

## Death 1351

Death... and me

Chapter 1351: Help

To make sure the same thing wouldn't happen again, the Armored Salamander focused its ability on the area around the twins' group. If it was already hard to move before, then it was just plain impossible now. Naturally, Rean and Roan tried to access the Soul Gem Dimensional Realm after that. However, they were unsurprisingly restricted as they were obviously in a dangerous situation.

'What do we do now?' Rean could not help but ask.

'Nothing. There's nothing we can do at the moment. Considering that Salamander's power, even burning our Divine Souls won't help,' Roan replied with a dark expression.

Hurio and Lilia were at a loss as well. Hurio was already having a much harder time as he was protecting Lilia from the Fire attribute imbued in the Salamander's spatial ability.

However, the Armored Salamander didn't attack straight away. Instead, it seemed to be paying attention to the twins for some reason. No, to be more specific, it was looking at Rean. At the moment, Rean was using his Light Element to heal the burning injuries that the Salamander's presence was inflicting on everyone's body. If a chance to escape appeared, they had to at least be in condition to move.

The Salamander's enormous head, bigger than Kentucky's whole body, then stopped right in front of their group. It was possible to feel the temperature increase by several degrees, with the lava still falling from its back. Its breath could be felt up close, making their situation even harder to bear. It was then that an ancient voice echoed in their group's ears as the Salamander's mouth moved.

"Do... you... have... Light... Affinity...?"

Everyone was taken aback, not expecting the Armored Salamander to speak at all. From what they heard from Hurio, the ancient beasts in the Lost Star Realm shouldn't have intelligence, so how come this one can speak? Could it be that it wasn't an ancient beast?

However, Roan also noticed something strange. 'If it only acted on instinct, it wouldn't have let Celso's group escape. Instead, it would have definitely tried to stop them as that elder was much stronger than us. But instead of that, it simply gave up and didn't show any reaction at all. That's not the behavior of a wild beast.'

Rean, of course, immediately answered, "I do have Light Element Affinity, sir."

The Armored Salamander's enormous eyes narrowed in response. Rean wasn't an idiot and used even more of his Divine Soul Power to gather Light Element and use it for healing. Only someone with Light Element Affinity like him could do so much like that. Whatever the reason was for the Salamander to focus on his Light Element didn't matter. What mattered was that it wasn't attacking them because of it.

The Salamander seemed to know that Light Element Affinity beings were able to heal others, while those who used Yang Energy to control Light Element couldn't. At least, that's what Rean thought since the only thing he showed was his ability to heal others, and that's why the Salamander stopped.

The Salamander watched as Rean continued to use his Light Element to heal Roan and the others from the burnt injuries caused by his Fire Element. Eventually, it seemed to have reached a conclusion before its ability from before changed into the simple spatial restriction. The Fire Element in it disappeared, and the Salamander retreated a little as it could see that its own body temperature was also affecting Rean's group.

After that, the Salamander looked in the direction of the volcano it came out.

\*Rooooooar!\*

Rean's group was much closer to it now, so just the roar alone made the Divine Energy in their dantians go out of control. If not because the Salamander was holding them in place with its spatial abilities, they would all have fallen from the sky already. Well, one couldn't fly more than twenty meters in this Lost Star Realm, so they wouldn't suffer any significant injuries with their cultivations anyway.

A few seconds later...

\*Roarrr!\*

Another roar came out of the volcano. It's just that this one was much milder, with little to no effect on Rean's group at all. Following that, a small ball of lava shot out of the volcano, appearing beside the gigantic Armored Salamander.

\*Bang!\*

The lava then kept falling down as that small ball began to spread open, just like the Armored Salamander did. It turned out that it was a much smaller Armored Salamander. The same white and red scales as the big guy, but miniaturized in a way. Of course, considering the size of the bigger one, the small one was still bigger than even Kentucky. It's just that it looked like a kid when standing beside the bigger one.

However, Rean immediately noticed something wrong with it. A huge chunk of its back armor was nowhere to be seen. Two of its four legs were gone as well, while one of its eyes had a clear mark of penetration. Rean found it quite hard to believe that it was even alive at the moment. One didn't need to be a doctor to tell that this small Armored Salamander was feeling a lot of pain.

The bigger Salamander then looked at Rean before using its spatial powers to bring him close to the smaller Salamander. "Help... him... I'm... mother... help..."

Rean didn't know that the big guy was, in fact, a girl. Nevertheless, he had to use this opportunity. "Will you let us go if I help?"

The mother seemed to have some difficulty processing Rean's words. It was obvious that she didn't have that much intelligence. However, after a few moments, her enormous head nodded. "Yes..."

It was hard to tell if the mother had even understood Rean's meaning or not. Then again, seeing how they were all at the Salamander's mercy, he could only trust that it did and that it would keep its words. As for a Soul Binding Contract, it would be useless against such a being. "Alright, I'll help him as well as I can."

With that, Rean touched the kid's body, who didn't seem to like it at all. It even tried to attack Rean. But after its mother roared at it, the small Armored Salamander became as docile as a puppy. Rean couldn't

help but let out cold sweat, though. Since he was touching the kid, he could naturally tell its cultivation.. 'So small, yet it's already at the Peak Stage of the Transition Realm. Just how strong is the mother then?'

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Chapter 1352: Not Supposed To Happen

Obviously, Rean couldn't feel it due to their difference in strength. Even using his Divine Sense bending skill would make it hard to guess. It was quite unfortunate that Divine Senses were useless here, so the mother Armored Salamander didn't even use it.

In any case, Rean used his Divine Soul Power to gather Light Element before channeling it into the smaller salamander. Due to the difference in cultivation and the size of the salamander, the healing process took over an entire hour. Not to mention that Rean was only able to heal or regrow the living parts of the ancient beast. The scales, for example, would need to regrow on their own once again. Nevertheless, the kid salamander now felt perfectly well, especially since its vision returned to normal.

"Phew..." Rean then looked at the Armored Salamander with some apprehension, saying, "Ahem... he's fine now. The scales will regrow at some point, but he's at no risk of dying anymore."

The mother looked at it with tender eyes. However, the now-healed small salamander looked at Rean as if it was looking at food. It didn't have any intelligence, so all it wanted was to fill its belly, even if it meant eating the person who helped it.

