it?"

Klaus cursed out, he didn't know whether to laugh or cry.

After a bout of cursing between Klaus and Reynolds, the group finally agreed on how to choose the path. Since they were four, and there are three paths, they would all have to point at a path at the same time, the path which two or more people pointed, would be the one they'd take.

In the end, Klaus and Reynolds pointed at the same path. Which was the one in the middle, when they all walked into the path, a voice just like the last one rang out.

"The Second Trial: Lost Caves, Objective: Find The Exit, Time Limit: None"

The voice went silent after this.

"This sounds relatively easier compared to the first trial. All we have to do is find the exit right? How hard could it be?"

Klaus asked the group started walking forward.

Four days later...

"We've been through here before"

A frustrated voice rang out.

"What! How's that possible?"

Another voice asked in disbelief.

"Yap, we've definitely been through here"

Someone else spoke up.

"We passed through here six hours ago"

A fourth voice spoke up, only it was softer compared to the others.

These were obviously Grey and the group, they had been wandering in the cave for four days now, and they still haven't been able to find the exit. What was worse was that they had been attacked by different groups of beasts in the cave, with bats being the most.

"I hate this place!"

Klaus yelled out loud.

"Same here"

Reynolds said.

The cave had a series of paths intertwining, and there are places where they would be faced with multiple paths to choose from. So far, it seems like they have not been able to take the correct path.

"How do they expect us to leave this place?"

Klaus asked in sheer frustration.

"By finding the exit"

Reynolds responded.

"It was a rhetorical question you dumbass"

Klaus shook his head when he glanced at Reynolds.

"Who are you calling dumbass you moron?"

Reynolds retaliated .

The duo once again started a cursing session. This was not the first time they were doing this on the journey, Grey was already used to it, so he didn't even have any plans of stopping them.

He called Alice over and showed her what he had been working on while they had been walking in the maze-like cave during these four days. He had been carefully trying to create a map after they started walking in the cave, although it wasn't accurate, it at least was better than just walking blindly.

The group once again started their journey, with the map Grey created, they were able to not walk in circles again. But there were still times the routes on the map were wrong, and they had to correct it after going in a circle.

Ten days later...

"Finally!"

Klaus exclaimed in pure delight as they walked towards the exit they had finally found.

It took them a total of two weeks to find it from the time they entered the place, and unlike the first trial, there was a bunch of things inside the cave. The auras radiating from each of them was clearly stronger than when they first entered the palace, and Klaus had even broken through to the Seventh stage of the Arcane Plane.

Grey and Reynolds weren't far from a breakthrough as well, they should be able to breakthrough within a week. Among the group, only Alice didn't show any signs of breaking through yet. But it wasn't unexpected since she was already in the Ninth stage of the Arcane Plane and the next breakthrough would take her to the Origin Plane.

Klaus could be said to be the most fortunate since he hadn't even refined the ice river source yet.

"I thought we were never going to leave this place"

Reynolds shuddered at the thought of staying in this place.

The constant attacks they faced from the beasts in the cave had improved their abilities all round, and there was also a faint killing intent that would sometimes radiate from their bodies due to killing too much when they were in the cave.

Walking past the cave, they saw an open field before them. They looked behind them, only to see the big palace.

"So there were only two trials?"

Grey looked back at the palace with a glad expression. He was happy he could experience both trials since they had helped honed his fighting skills. He was confident he would be able to hold on against some Elementalist at the Ninth stage of the Arcane Plane now.

"So what do you all think should be our next course of action?"

Reynolds asked the group.

They all stared at each other, they knew they would have to separate at some time during the trial.

"I think going out separately is the wise choice for now. First, I need to find a secluded place to refine this since keeping it with me isn't a good idea, and there's no way I will agree for you all to stay with me since it would decrease your chances of gaining something here"

"And besides, I don't even know how long it would take me to completely refine it, it might take a month just as Alice said, or, it might take two months"

Klaus was the first to speak up.

"You're right"

The others all agreed with what he said.

"I'll be leaving first, you all better make sure you don't die. I'll try to find you guys after breaking through"

Klaus turned decisively before disappearing into the forest by the side.

Reynolds was the next to leave before Alice went in the other direction. Now, Grey was left all alone.

The true trial has just begun for the group...

Chapter 86 - Jackpot!

Grey stared at the vast landscape ahead of him, from now on, he would have to journey alone. Although having company was great, he still enjoyed being alone in places like this. After taking a deep breath, he set off towards the eastern part of the trial lands.

'I'll increase my strength first before I start exploring the place. I should be able to breakthrough within two days'.

He sensed it wouldn't take up to two days before he breaks through, so he decided to first breakthrough before he heads out since it was always better to increase your strength in places like this.

In this aspect, he slightly felt envious of Klaus. If he had been the one to refine the ice river source, he would definitely have been able to awaken his water element, and it would have been a high grade also. Not just that, but he would have also gotten a higher boost in strength compared to Klaus since awakening a new element will naturally give him an upgrade, added with the essence in the ice river source.