However, the mother salamander immediately roared at the kid in anger, which stopped the small salamander from doing as much as opening its mouth. It only looked at her with a sad expression, feeling hungry.

\*Roar...\*

\*Roar, roar...\*

After a few moments, the small Transition Realm salamander took flight and dove into the volcano once again, leaving only Rean's group and the big mommy behind. The salamander then approached Rean with its big head, making Rean feel like an ant. However, this time, there was no heat coming from her. She kept it sealed with her own spatial abilities.

\*Vush...\*

It was then that it breathed at Rean's face. Rean almost lost his balance due to the strength of the gale, but that wasn't what surprised him. Instead, it was the fact that his Light bending skill that kept his Dragon Wing Mark hidden was broken apart. Soon after, the Dragon Wing Mark appeared in its full splendor. Rean and the others got nervous after that, afraid that it was a bad thing. Yet...

"Follow... I... Protect..."

Protect? Naturally, that shocked them even more. The mother salamander... an ancient beast with such high cultivation that it even had some intelligence. The ancient beasts' races were obviously different from the demon beasts outside the Lost Star Realm. They didn't acquire intelligence at the Transition Realm. It looked like they needed much, much higher cultivation for that. And now, such a powerful ancient beast would protect them? Not even Hurio and Lilia had heard of such a thing before.

Then again, although the mother salamander told them to follow her, the truth was that she held everyone with her spatial powers. They didn't have the ability to move at all as she pulled them away. She was gigantic, that's for sure. But just like the other ancient beasts in the Lost Star Realm, she could use spatial powers to move much faster than Kentucky could even imagine. Let alone the twins, Hurio, and Lilia.

Rean couldn't help but ask, "Senior, where are you bringing us?"

The mother Armored Salamander glanced at Rean with its giant eyes for a moment but didn't answer. Instead, it kept teleporting at extreme speeds while bringing Rean's group with it. Well, the second level was just so big, so with the Armored Salamander's power, she only took a minute or so to arrive at its destination.

It turned out that the mother salamander brought Rean's group to another volcano, a very big one at that. Below, it was easy to see the giant pool of lava that stretched for over five kilometers from one side to another.

It was then that Rean, Roan, Hurio, and Kentucky's Dragon Marks began to shine with ice-blue light. That light touched the lava pool below as it began to bubble. Rean's group immediately remembered that

they were supposed to look for a pool, a Dragon Pool. It's just that they didn't consider the idea that the pool wasn't filled with water. Instead, it was lava.

\*Roar!\*

After a few moments, the lava pool split apart as a small white dragon came out, identical to the one they saw on the first level. No, there was a small difference between this one and the white dragon back in the first level. In the first level, the dragon was also white but had a faint blue hue over it. This one, however, had a faint red hue instead.

The small dragon then looked at Rean's group and immediately felt the Dragon Wing Marks on their foreheads. However, instead of proceeding with its duty to pass over the second mark, it looked at the Armored Salamander instead and said, "Why is there a Star Armored Salamander helping the candidates? You should know that all the ancient beasts are forbidden from helping the cultivators during the Lost Star Selection."

The mother Armored Salamander couldn't help but show a fearful expression after that.

\*Roar, Roar, roar... Roarrrrr, roar!\*

Rean's group obviously couldn't understand a single thing other than that she was roaring. However, the small white dragon was different. "Light Element Affinity? Plus he saved your son with that? You know that's not possible. The humanoid races of the Realm of Gods shouldn't have Light Element Affinity cultivators. Only Demon Beasts and Spirits should have a few races with this kind of Elemental Affinity."

\*Roar, roarrrr, roar, roarr, roawww.\*

After hearing a few more things from the Mother Salamander, it narrowed its eyes and looked at Rean, telling him, "Show it to me."

Rean couldn't help but swallow some saliva before nodding. Soon after, he used his Divine Soul Power to gather the surrounding Light Element.

Naturally, the small dragon was able to tell that Rean wasn't using Yang Energy to do that. It was truly Rean's Elemental Affinity, so it greatly surprised the small white dragon, prompting it to mutter, "That's not supposed to happen...."

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Chapter 1353: Rules Broken

Of course, Rean had to ask after that. "Is there a problem? Can't I have Light Element Affinity?"

The small dragon seemed to have ignored Rean's words as it fell into deep thought. Seeing that, Rean's group couldn't help but think to themselves, 'This one seems a lot more sentient than the small dragon on the first floor. That one acted more like a puppet.' Of course, they didn't say that to the small dragon at all.

A few minutes later, the small dragon sighed before saying, "Alright, let's leave it for now. This isn't something anyone in this place can do something about." After that, he looked at Rean's group. "Seems like the four of you have the Blue Dragon Wing Mark, so I'm going to pass onto you the second one."

Before the twins' group could say anything, the marks on their foreheads began to change once again. In between the Ice-Blue Dragon Wings, a red body began to take form. It wasn't a painful process or anything like that. Just like the Dragon Wings, the small dragon scanned the surroundings to check who the five most worthy people were to get the mark. With that being said, the four people it considered worth taking ended up being the twins' group once more. That was what the Dragon Tail Brotherhood's disciples were expecting to happen back in the first level if Rean's group didn't receive the marks in their place.

After it finished, the marks on the foreheads of the twins' group now had a red dragon body with blue wings, and both seemed to fit each other. The only thing that remained was the dragon tail and its head. "Alright, I'm done. As you probably know, the girl wasn't considered in this distribution of marks since she doesn't have the first Dragon Wing Mark from the blue dragon."

Hurio didn't waste this opportunity and immediately asked back, "Sir, do you think she will die if she doesn't gather all three marks?"

The small dragon looked at Hurio with some surprise in his eyes. "Your group came here, and you don't even know how things work?" However, the small white dragon quickly noticed something, saying, "Oh,

I see it now... in the last 52 selections, it was always those people from that Dragon Tail Brotherhood or whatever who gathered the Dragon Marks. Well, seems like they missed my pool this time around. However, I'm not the only dragon on this second floor giving the second mark, so they should be able to find the others."

After that, it answered Hurio's question. "Anyway, anyone who doesn't pass the selection will not be able to enter the Separated Plane that can be found in this Star Realm. That means they'll have to fight the Star Light Waves that come out once every year. Just so you know, there are a total of ten waves, and the second one passed by a few months ago. If she can resist the waves on her own, she'll obviously survive."

He then continued, "As for the people who enter the separated planes, they will have an entire week there. After this time is up, they will be automatically teleported outside the Star Realm. As for where they'll land, that's totally random. All I can say is that they will appear somewhere inside the continent where our Star Realm had fallen into."

Little did the twins know, but the small white dragon had never talked that much before. It was only because of Rean's Light Element Affinity that he decided to open his mouth. If the Dragon Tail Brotherhood or any of the other top ten powers' disciples were here, they wouldn't believe the small dragon could talk so much.

Lilia bitterly smiled after hearing that. Resist eight more waves? She had no hope of resisting even a single one, let alone eight. Hurio, of course, didn't stop there. "Isn't there another way? She doesn't have a chance to survive that at all."

The small dragon didn't answer, though. Instead, he looked at the mother Armored Salamander. "I understand why you brought them here. First, you wanted to thank them for saving your child. Second, you knew I would be interested in a Light Element Affinity cultivator. However, it doesn't change the fact that you broke the rules and shouldn't have done that.

As soon as the mother Armored Salamander heard that, she took several steps back as the fear on her face increased. Nevertheless, she didn't regret it since her child was fine now. He would have definitely died if not for Rean's treatment, so paying for it with her life wasn't a problem at all.

The small white dragon's wings suddenly expanded as some kind of power began to gather on them. After a moment, the small white dragon flapped its wings, releasing several white and red beans of light



that aimed for the mother Armored Salamander's head. They moved quite slowly to the point that even Kentucky could dodge them if he used his full speed. Let alone the mother Armored Salamander.

However, the small white dragon also used its spatial powers to lock the Mother Salamander in place. The mother Armored Salamander's spatial power was definitely huge. That guy from the Dragon Tail Brotherhood couldn't hold a candle to it. However, in front of the small white dragon, she was even worse. They simply weren't in the same league at all.

The mother Armored Salamander could only close her eyes and wait for death. Yet, at the last moment, Rean jumped from Kentucky's back, placing himself right in front of the light beams. He wasn't the only one, though. Roan was also there, having taken the same action as Rean.

Hurio and Lilia were taken aback to see that. Were they crazy? Something that could kill the mother Armored Salamander would obviously pulverize their bodies. What the hell were they thinking?

However, at the last moment, the light beams changed in several different directions, trying to avoid the twins. Many disappeared into the skies while others hit the ground.

\*Boom, boom, boom, boom, boom...\*

The fabric of space itself broke apart as spatial storms began to rampage in the area. Just the shockwaves from the explosions alone should be enough to annihilate the twins and their group. However, that didn't happen.. At the same time the light beams changed direction, a spatial barrier appeared around the twins' group, protecting them from the explosions.

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Chapter 1354: Protect

Rean then looked behind him as he couldn't help but narrow his eyes. Even though the twins' actions forced the small white dragon to divert its attack, some of the light beams still hit the Armored Salamander. She wasn't able to defend that well, so she received quite the injuries over her body, breaking a few parts of her armor. Fortunately, it wasn't anything serious as nothing vital was hit.

Of course, the small white dragon didn't like what the twins did. "Why did you do that? If I hadn't changed the direction of the attack and protected your group, you would all be dead right now."

Rean and Roan understood one thing about this Lost Star Selection, the white dragon couldn't do anything to the cultivators trying to be selected for it. They were certain that the small white dragon would have to change the trajectory of its attacks if they intervened. Otherwise, they wouldn't have jumped in front of the salamander. As to why they did that, neither Rean nor Roan liked to own favors. Rean saved the Star Armored Salamander's son's life, and in exchange, she allowed them to obtain their second mark.

However, the marks were worth much more in their eyes than what Rean did for the mother Armored Salamander. After all, healing was something way too easy for Rean at the moment. Last but not least, they simply didn't like the idea that she had to die just because she helped them.

"What else would be a reason as to why would we do that? She helped us get here, so we can't let her die just like that, you know? Come on! If you had a child, you would also do anything to protect it, even break these weird rules of yours. Can't you just let her go? I doubt she'll break the rules again."

Hearing that, the small white dragon looked at the twins and then at the Armored Salamander's giant body. He had been in charge of delivering Dragon Marks for a very, very long time. However, this was the first time he had ever seen someone try to protect one of the Lost Star Realm's ancient beasts. "You know you won't gain anything from your actions, right?"

Roan snorted in response, saying, "Hmph! We don't need anything else to start with. Just let her go, and then we'll leave as well. If helping us is breaking the rules, then protecting us with the barrier is also breaking the rules."

The small dragon was taken aback to hear that, saying in response, "I protected you because attacking the participants is prohibited for the beings in this Lost Star Realm."

"It's also prohibited to protect them, and you did just that," Rean smiled as he said that. "So, how about we pretend that nothing happened? We won't tell anyone about what happened, and neither will you. We all know you definitely have some authority here, so you can do that at least once, right?"

Surprisingly, the small white dragon seemed to clearly be in an internal conflict after that. However, a few moments later, it decided to let it go. "Fine! It's true that you're playing with the rules to force my hands. However, it's not like I want to kill that Star Armored Salamander either. It's very hard for ancient beasts to attain intelligence, and she's one of the very few who did."

The small white dragon then looked at the Star Armored Salamander, telling her, "Since that's the case, you might as well protect them until they leave the Lost Star Realm. Consider that a way to pay for their intervention and their meddling with the rules."

The twins' group was shocked to hear that. Protect them? The Armored Salamander? Wouldn't that mean they were invincible in this Lost Star Realm?

Of course, the small white dragon knew what they were thinking. "However, you can only protect them. You can't kill anyone as it would be too much for the other beast mark givers to accept."

Naturally, the mother Armored Salamander was delighted to hear that she wouldn't have to die today.

\*Roar! Rooorr, roarwww...\*

The twins didn't understand what she was trying to say at all, but they could guess that she simply accepted the task with glee. It was a lot better than being killed, after all.

After that, the lava pool under the volcano opened again as the small white dragon dove into it. It then returned to its previous state as if nothing had happened at all.

Roan couldn't help but sigh after that. "I had a lot more things to ask him..."

Kentucky nodded, saying, "Me too. I wanted to know what we should expect on the other plane. That little girl said that Divine Origin Energy isn't the only thing there."