But since it was beneficial to his friend, he wouldn't fight over it with him. It would be great if Klaus would be able to breakthrough given his stage was the lowest among them all. He located a cave not too far from the palace, after confirming it was safe, he immediately started his cultivation.

Later the next day...

"Huuuu"

Grey who was seated crossed leg breathed out a turbid air, after almost a day and half, he had successfully broken through to the Eighth stage of the Arcane Plane, and he could clearly feel the difference in his overall strength. Sending his spiritual energy inside his body, he saw the chaotic form of his essence orb which had three different colors. Getting to this stage, he suddenly remembered what he read about breaking through to the Origin Plane.

On getting to the peak of the Arcane Plane, the essence orb in the body of the Elementalist will transform into a bead that will settle in the dantian. The bead is usually one, but in the case of Dual Elementalist, they have two different beads since they have two different elements. Since he currently had three elements, he would form three beads when he breaks through to the Origin Plane.

He hoped he could awaken a fourth element before he breaks through to the Origin Plane. He felt he wasn't far from awakening both the water and fire elements since he had been comprehending them for a long time now when he didn't try to comprehend either of his three elements. Now, it was time for him to explore this place, if he's lucky, he might be able to break through to the Ninth stage within the next two weeks. If not, it will take him one month.

Calculating the time, he had spent almost three weeks here. He still had over five months left, there was a good chance he might reach the Mid-stages of the Origin Plane before he leaves this place.

Grey got to his feet and walked out of the cave, it was already starting to get dark when.

'I should get something to eat first. I'll think of what to do after that'.

He lightly patted his stomach, during the time they spent in the palace, he didn't eat anything, and he immediately started cultivating after leaving the place. This was the longest he had gone without eating, and although it hasn't started to affect him since Elementalist at the Arcane Plane could easily go over a month without eating, he just enjoyed eating.

Before long, he appeared in a place that looked like a garden.

"I've struck gold"

Grey's eyes lit up as he stared at the garden in front of him. The garden stretched to at least two hundred meters in length and width. There were some plants and fruits he recognized there. If he could refine a good amount, forget about one month, he would be able to break through to the Ninth stage within a week.

"Hahaha, I knew my luck wasn't bad"

Grey laughed out loud as he immediately ran towards the garden. Just as he was about to enter, he suddenly stopped.

"This place should usually have beasts around since it has abundant resources"

He calmed his excited heart and carefully surveyed the area, if he carelessly charges into the garden and ends up being attacked by a strong beast, it would be bad.

"Strange, how come I can't see any beast?" magic

Grey furrowed his brows.

He couldn't see any beast around the area the garden was. Just to be extra sure, he sent out his spiritual energy, although it couldn't cover an overly wide area, it shouldn't have a problem with covering a hundred and fifty meters. If he still doesn't sense any beast, he'll immediately start harvesting.

Another three minutes passed and he still didn't sense any beast, he sent out his spiritual energy three more times to be extra sure before he ran into the garden.

"Haha, a Scarlet Blood Fruit. This place is heaven"

Grey happily plucked the five fruits which were on the tree. These fruits had the unique property of increasing the strength of an Elementalist in a short period of time, they were very rare, and he never expected to find them here. They also had a very faint trace of fire element in them, maybe they might just be what he needed to awaken his fire element.

The garden had different rare plants and fruits he had read about. There was a lot he wasn't familiar with though, but it didn't stop him from collecting them. He was still stuffing his bag when he suddenly heard a noise.

On lifting his head, he saw the head of a bunny popping out from the ground. The bunny twitched its nose like they usually do.

"Huh! Bunny?"

He was slightly taken aback seeing a bunny popping out of the ground, he was stunned by its size though. The bunny Chris had at the valley was only about half a meter tall, but when this one fully emerged from the ground, it was well over a meter in height.

The most surprising thing was its cultivation level, the bunny was already in the Seventh stage of the Arcane Plane.

"Who knew bunnies could cultivate to this stage. Well, you, my friend, came at the perfect time. With these plants, I'll be able to make a great bunny soup"

Just as he got within ten meters of the bunny, he suddenly caught sight of a movement from the side of his eyes.

Pop!

Another bunny popped out from the ground, this one was also in the Seventh stage just like the first one.

"Two bunnies, not bad"

Grey nodded with a smile.

Given his current increase in strength, he didn't have anything to fear in the Arcane Plane any longer, even Alice might not be able to defeat him anymore. Facing two bunnies wouldn't be too much of a hassle, the only thing he felt regretful about was the fact that he could only kill one since there was no way for him to store the other one.

Taking another step, he suddenly froze in place. A series of popping sounds echoed over the place.

Pop! Pop! Pop!...