Hurio and Lilia, who had been silent until now, didn't get what they wanted, though. "In the end, he didn't tell us anything that can be used to survive through the Light Element Wave."

Rean looked at those two like they were idiots, tilting his head as he told them, "What are you talking about? Lilia can totally make it through the last eight waves now."

"I can?" Lilia didn't understand where Rean got that idea from. "How?"

Rean then pointed at the gigantic Armored Salamander on their side. "The white dragon told her that she had to protect us until we left the Lost Star Realm. With the mother Armored Salamander's power, she can totally keep Lilia safe until all ten waves have gone through. It's just that she'll be leaving the Lost Star Realm much later than us since those that are sent into the second plane are teleported out one week later.

\*Rooorr...\*

The Mother Salamander seemed to have understood what Rean said and nodded while roaring a little. Her duty would only be finished once Rean's group, which included Lilia, was all outside the Lost Star Realm.

Lilia and Hurio's eyes lit up when they saw that. "Great!"

With that, Hurio's main concern was finally solved. In fact, Lilia would be one of the best-protected cultivators in the entire Lost Star Realm, so he couldn't hope for more.

Nevertheless, Rean was curious about one thing. "Why did the small white dragon order the salamander to protect us, though?"

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Chapter 1355: Yes, Elder

Indeed. Even though the twins played with the rules to save the Armored Salamander, it simply didn't explain why the small white dragon ordered her to protect them. That was obviously much worse when the rule of not helping the participants was taken into consideration. Were the twins' interference and bending of the rules that effective to warrant such an order? Rean, Roan, Kentucky, Hurio, and Lilia highly doubted that.

"Oh well, such a result is still more than welcome," Rean said after thinking about it for a bit and getting nowhere. "Whatever the reason may be, it's a good thing for us, especially Lilia. Actually, not only Lilia. If Roan, Kentucky, Hurio, or I fail to be selected, we will also rely on the mother Armored Salamander's power to survive the Light Element Waves."

Roan then looked at the Armored Salamander after that, saying, "Then again, I don't think she'll have much to protect. With such a gigantic ancient beast following us around, none of the other participants will even dream about getting close to us."

As soon as Roan said that, the mother Armored Salamander's body began to shrink at a very fast pace. The several kilometers body quickly shrank within the span of a few seconds. Eventually, it reached the size of a normal lizard. It's just that it still had the mother ARMored Salamander's appearance.

"Cu...Cute!" Lilia couldn't help but say that. Indeed, the little mother Armored Salamander, with her white and red scale armor, did look very cute at this moment. Unsurprisingly, Lilia wanted to pet the mother Armored Salamander, but she refrained from doing so. That thing was who knows how many times more powerful than herself.

The Armored Salamander then floated to Rean's shoulder and held itself there, telling him, "I... protect... if... necessa...ry..." From the looks of it, she had no intention to bring the twins' group around. Her mission was only to protect, so she wouldn't show them where the next mark could be found either.

Kentucky then asked the mother Armored Salamander, "What about your kid? Is it okay to leave him alone for such a long time?"

The mother Armored Salamander nodded, telling Kentucky, "He... sleep... next... ten... years..."

"Ten years of sleeping?! Holy shit!" Naturally, Kentucky was surprised to hear that. "Well, if he gets to sleep for ten years inside that volcano, then I think he should be safe."

Lilia couldn't help but ask after that, "By the way... do you have a name?"

The Armored Salamander looked at Lilia for a moment before shaking its head in the end. "No..."

"Alright, I'm going to call you Sally from now on." Rean immediately came up with a name...not that it was very original, though. "Using the term mother Armored Salamander every single time is annoying."

“Sa...lly...” The Mother Salamander did seem to like it, though. “I... accept...”

Well, Roan couldn't care less about the salamander's name. “Alright, since everything ended well, let's head to the third floor. It's very likely that we're one of the very first groups to acquire the second mark, so we have quite a good position in the Lost Star Selection.”

Naturally, no one was against Roan's words. With that, Kentucky let everyone jump on his back before taking flight once more. Rean also took the opportunity to heal Sally's body since she was touching him. They weren't serious injuries, but due to her level, it would take a very long time to heal them on her own.

However, while they were heading to the exit, little did they know that another group of the Dragon Tail Brotherhood watched things unfold from a hidden area far in the distance. They had found this Dragon Pool quite easily since Sally's gigantic body was very eye-catching. Not to mention that they also had a white scale with a red hue in their hands. Sure enough, they could be used to find the dragon pools, just like what Celso's group was doing before Sally appeared.

However, the Dragon Tail Brotherhood group was in a deep dilemma. How would they get close to the Dragon Pool with that enormous ancient beast there? That would just be tantamount to suicide. They were also puzzled by that scene as they had never heard of an ancient beast located near a Dragon Pool. The pools had always been empty in their surroundings.

They became even more afraid when they saw the several light beams raining down, breaking space apart. For a moment, they even thought they had been discovered. However, after seeing that none of the beams landed close to them, they eventually let out sighs of relief. They were just puzzled as to why that happened, as it looked like the beams suddenly changed direction. It was quite unfortunate for them that Sally's body was covering everything that was happening inside the Dragon Pool in the volcano, so they obviously didn't see Rean and Roan's intervention at that point.

Eventually, their wait was rewarded, and Sally's body began to shrink at a fast pace. At the same time, they were confused. That's because they were finally able to see something else other than Sally. Obviously, they could see Rean's group with Sally's body shrinking. They also saw how the ancient beast landed on Rean's shoulder before Kentucky took flight and left. They didn't dare to show their presence at all as they knew that Sally was an ancient beast and could feel their presence if they got too close.

In fact, when Kentucky took flight, Sally did glance at their group for a moment. But since they didn't attack, she didn't act either. Protect if in danger. That's her only duty, and she was prohibited from doing anything else.

Only after thirty minutes or so did the Dragon Tail Brotherhood group decide to come out of their concealment. "I remember those guys from when we were at the entrance. Weren't they the ones Celso almost started a fight with but gave up in the end?"

Another member nodded in response. "Yes. Celso thought they were the ones who stole four of the five Dragon Marks from his Dragon Pool. But after he checked those guys' marks, he found out that he was wrong. Well, I'm not so sure if he really was wrong at this point."