Looking around, Grey's hair stood on end. Over one hundred bunnies popped out of the ground, and the one with the lowest stage was at the Sixth stage of the Arcane Plane. There were even three who were in the Ninth stage.

Grey stood on the spot staring at the bunnies, the bunnies all stared back at him. It was like he was in a sea of bunnies. Surrounded from all angles, escaping was not going to be easy.

Squeal!

One of the three bunnies at the Ninth stage screech and raised one of its paws pointing it at Grey. With a fierce light in its eyes. Although Grey couldn't hear or speak bunny, he was able to understand what the bunny said. It was one word 'attack'.

Squeal!

The other bunnies reciprocated and just like a moving tide, they all dashed towards the still stunned Grey. The current posture of the bunny was too cute, so he couldn't help but stare a little longer. He was quickly knocked off his daze when the bunny closest to him kicked on the stomach.

"F.u.c.k! Do they know how to fight? I thought they only knew how to bite?"

Grey swore as he immediately turned and fled.

There was no way he could fight against them, if there were only three bunnies, he might have still had plans of making soup, but now, to hell with the soup, all he wanted to do was escape from them. He managed to escape the encirclement after some time.

While he was running, he turned around from time to time to check if they were chasing him. And to his greatest surprise, they were, he thought after leaving the garden they'd let him be. But he was wrong, he almost had the urge to cry. If Klaus or Reynolds finds out he was chased by bunnies, they mock him forever.

He suddenly heard a loud squeal from behind him again, and just like the first time, the bunny in the Ninth stage had the posture of a general telling his soldiers to attack. But unlike the first time, Grey didn't find it cute.

"Bunnies aren't cute like everyone says"

Grey said out loud as he once again used his movement technique to flee from the area.

"Damn bunnies"

Grey cursed while sitting in a crossed leg position inside a hole in a huge tree.

The bunnies surprisingly chased him for over one hour. He could swear the leader of the bunnies gave him a smug look, like, 'I thought you wanted to make bunny soup?'

Looking at his bag, he felt a little excited about his harvest. Although he didn't take a lot which would have guaranteed him a quick advancement to the Ninth stage, they were still better than nothing. Since he was not an Alchemist, there was no way he could fully bring out most of the essence from the plants. The best he could do was just cooking them since unlike fruits, plants shouldn't be eaten directly because there are toxins present in them. There are procedures in extracting their essence, but he did not know of them.

However, cooking them will only bring out at most ten percent of the herbal essence. But he'll have to do with that for now, he didn't plan on using all the plants since he didn't know most of them. What if some of them had poison? Thinking up to this point, he decided to only use the ones he was familiar with.

Since it was dark, he didn't cook the plants, instead, he went into the chaos space and started comprehending the water element.

The days passed by and before Grey knew it, he had been in the trial lands for one month now. This one month could be said to be fruitful since he had been able to advance quickly in his cultivation. Currently, he was just a whisker away from the Ninth stage of the Arcane Plane. The only thing that dampened his mood was that apart from the garden, he hasn't obtained anything good that boosted his strength.

He had searched multiple buildings but couldn't find anything could.

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"A castle"

Grey saw a castle in the distance from the hilltop he was currently on, and made his way towards it.

From the palace he entered the last time, he had big expectations for this castle. Although this place wasn't as big as the palace he entered the previous time, it should have good items inside.

It took Grey three minutes to get to the castle. There wasn't anyone outside the castle, which meant two possibilities, either they were inside, or there was no one here.

He cautiously entered the castle, and before he could walk any further, he heard sounds of battles.

'Someone's fighting? No, seems like a group'

At first, he thought it was a single battle, but from the sounds, it was clear the battle was between two groups.

He sneaked towards where he was hearing the sounds and soon a big hall appeared before him, and he noticed the groups fighting against another. There were at least ten people in each group, and at the side of the hall, six beasts could be seen lying lifelessly on the ground.

'These beasts aren't weak, they are all stronger than an average peak Arcane Plane Elementalist'

Grey thought.

He had battled with beasts that were exactly like these, so he knew just how strong they were.

Focusing his attention back to the group fighting, he saw some familiar faces he saw not too long ago.

'It's them! What are they fighting over?'

He saw them about a week ago. When he was about to enter a compound, he saw this group. They consisted of about ten people, and the one with the weakest cultivation stage was at the Eighth stage of the Arcane Plane. But none of them had been able to break through to the Origin Plane though.

The leader of the group was a refined-looking young man who had sharp features and a warm, gentle smile. When the group noticed Grey, the leader suddenly walked up to him and introduced himself with a calm voice. The way

he spoke was very soothing to the ear and Grey was sure he wouldn't have a problem with convincing people. Just from how he spoke, Grey almost had the notion of befriending him. But when he recognized the students from the Starlight Academy behind him, he quickly dismissed that thought.

Seeing them, he thought they came to find trouble with him.