On the other hand, the elder that protected that group let out a bit of cold sweat. As a Void Tempering Realm cultivator, he could feel Sally's stare at him, even from such a long distance. "Remember their faces. I don't care what you do. You must absolutely not offend that group. Understood?"

He didn't need to say that twice as they saw how Sally followed them. Who would try to buy a fight against a group that had an ancient beast protecting them? "Yes, elder!"

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Chapter 1356: They Noticed It...

To be honest, the Dragon Tail Brotherhood group was lucky to have seen that scene. At the very least, they would be able to warn their other companions about the event. That information would also be spread to their other groups once they arrived at the third level. However, they definitely wouldn't tell anyone else. After all, it's not like the top ten powers of the Lanqueas Continent were friends or anything like that.

Then again, it wasn't all bad news for them. That's because a member of their group now had both the ice blue dragon wings and the red dragon body on their forehead. As mentioned before, the small white dragon would check the five most worthy people to give the marks to. Surprisingly, it turned out that this group of the Dragon Tail Brotherhood was close enough when that happened. It's just that Rean, Roan, Kentucky, and Hurio were still considered to have much more talent than the five members of the Dragon Tail Brotherhood. With that being said, the twins' group got the four extra marks and didn't even notice the Dragon Tail Brotherhood member, who got the fifth and last one.

The elder, who accompanied the cultivators of that group, looked at the top of the volcano before saying, "We already got Frinho's mark. Let's head to the lava pool in the volcano and see if the white dragon will appear or not. If it doesn't, then that group we saw leave some time ago got the rest of the marks from this pool."

The other four who didn't get the second mark obviously agreed with that. As for Frinho, he sighed in relief, seeing that he at least got his own. 'Now I know how Celso felt when he was the only one who got his mark.'

Their group soon ascended the volcano, eventually showing themselves in front of the lava pool. Unfortunately for them, the small white dragon didn't come out at all. The Dragon Tail Brotherhood had participated in this selection fifty-two times, so they knew what that meant. "Alright, all five marks have been distributed."

The elder then looked in a certain direction before saying, "Celso's group went to their Dragon Pool as well. However, only Celso can get the second mark. That means the white dragon there will still have four marks remaining. This detour will make us lose quite a bit of time, but it's better than the rest of you not getting your marks."

Except for Frinho, the rest of their members naturally approved the idea. However, they also understood that it would delay Frinho. The brotherhood was known for its union, so the rest of the cultivators immediately understood what they should do. "Frinho, you go ahead of us and try to reach the third level. We'll head to the next lava pool. There's no need for you to follow us since you don't need the second mark anymore."

Frinho knew how their brotherhood worked, so he didn't complain, nodding as he told them, "Alright. We don't know what happened to the other ten powers, so you still have time. Try to make your way to the next Dragon Pool quickly. I'll wait for you at the third level's entrance."

The elder then warned Frinho, "If we take more than one day to arrive, then you should go ahead and look for the Dragon Pool there. As you know, speed is paramount in the selection, so don't wait more than you need. Be careful, though. Although the number of ancient beasts is smaller during the Light Element Wave season, they're still around. That salamander is proof of that."

Frinho nodded, taking out an item that looked like a compass. "Don't worry, elder. I should be able to avoid danger."



With that said, Frinho soon separated from his group, heading to the second level's exit. His group, on the other hand, went to the second Dragon Pool on the second level.

In the meantime, Kentucky flew at his normal speed. Before, he had to be careful to not catch any ancient beast's attention. However, with Sally there, he didn't need to care about that anymore. Thanks to that, Rean's group was one of the first groups to arrive at the second level's exit while they still had their marks, spending only three days.

Of course, that only included most of the top ten powers' groups, who stayed in the second level to look for their beast pools. When they entered the second level, many cultivators rushed forward, trying to leave the searing environment as soon as possible. Although a few perished along the way, there were indeed those who made their way out. Not only that, but they were mostly waiting outside the second level, right in front of the exit. They were once again waiting for the top ten powers before continuing onto the third level.

Then again, the word 'mostly' did not mean all. It turns out that Rean's group wasn't the first dual mark bearers to exit the second level. Stationed close to the exit of the second floor, they quickly noticed three more small groups with five people in them. Judging by their clothes and badges, it was easy to tell that they were part of the top ten powers. To be more precise, there was one group from the Lanqueas Sect, one from the Jix Organization, and finally, one from the Croste Clan.

At first, those from the top ten powers didn't care too much about Rean's group. A bunch of cultivators with a flying demon beast could definitely make their way out of the second floor. There were even a few cultivators around who didn't even have their flying demon beasts but arrived nonetheless. However, their expressions quickly changed when they paid attention to the marks on Rean, Roan, Hurio, and Kentucky's foreheads. No, to be more specific, it was the aura left behind by the twins' group marks that got their attention.

"Two Dragon Marks?!"

"How did they get that?"

"They must have killed the Dragon Tail Brotherhood members. Don't forget, you can steal others' marks if you kill them."

Rean could have used his Light bending skill to hide the marks again. However, it would be useless at this point. That's because they noticed that after they received the second mark, it began to release a strong aura. The worst part was that they couldn't prevent it from spreading at all. 'Seems like they noticed it....'

Death... and me

#### Chapter 1357: Fly Away

The twins could be said to be one of the first groups to obtain two marks. However, the thing was that the pool they went to obtain the second mark was far from the second level's exit, which was the reason why there were already three other groups with their second marks. They simply got their marks somewhere nearer to the exit.

Those three groups couldn't help but discuss after seeing Rean's group. "What should we do? Should we kill them?"

The Void Tempering Realm elder of the Lanqueas Sect group, a man called Yuan, said in response, "They are just kids, so we can kill them easily. However, the marks will be given to the ones who are closest to them and don't have the two marks."

The Croste Clan's guardian elder nodded in agreement. "Yuan is right. That means the marks will jump to the other cultivators who have already made their way out of the second level. It won't come for us since we're already in the Void Tempering Realm," the elder said, who was known as Xintari.

The elder from the Jix Organization, Papola, didn't seem to care, though. "Hmph! So what if we kill the rest? It's better than letting the secret escape. Only our top ten powers should know about the marks. Besides, they'll all die once the third wave comes. We would be just anticipating their outcome."