When the leader noticed this, he laughed before introducing himself to Grey. When Grey heard his identity, he was shocked. The leader of the group claimed he was the twelfth prince of the Qilin empire, and from the way, the students from the Starlight Academy were behaving towards him, it didn't seem like he was lying. He didn't expect the twelfth prince would recognize him, he hasn't even seen this twelfth prince before or any other prince.

He was invited by the prince to join their group, which he politely refused. Since the prince was talking to him calmly, there was no need to be rude to him. But there was something he noticed the moment he refused. He felt a hint of animosity from them, the prince included. Well, he already felt it from the trio from the Starlight Academy the moment they saw him. Although the prince hid it quickly, he was still able to sense it.

'I understand the animosity coming from the students from the Starlight Academy, but I've never met any of the other people. So I don't get the reason they are feeling this way towards me'.

'It shouldn't be because I refused to join them right?'

Grey had always kept his guard up whenever he crosses part with people, he increased it further the moment he recognized some people from the Starlight Academy. He further increased it when he sensed animosity from people he hadn't even made contact with.

.....

'Huh! What's that?'

Grey's attention was immediately drawn to the box which was placed not too far from the fighting group.

'There's an array protecting it, but it seems to have worn down due to time'

'They are probably fighting over who will acquire it. But from the aura radiating from the array, it has been attacked before. It's almost broken even'.

"F.u.c.k you all, this place was found by us. And we also defeated the beasts here, now you all want to claim the reward"

A youth from the other group yelled towards those from the Qilin empire.

The prince replied in a very cool and calm manner,

"It doesn't matter who finds it first, it's who has the strength to acquire what's inside that matters"

The group from the Qilin empire all laughed. They had been here before the other group defeated the beasts, but they hid so as not to alert them of their presence. When the group successfully killed the beasts, they immediately went over to the box but seeing it was protected by an array, they started attacking it. Luckily, the array didn't seem to have a self-repair function, or maybe it had, but it wasn't working properly. They were about to break the array when the group from the Qilin empire showed up and attacked them.

Grey looked at them for a while, the moment he saw the box, his interest was aroused, and he was already plotting on how to acquire it. He didn't care about any prince, if he's a prince, what does it have to do with him? Given his knowledge of arrays, although this array was more complex compared to the ones he knew, they all had the same outline. If he could figure out the weakest link, he could quickly destroy the array and escape with the box.

But he wasn't in a hurry, even if he finds the link now, he couldn't attack since he had to make sure he moved at the best time. The group from the Qilin empire already had the upper hand, and he estimated they would most likely win the battle since the other group was already exhausted from the previous battle with the beasts.

"You should just give up. Some of you are already injured, and there's no way you can contend with us"

The prince tried convincing the group.

It would be better if they didn't have to waste their energy fighting a prolonged battle.

The other group all looked dismayed, they had worked so hard just to get here. Even defeating the beasts wasn't easy, but now, someone wants to take the fruit of their labor. They didn't want to accept it, they couldn't. They would rather fight it out with them, what if what was inside the box was a life-changing item.

The battle soon entered the crucial stage with both groups attacking more fiercely.

Grey knew his time had come since there was no way he would wait for them to finish battling before he makes a move. Now that they were more focused on their opponents, they would not be able to notice him as he sneaks towards the box. He had already picked out the weak link in the array.

'Now'

Chapter 88 - Couldn't You Knock Him In Another Direction?

"This is ours, we can't let them have it"

A youth said persistently.

The sneaking Grey looked at the youth and couldn't help but feel their decision to fight wasn't the best one. From the time he had been watching the battle till now, they were on the losing side. There didn't even seem to be any hope of them being able to turn the tide, yet they still chose to stubbornly hang on. Maybe they had a trump card, he wasn't really sure. It's not cowardly to admit defeat when you know there's no hope of winning. Although there are times in life when even though you know there's no way for you to win, you just shouldn't admit defeat, Grey felt this wasn't the time.

They were in a trial land, a land where treasures were supposedly numerous. There was no way they wouldn't be able to find another treasure, why the hell would they want to give up their lives just because of one? Well, thanks to their stubbornness, he had the opportunity to be the person benefiting.

If the group had given up, there was no way he would have had the thought of stealing the treasure. He wouldn't even be here as he would have immediately left the place the moment he sees the group from the Qilin empire. The thought of stealing the box only came to his head when he realized what was going on, he saw an opportunity when the other group decided to fight resolutely.

But he admired their bravery though, although he felt their choice wasn't a wise one. He even felt his current choice of action was impulsive since if he were to be caught, it wouldn't be great.

The group from the Qilin empire would definitely not let him off. He was already lucky they didn't attack him the first time, stealing the treasure is no different from slapping them in the face. Well, that was on the premise that he was caught. If he could successfully steal the treasure and leave the place with no one noticing it, then it would be perfectly okay.

Boom!

An attack that was dodged by a student from the Starlight Academy landed close to Grey.

'Shit! What the hell!'

Grey almost screamed out loud. Luckily, he was able to quickly regain his composure.

The attack landed just five meters away from him. If he were hit by it, it would have been a painful experience.

There were a bunch of things in the hall he could easily hide behind as he was making his way towards the box.

He would stop and look at the battle to confirm if he should still continue with his plan. It wouldn't be funny if just as he stepped out to take the box, the battle ends and both groups stared in his direction.

Attacks were flying left and right in the battle and the group from the Qilin empire were gaining more advantage against their opponents. If it continues like this, the battle would end in at most ten minutes. Well, that was enough time for him to take the box and make a run for it.

The distance from the door to the other side of the hall was almost five hundred meters, this showed just how big the hall was. Currently, Grey had already gone over one hundred meters.

There was the corpse of one of the dead beasts about sixty meters away from him. This would also be one of the things he would use to hide from the fighting group.

"Arghh"

One of the youths screamed out in pain.

On hearing the shout, the others from his group all looked towards the direction. They saw one of their comrades was seriously injured by his opponent.

"Ah! You animals!"

Another youth shouted in anger and increased the fierceness of his attacks, he was not the only one, his comrades also did the same.

The youth from the Qilin empire furrowed his brow since this was not the result he expected. According to his speculations, after seeing their comrade seriously injured, they'll decide to retreat since their hopes of victory would also be diminished due to the injury. But unexpectedly, they all attacked with renewed vigor. It was like seeing their comrade injured was a form of motivation for them.

"Hmph! Fools who don't know what's good for them"

The youth snorted coldly before he resumed his attacks.

Grey looked at them all and was quite surprised, these people were really passionate.

'Well, the more they fight, the better for me'

Grey thought as he silently moved towards the body of the dead beast.

On getting there, he squatted by the side of the beast. Given its size, there was no problem for it to hide Grey's body even though it was lying on the ground. At the time Grey battled with the beast, he estimated they were at least six meters tall.

Grey who once again focused his attention on the battle, failed to notice that the beast which had its eyes closed previously, was currently staring at him. He even placed his hand on the head of the beast as he stayed in the squatting position.

'Strange, what's this foul smell? I didn't perceive it a moment ago'.

The beast which currently had its mouth open was breathing slowly. The stench which came from the mouth of the beast quickly enveloped Grey's nose.

Trying to sniff out where the stench was coming from, Grey's head uncontrollably turned in the direction of the beast. In fact, his head was right in front of its mouth.

Grey's heart nearly jumped through his throat as he unconsciously retreated. After carefully observing the beast, he breathed a sigh of relief.

'*Sigh* It nearly scared me to death'

Although the beast was still breathing, it was no different from its dead friends around the hall, it couldn't move due to the injuries it had sustained.

Grey looked around to check if his sudden movements alerted anyone, but he was relieved when he saw they were still fighting their battles fervently.

"It's time to join your friends"

Grey murmured as he pierced one of his blades through the eyes of the beast. The blade quickly traveled from the eyes and reached the brain of the beast. The beast twitched when the blade made contact with its eyes, but the twitching stopped the moment the blade reached its brain.

After killing the beast, he checked on the group once more. Seeing they didn't notice anything, he continued sneaking steadily towards the box.

Two minutes later...

'Got it'

Grey thought excited as he broke the array. It wasn't as easy as he thought it would be, the array was much more complex. Looking at it from afar, he could already tell it wasn't on the same level as the ones he had worked with. But when he tried breaking it, he had to reevaluate it. At first, he thought the difference wouldn't be too much, but on getting in touch with it, he noticed just how big the difference was.

He slowly picked the box from the erected stone, and once again starting sneaking quietly towards the door.

'Hehe, before they'll realize what happened, I'll already be long gone'

Grey snickered in his mind as he carefully sneaked towards the door so he could escape.

Bang!

A sound echoed in the room, it was different from when attacks had been landing on the walls of the hall, it sounded like someone hitting a wall. Looking closer, Grey realized it was a youth from the Qilin empire. Seeing where he landed, Grey broke out in cold sweat.

The youth was sent flying, and he smashed into a wall close to where the box was supposed to be. When he managed to stand, he realized the stone he used in supporting himself looked familiar.

He was quite shocked by the sense of familiarity he got from the stone, but he shrugged it off when he couldn't figure out the reason. He couldn't be blamed for not realizing the stone was where the box was placed since he only looked at it the first time they entered the place. The rest of his time had been focused on fighting with the other group.

Just as he was about to get back into the fight, he suddenly jolted and looked back at the stone.

"Where's the box?" magic

At this time, Grey was already fifty meters away from the door.

'Damn! Why did they have to knock him in that direction?'

Grey swore as he immediately dashed towards the door.