Yuan shook his head after hearing that. "Since they were able to kill the Dragon Tail Brotherhood's group, they might have some card capable of posing a threat. Don't forget our main objective is to guarantee our disciples' safe passage into the second plane."

"What if they are also selected and are teleported outside after a week? Wouldn't the secret be at risk of being spread?" Papola asked soon after, still preferring to attack the twins' group. It's just that she was also apprehensive. She didn't want to do it alone, even though her cultivation was much higher. She

also got to the same conclusion as Yuan regarding the twins' group, who might have killed their opponents and possibly a Void Tempering Realm elder of the Dragon Tail Brotherhood.

However, one of the disciples of the Croste Clan mentioned, "Now that I think about it, I think I saw a group from the Dragon Tail Brotherhood who didn't have their marks back at the entrance of the second level."

Yuan, Xintari, and Papola immediately looked at him as one of them asked, "Is that true?"

"Yes," the disciple replied, nodding. "It was Celso's group, but only Celso had the ice-blue Dragon Wing Mark. The other four members of his group didn't have their marks. Look at that group. They have exactly four marks with them. However, Celso's group was entirely alive, and there were no elders dead from the Dragon Tail Brotherhood either. I don't think they killed anyone. Instead, they seem to have stolen the marks. Most likely, they reached the Dragon Pools at the same time as Celso's group."

One of the Lanqueas Sect disciples found it to be strange, though. "If they got there at the same time as Celso's group, the dragon in the pool would still distribute the marks to those with the highest talents. Then, does that mean the four members of this black and white bird group are more talented than the other four members of Celso's group?"

At that moment, everyone narrowed their eyes. They all knew that only the top disciples of each power came for the Lost Star Selection. They were the cream of the crop when it came to talent in the entire Lanqueas Continent. How could four members of Celso's group be worse than them? "Just who are those guys?"

Nevertheless, that news was enough for Yuan, Xintari, and Papola to understand that there was probably no risk involved. "Let's go check them out."

All that conversation happened with Divine Sense, so just a few seconds had passed since Rean's group appeared. Before they could have Kentucky fly out of this place, those three Void Tempering Realm elders blocked their path. Rean's group didn't seem the least bit worried, though. "Oh, it's the elders of the Lanqueas Sect, Croste Clan, and Jix Organization. Is there something we can help you with?" Rean asked with a beaming smile, giving off a weird feeling to those elders.

However, Yuan quickly recovered before asking, "Where did you get your Dragon Marks?"

Hurio, Lilia, and Roan simply let Rean do the talking as always. “Where else? From the Dragon Pools, of course. Oh, that also reminds me of one thing. What are the other nine beast marks? Can you tell me more about them?” Rean asked in response with a curious expression, looking at the disciples of the three powerhouses.

Yuan narrowed his eyes after hearing that. Only an idiot wouldn’t notice that Rean’s group didn’t seem to be concerned with their presence at all. “These marks were reserved for our Lanqueas Continent’s top ten powers. You shouldn’t be carrying them.”

Rean shrugged his shoulders as he replied, “We both know that’s not true. The dragon in the pool mentioned that only the five cultivators it finds to be the most worthy would receive them. It didn’t mention anything about having to be part of the top ten powers of the Lanqueas Continent.”

The three elders’ expressions turned dark after that. In any case, Rean didn’t care. “Besides, you should all know that only by killing a beast mark owner can the mark be transferred to some other cultivator in the surroundings. Could it be that you seniors want us to kill ourselves? I’m sure you wouldn’t be asking for something like that, right?”

Papola snorted in response, replying, “Obviously. However, we can simply kill you and everyone here so that the marks won’t have anywhere to go. They would then return to the dragons in their pools and would be distributed in the next Lost Star Selection as always.”

“Oh, is that so?” Rean’s smile only became even brighter after that. “Then, I wish very much to see how you will do that.” Soon after, Rean patted Kentucky, telling him, “Let’s go. We don’t need to pay attention to them..” With that, Kentucky ignored the elders and began to fly away once more.

Death... and me

Chapter 1358: No Reason To Help

While Kentucky and the others were in the process of leaving, Papola felt like she was being played with. With that said, she immediately acted, preparing to take the twins’ group down. However, Yuan’s hand suddenly touched her shoulder, stopping her from taking action. As mentioned before, the top ten powers weren’t exactly friends or anything like that, so she obviously looked at Yuan with a dark expression, asking him, “What the hell are you doing?”

Yuan shook his head and took his hand off her shoulders. Though, surprisingly, he gave Papola a warning, telling her, "Something seems fishy. If I were you, I wouldn't attack them now." After that, Yuan turned around and made his way back to his group. He was just waiting for the second group of his Lanqueas Sect to arrive before they left for the third level. Especially because they had a huge lead compared to the rest. Also, he absolutely didn't want to touch the twins at any cost right now. "However, I won't stop you after this. If you decide to ignore what I said, then so be it." Little did Xintari and Papola notice, but Yuan was letting out cold sweat under his clothes, doing his best to keep his fear in check.

Xintari pondered over Yuan's words for a bit as he looked at the twins' group flying away. Even though the twins' group was taking the lead, it wasn't a problem since the majority were still inside. He then shook his head and went back to where the Croste Clan's disciples were. Somehow, he also felt that something wasn't right. That's not how a group of weak cultivators should act in front of powerful elders like them. "We might just be overthinking it. However, I would do what Yuan said, Papola. At the very least, wait for more members to gather. If they want to be selected, they'll need to come to the Star Altar as well."

Papola gritted her teeth in response and felt very unwilling to simply let the twins disappear into the distance. Nevertheless, seeing Yuan and Xintari's reaction, she decided to not do anything. "Hmph! I still think we're being played for fools." With that, she also returned to her group.

When the twins finally disappeared, Yuan let out a huge sigh of relief. "Holy shit! That was so fucking close! We truly escaped a calamity just now."

"What?!" Xintari and Papola were taken aback to hear that. "What are you talking about?"

However, Yuan's expression turned dark as he quickly berated them. "Idiots! Just because they looked like some weak cultivators, you totally ignored the spatial readings coming from them. What kind of Void Tempering Realm elders are you? Did you really not see the enormous black hole coming from that lizard on the guy's shoulder? It was an ancient beast, for fuck's sake! On top of that, it's several times stronger than any of us!"