Currently, there was nothing he could hide behind and since they had already noticed the box is missing, they will definitely search the entire place. They might even block the door until they were sure the person is no longer in the building. Staying here, wasn't a wise option for him.

The fighting stopped instantly when they heard the youth. How can they still continue fighting, when what they were fighting for was gone?

"Where's it?"

The prince asked with a cold face.

'There is no one else in the hall, or could it be...'

He quickly looked in the direction of the door but only saw the back of the fleeing Grey.

"There!"

The prince dashed towards the door.

When the others saw this, they immediately followed behind him.

Chapter 89 - Black Lightning Crocodile

The moment Grey passed the door, he sensed they had already started chasing after him.

'If not for that moron, I'd have successfully left without them realizing it. Oh well, I'll run first'

Looking at the box in his hands, he couldn't help but feel curious about what it contained.

The size of the box was somewhat impeding his movement speed. He decided to take out what was inside and ditch the box. When he opened it, he was surprised by what was inside. Inside the box laid an egg, it was pitch black in color and was slightly larger than two fists combined.

'An egg'

Grey was slightly dazed and his speed reduced substantially due to him putting most of his focus on the egg. But he quickly snapped out of it and once again increased his speed.

'I'll study it later. But there seems to be a trace of life inside, although it's faint, I can sense it'

He kept the egg in his bag before charging out of the castle.

Some seconds after he exited the castle, the prince came out also. But Grey was nowhere to be found. There were trees around the castle, so there was no way he could guess which direction Grey faced.

"He's fast"

Although he was a Wind Elementalist, he was still unable to catch up to the thief. This could be attributed to the fact that the thief had the head start, and the distance from the castle to the trees wasn't large. But he was sure the thief was fast as well, at least no slower than he was.

Giving chase was useless, given the fact that the terrain was good for escaping.

"Where's he?"

The others slowly caught up with the prince who was standing outside the castle looking in the direction Grey faced.

"Gone"

The prince said indifferently before turning back inside the castle. That was not the only hall in the castle, there were others. So, he wouldn't brood over losing this box. He was upset, that was certain, but there was nothing being angry could do. But there was something he found strange. When he saw the back of the thief, he felt a sense of familiarity. It was like he had seen the person before.

'Who was it?'

He went deep in thoughts as he walked into the castle. He had seen many people since entering the trial lands, so it would be hard for him to remember just who it was from seeing only their back.

"Shit! After all our hard work, another person was the one who benefitted"

A youth from the Qilin empire said angrily.

The other group also felt frustrated, but they were happy the group from the Qilin empire wasn't the one who obtained the box.

"Now you all know how it feels, only in your case, you couldn't even fight back"

A youth laughed out loud, pleased on seeing the misfortune of the group from the Qilin empire.

"Who would have thought you were all working for someone?"

They continued mocking them since they couldn't have it, they were happy the group who blocked them didn't also obtain it.

Under the gloating gazes from the group, the group from the Qilin empire furiously headed back into the castle.

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Five minutes later...

Grey was sitting on a tree with the egg in his hand.

'What could be inside? How come it is still alive?'

He could feel a faint ancient aura coming from the egg. Just how old was the egg? He didn't know. According to what Chris told him, this place was discovered nine hundred years ago. This meant the egg was at least nine hundred years old, that was a terrifying number. How strong was the creature which was inside, for it to still be alive even after so long?

'Or, could it be dragons?'

Grey's imagination started running wild. But unfortunately, there was no way for him to get an answer.

After looking at it for some time longer, there was no change in the egg. He thought maybe the egg would hatch after it was removed from the box, but it didn't seem like it. He placed the egg back into his bag before thinking of where next to head towards.

Two days later...

Bang!

The body of a huge crocodile slammed heavily into the ground.

Grey walked calmly towards the beast.

'It truly does live up to its name'

He thought while looking at the corpse on the ground.

This was the corpse of a rare beast, the black lightning crocodile. The crocodile is equipped with a rare type of lightning, black lightning, hence its name. Its scale is tough and it took Grey a great amount of effort before he was able to defeat it. Well, the crocodile was in the Eighth stage of the Arcane Plane. Had it been in the Ninth stage, there would have been no way he could have defeated it.

Grey felt excited while looking at the beast. This beast could be said to be a walking treasure. Its scale could be used for making clothing that is almost fully resilient to lightning. The lightning element was imbued in its bones which could be refined with weapons. There are rare weapons that have attributes imbued in them, if an Elementalist uses a weapon that was imbued with his element, the attack power will be increased by almost twenty percent. These weapons are known as elemental weapons.

But the most important treasure in the body of this beast to Grey was its heart. The black lightning crocodile heart is called a water heart pulse. It was biased towards to water element and had the effect of cleansing the body. In Grey's situation, he wouldn't have a problem in awakening his water element if he acquires it.

"Who's there?"

He asked as he vigilantly looked around.

Three young men walked out behind the trees around the place. They all had a smile on their faces.