Xintari and Papola were left aghast when they heard that. As mentioned before, cultivators at the Void Tempering Realm and above could easily feel each other's presence. That's because the spatial laws around such cultivators were warped due to their spatial powers. It's as if a black spot appeared on a piece of pristine white paper. One had to be blind to not see it. The higher one's realm, the bigger that spot became.

However, they truly ignored that point when they saw the twins' group appear. It was just a bunch of young cultivators, after all. "Ancient beast?! Are you sure about that?!"

Yuan felt like he was talking to two idiots. "You two really are lost causes. The moment that young man didn't show any concern towards us should have been enough of a reason for you two to think that something wasn't right. Why did you ignore your own natural spatial detection ability? Do you think I'd get something like this wrong? Would you get it wrong?"

Xintari and Papola immediately shook their heads in response. Indeed, there was no way one could get it wrong when they used the natural spatial detection ability bestowed upon them at the Void Tempering Realm. "But... how did they get an ancient beast to help them? I've never heard of such a thing in my life. Are you sure that wasn't some other demon beast they brought from outside?"

Yuan shook his head, telling them, "I don't care how they did it. I'm absolutely not going after them to ask. However, I do know which ancient beast that one was. It was a Star Armored Salamander. It's just that this was the first time I saw one that small."

Xintari shook his head, clarifying, "After a certain level of cultivation, demon beasts can shrink the size of their bodies. You should know that already. It's just that we never found an ancient beast who did that. They were always the same size. Now we found out they can also do it."

Papola's anger completely disappeared now, feeling lucky that she didn't try anything. In the end, the top ten powers were so used to these Lost Star Selection events that they had become complacent. It was a good thing Yuan stopped her. "Th-Thank you... Yuan."

"Hmph!" Yuan didn't seem to care, though. "I wasn't helping you. I was just afraid that if you attacked, that beast might have thought I was with you. I can't let the disciples from my Lanqueas Sect die just because of a wrong move you did."

A few moments later, another group exited the second level. They just so happened to use the same clothes and badges from the Lanqueas Sect. Soon after, the elder within that group came to talk with Yuan, telling him, "Sure enough, your Phoenix Pool was a lot closer to the exit this time, huh?" The Lanqueas Sect's Marks had the form of a phoenix on their foreheads.

Yuan completely ignored that remark before using his Divine Sense to explain what happened. Naturally, his companion was alarmed to hear that. "Are you absolutely sure?"

Yuan nodded, saying, "Yes." Soon after, the two elders prepared to leave as they warned their disciples. "I hope you all remember their faces. DO NOT try to cause trouble for them. We will discuss it with our sect once we leave the Lost Star Realm."

"Yes, elders."

They also added one more thing. "Also, don't tell the other powers about it.. We have no reason to help them."

Death... and me

Chapter 1359: Decoration

While making their way to the third floor, Rean looked at his shoulder and saw Sally sleeping. During the entire conversation, he couldn't tell whether she was awake or not. Nevertheless, it seemed like she was the reason they didn't do anything. "It seems like one of them noticed Sally's presence."

Roan nodded in response, saying, "Indeed. That guy from Lanqueas Sect changed his behavior way too fast. As expected of the spatial detection ability only those at the Void Tempering Realm and above have. Sally probably looked like a monster in his eyes."

Kentucky could not help but laugh in response. "Hahaha! It won't be long before we also instill fear into others, you'll see! Now, with Sally protecting us, let's rush to the third level. I want to see that second plane full of Divine Origin Energy."

Rean shook his head, telling Kentucky, "That can wait. We need to find Fallen Light Star Fragments first."

Hurio, obviously, agreed with Rean. "Indeed. In fact, Kentucky doesn't even need to head straight to the third level. We're in the region between, and it should already be somewhat easier to find Fallen Light Star Fragments."

"Is that so?" Rean's eyes lit up after hearing that. "Then, let's go back to our searching mode."

Hurio agreed with Rean and immediately jumped down from Kentucky before opening a gap of ten kilometers between them. From there, they began to make their way to the third level at a slightly rushed pace. However, seeing their speed fall drastically, Roan narrowed his eyes before saying, "Hurio, come back. If we keep going like this, we'll take at least a month to arrive at the third level."

Hurio narrowed his eyes after hearing that but returned straight away as Roan asked. Rean couldn't help but shrug his shoulders after hearing that, though. "However, if I don't find enough Fallen Light Star Fragments, I won't be able to use the Divine Origin Energy in the second plane to break through anyway." Indeed. Rean, Roan, Kentucky, and Celis' cultivations were connected to one another. If Rean couldn't break through, none of them would. Only Hurio would benefit from it, but Hurio seemed more interested in the Fallen Light Star Fragments as a whole.

In response, Roan told them, "The third level is supposed to be more dangerous but has more Fallen Light Star Fragments in it. However, we have Sally on our side. Let's just risk it." Roan then used the twins' Soul Connection. 'Besides, with Sister Orb here, we aren't at any risk of falling into ancient formations either.'

Rean pondered over it for a bit before agreeing with Roan. He then looked at Hurio and asked, "There should be more Fallen Light Star Fragments in the third level, right?"

Hurio nodded in response. "As far as the records go, that should be the case. However, we would need to be extra careful there. To be honest, I would rather spend our time outside the third level so that we can find Fallen Light Star Fragments here. It'll take longer, but it's a lot safer. Now that we have Sally to protect us against the Light Element Wave, we don't really need to enter that second plane."

Roan shook his head, telling him, "If I could have both the fragments and the Divine Origin Energy, why would I give up? Are you even a cultivator? Stop running away from problems, and let's go. Besides, it's not like we are that much safer outside either."

Hurio looked at Rean, who nodded at him. Rean knew that Roan was thinking about Calina, so being able to gather the fragments and use the second plane would obviously be better. Rean also wanted to find Qia, so he decided to do as Roan said.



Hurio obviously wouldn't stay behind while the twins entered the third level. After all, without Sally, even the outside would be much more dangerous. Not to mention that he wouldn't have the twins' method of avoiding ancient formations, although he didn't know how they did that.

Eventually, Kentucky returned to his normal speed. He didn't go all out, though, as it would use too much energy. They were making full use of the headstart that Sally provided them. Of course, because of that, it allowed many of the top ten powers to exit the second level with their marks and more or less catch up to the twins' group.