"You've done well. Now, we'll take it from here"

One of the youths said while chuckling lightly.

"Take what over?"

Grey asked with a long face. He could already guess what they were saying, but he hoped it wasn't what he thought.

"Are you dumb? Or just acting like you are? Step away from the beast"

Another youth said.

Grey's face went dark when he heard this. How could he accept this? After fighting so hard to kill the crocodile, now the spoils were about to be taken by others. Now he knew why that group refused to give up. After painstakingly defeating the beasts, then someone would just step out of nowhere and tell you to leave it, which was impossible to accept.

Grey studied the group and his heart sank when he realized their stages, two of them were in the Ninth stage, while the last one was in the Eighth stage.

He couldn't leave the heart behind given how important it was to him. But the chances of his victory weren't even close to forty percent.

"All I need is one thing from it, you can have the rest part of it"

He tried to negotiate a deal, getting the heart was a must for him since he couldn't guarantee he would be able to see this creature again anywhere. This was a rare beast to start with, and they were very difficult to deal with given their strength. Even if he sees another one, what if it was stronger than he is? magic

"No! Now get lost before I lose my patience"

The last youth who hasn't said anything spoke up.

Compared to the other two, he had cold eyes which were filled with killing intent.

The three youths were currently twenty meters away from him. Grey couldn't accept the fact that this opportunity will pass him by, steeling his mind, he held his blades in front of him and prepared himself for battle.

Against one of them, he was confident he would be victorious. But against three of them, his chances weren't that good.

"You want to fight against us?"

The youth with cold eyes asked while laughing.

The other two also started laughing like they had heard the funniest joke. Even if Grey were to be in the Ninth stage of the Arcane Plane, his chances of victory against them were almost zero. With two being in the Ninth stage, and

one being in the Eighth stage, they could be said to be almost invisible if they faced a three-man team also.

Grey didn't bother answering and just stayed in the same position. As long as he could take out one of them quickly, his chances of victory will be increased. And the delay was exactly what he needed.

The trio was mocking him, while he was currently busy inscribing. He was trying to inscribe at least two symbols before the battle starts, with that, he'll be able to at least take one of the trios out of the picture.

"Hmph! Fool"

The trio immediately attacked him.

'Couldn't they mock me a little more?'

Grey thought as he used a defensive technique to block and also used his movement technique to evade their attacks. He wasn't done with the inscription before they attacked him.

He knew inscribing will be harder now since he also has to focus on the battle. If he lost focus just for a moment, he'll be in a tough spot. Now, all he had to do is delay them till he's able to finish his inscriptions.

Chapter 90 - Don't Celebrate Too Early

"Shit!"

Grey cursed on seeing the attack which was currently flying towards him.

Bam!

The attack landed on his body, and he was sent flying. He landed almost fifteen meters away from his previous spot.

Looking at the earthen armor which was almost completely ruined from the attack, he couldn't help but feel lucky for awakening his earth element sooner. Had it been delayed just like the other elements, he would have been in serious problems in his current battle.

With the increase in his grade and stage, the strength of the earth armor has increased significantly. If before, it could defend against an all-out attack from

someone in the Sixth stage, now it had no problem defending an attack of someone in the Eighth stage at least twice. But against someone in the Ninth stage, it could only withstand one attack.

He stared at his opponents calmly, being hit had disrupted his inscribing, now he has to start all over. If only he was already as proficient as Chris was, then he wouldn't have a problem dealing with these people.

"He's from the Qilin empire"

The youth in the Eighth stage suddenly said.

"Qilin empire, hmm, at first I only wanted to beat you up and let you go. But now, I've changed my mind, this will be your burial ground"

The cold-looking youth said arrogantly.

Although he was surprised Grey was able to survive their first onslaught of attacks. It still didn't change the fact that, to him, Grey wasn't an opponent who could bother them.

"What makes you feel you're capable of achieving such feats?"

Grey said in disdain.

'Since there's a chance to talk for some time, I'll take it happily'

Normally, he wouldn't entertain them, but these aren't normal times. He needs the heart of the beast, and there was no way fighting with them normally will work. If he could take out one of them, or even two before the fight gets to the critical point, then that would be great.

"You'll know soon enough"

The youth didn't waste time and immediately went on the offensive.

"Wait!"

Grey suddenly stretched out both arms in front of him.

Seeing this, the youth narrowed his eyes but still halted.

"What?"

He asked coldly.

"Where are you from?"

He really didn't give a shit where they came from, but currently, he'll do almost anything to delay them.

The trio looked at him before the other youth in the Ninth stage asked,

"Why are you asking?"

When he heard their reply, he felt elated. If he could at least delay them for three minutes, then it'll be great. But he knew that was just a pipe dream.

"Oh you see, I haven't really interacted with anyone outside my empire, so I thought maybe you could tell me how things are in your emp..." magic

Boom!

Grey who was still speaking quickly dodged to the side and an attack landed where he was previously standing.

'So impatient'

He complained as he once again engaged in battle with the trio.

Well, so far, Grey really hasn't been having a good time. Attacks were landing on him left and right, and he had used earth armor so many times that he couldn't keep count. Usually, after making the armor the first time, it stays with the Elementalist till the end of the battle unless it takes heavy attacks that will destroy it. But unfortunately for Grey, each time he makes one, it doesn't last up to a minute before it's destroyed, some were even destroyed instantly.

His still being able to fight is mostly because of the earth armor and his movement technique. Currently, he felt like the speed boost he got from both the lightning and the wind element isn't enough, as, although he was fast, he couldn't dodge all of them.

"He's strong"

The cold-looking youth said with a stunned expression.

Given their strength, they should be able to easily overpower Elementalists at the Ninth stage of the Arcane Plane. Yet, they have been unable to put down this person who is clearly in the Eighth stage. What's worse is that he isn't only defending, but he's attacking as well.

They've seen Dual Elementalists before, but they have to admit that Grey was the strongest they've seen. Unknowing to them, Grey was also using his wind element, but he was only using it to increase his speed and not using it to attack, so there is no way they'll find out.

The youth previously believed he could even deal with Grey on his own, but now, he knew he stood no chance against him. He even felt threatened, and it infuriated him, how can someone who is in a lower stage compared to him be stronger than he is? Not just that, but he also felt a sense of threat from him?

He immediately strengthened his resolve to kill Grey.

"We must kill him"

They nodded their heads. He wasn't the only one who felt threatened by Grey, they also felt the same way. If they battled Grey one on one, they would not last five minutes before he makes short work of them.

Their opponent was from the Qilin empire, and there have been rumors saying they'll be going to war with the Qilin empire soon. The trio was from the Azure empire. And naturally, they'll also take part in the war. If they were to allow Grey to grow further, he'll become a big threat to them if the war starts.

Someone like Grey could greatly influence the flow of a battle since he can take on several opponents who are in a stronger stage than he is.

Their attacks became fiercer and soon, injuries started appearing in Grey's body. Although they weren't severe, at the rate the battle was going, it wouldn't be long before he falls.

Six minutes later...

'Just a little more'

Grey told himself.

He was already starting to lose hope in the battle as his inscriptions had been stopped halfway countless times during the battle. But this time, he was already almost done, in another minute, his inscription will be complete. Then these people will get it from him.

While the battle was going on, something was taking place that none of the people there noticed. Grey's blood was slowly flowing towards his bag like it was being attracted by a strange force.

Inside his bag, the previous pitch black egg was different compared to its previous appearance. Now, if one looks closer, they'll notice vein-like red lines moving around the egg, it was like a moving blood vessel. Grey's blood flowed in the direction of the egg and it in turn absorbs it. But there's no way the bleeding Grey will realize the blood which was flowing from his body was moving in the direction of the egg.

'Lightning Rain'

Grey used one of his strongest moves.

The trio was slightly taken aback by the sudden appearance of the lightning, but the two at the Ninth stage were able to escape the range of the attack quickly. The youth in the Eighth stage wasn't as fast as they were, and he was caught in it.

"Great!"

Grey didn't think twice and sent an earthen spear towards his opponent.

His current motive was simple, and that was to, kill these people. The thought of letting them go if he were to defeat them had already far left his head. He already noticed the killing intent from them, since they want to kill him, why would he let them go if he had the chance.

When he started cultivating, one of his mottos was, as long as you attempt to kill me, then I'll kill you first. Showing mercy to your enemies is the same as hurting yourself, he learned that from the different books he had read which told the stories of some legends who fell because they decided to show mercy to their enemies.

He already marked them dead the moment he sensed their killing intent.

The youth in the Eighth stage was unfortunately hit with paralysis when the lightning touched him, so all he could do was stare as the earthen spear moved towards him. Fear and despair were visible in his eyes, he didn't want to die.

The youth who closed his eyes opened them after some time. When he noticed he wasn't hit by the earthen spear, tears of joy fell from his eyes. He survived, he had escaped death.

A smile appeared on his face after this thought flashed through his head. But then, his smiling face froze, and his eyes were filled with unwillingness as his body fell lifelessly on the ground, he was dead.

"Don't celebrate too early"

Grey who noticed the youth's joy when he realized he wasn't hit said with a cold smile.

"How?"

The cold-looking youth asked dumbfounded.

He destroyed the attack Grey sent towards his friend, so how did he still get hit and die?

The other youth also stared at the dead youth with fear eminent in his eyes.

'Who attacked him?'

At the thought of this, he quickly looked around but still couldn't find anyone.

Grey stared at the two stunned youths and his smile grew colder.

"This place is really fitting for a burial ground. Only, it won't be mine"

He said as he launched himself towards them, above him was a silver symbol.