Two weeks went by, and Rean's group finally arrived at the entrance of the third level. However, saying that it was an entrance was wrong. What appeared in front of them was a vast place filled with ruins that seemed to originate from a city in the past. They couldn't see the end of the ruins as far as they could see on Kentucky's back. Well, Kentucky could only fly twenty meters at most before encountering the pressure restriction, so it wasn't like they could see much anyway. After all, the ruins were huge by themselves.

Rean couldn't help but comment once they arrived, "Aren't these ruins way too big? Even the houses have enormous entrances. It feels like the people... if they were people at all... were at least twice as big than normal humans."

Hurio and Lilia shrugged their shoulders, saying, "Well, Lilia and I aren't humans either. Don't forget that there are a few humanoid races that are indeed twice as big as humans, or us for that matter. Some are bigger than that, so nothing here is too out of place."

Rean had to admit Hurio and Lilia were right. "True. I guess I'm just not used to seeing a city made exclusively for large humanoid races. The cities I've visited so far were mixed except for the commercial sector, which had to have big entrances to allocate all races."

Suddenly, Rean and Hurio noticed something and looked in the same direction. Hurio then took out a tablet from his spatial ring, which pointed in the same direction. "Fallen Light Star Fragment!" Without wasting time, Kentucky flew in the direction shown by the tablet and the direction of Rean's Light Element detection.

Sure enough, no one cared about Fallen Light Star Fragments. It wasn't as if it was hidden or anything like that. In fact, the fragment was being displayed at the top of a rundown ruin that looked like a store.. It was more like a decorative item than anything else.

Death... and me

## Chapter 1360: Free Meal

“Well then... to think it would be this easy...” Rean could not help but say as he got the fragment found from the store. In fact, there were quite a few of them bunched together since just a single one wouldn’t be enough to be seen. “There’s a total of seven fragments here, so it’ll be four for me and three for you since you got the first fragment back in the city. Is that fine with you, Hurio?”

Hurio immediately nodded in agreement as they had agreed to do it this way from the start. “Sure thing. The fact that we already started with so many fragments makes me incredibly delighted.” Following that, Hurio jumped down from Kentucky and said, “Alright. This time, I’m distancing myself, as we’ve talked about before. That way, we can cover more space at once.”

Hearing that, Roan jumped down so that he could follow Hurio. With him there, he could use his connection with Rean to instantly communicate. After all, Divine Sense was somewhat useless in this realm.

“Oh, right!” Hurio remembered something else, telling the others, “In the ruins, the restriction of going above twenty meters doesn’t exist. Well, there’s still a restriction, but it’s far, far above the highest buildings here.”

Naturally, Kentucky was happy to hear that. “Cool. If that’s the case, I’ll keep an eye on the things from above and let you guys know if I find anything.”

Rean agreed with Kentucky and jumped down as well, saying, “Alright. You and Lilia can stay in the skies, then. I’m going to stay on the ground since it’ll be easier to feel the presence of Fallen Light Star Fragments that way.”

With that said, Kentucky brought Lilia up high in the skies while Rean and Hurio greatly distanced themselves from each other. They also decided in which direction they would walk while looking for them.

They weren’t the only ones in the ruins’ site, though. More cultivators of the top ten powers had arrived, as well as the cultivators who just followed them. Because the ruins were enormous, they all

entered it from several different locations. In just a few hours, at least half of the groups that entered the second level had already arrived at the third one.

Rean's group just so happened to bump on one of those groups, a few people from the Didatico Sect. They were the holders of the turtle marks. At the moment, it was possible to see the blue turtle limbs, as well as the red shell. The only part remaining for them to acquire was the head and tail. Sure enough, all the marks followed the same pattern of acquisition.

'Rean, head to where Roan is located. We have company,' Kentucky said, watching as that group approached Roan and Hurio. Sure enough, Kentucky's high altitude and amazing vision made things a lot safer.

Hearing that, Rean didn't waste time and met Roan and Hurio halfway. At the same time, Kentucky landed on the ground on their side with Lilia, telling them, "It seems like they can detect our location. Even after you guys changed direction, they kept coming at you."

Roan nodded in response. "It's the marks' aura. We can also feel their marks, albeit faintly."

"Why would they come for us, though?" Rean wondered. "They were supposed to think that we were simply another one of the top ten powers' groups. Can they tell the difference?"

Hurio shrugged his shoulders after that. "Well, we'll find soon enough, won't we?"

A few moments later, the group Kentucky talked about appeared on the other side of the road. This one, however, didn't have an elder following them. As mentioned before, each power came with twenty disciples below the Late Stage of the Transition Realm to make full use of the second plane. However, the elders that followed them weren't many. The only top ten powers that sent one elder for each group was the Lanqueas Sect as they had more resources available.

It was then that a fat guy from the group noticed the attires of Rean and the others, prompting him to say, "Eh? You guys don't seem to be part of the Dragon Tail Brotherhood." His name was Gigo, an Early Stage Transition Realm cultivator. In his group, there were two more Transition Realm cultivators, while the remaining two were at the Late Stage and the Peak Stage of the Elemental Transformation Realm, respectively.

Rean nodded at Gigo's words, replying, "We aren't. We just so happened to find these marks ahead of them. However, whether we have these marks or not doesn't explain why you came here. We spotted you guys coming here from far away with the help of our flying demon beast. Is there something you need from us?"

Gigo and the other members of his group looked at each other after that. Obviously, they were communicating with each other about this situation. Eventually, Gigo turned back to Rean before saying, "You don't know how the Lost Star Selection really works, right?"

Rean immediately shook his head. "I don't. All I know is that I need the three marks. At the moment, we're looking for the last Dragon Pool."

Gigo nodded in response. "Indeed, you need all three marks to form the complete dragon mark. For us, we need the full turtle. By the way, do you only have four dragon marks, not five?"

Rean narrowed his eyes after the guy specified the number of marks they had but nodded nevertheless. "Our last companion wasn't considered someone worthy enough to receive the first mark. Well, you probably already guessed that anyway." Obviously, he was talking about Lilia, who didn't have the Dragon Mark.

"That's quite unfortunate." Gigo couldn't help but sigh in response. "Only four of us will be able to get a second stage mark to complete our own."

Gigo and his companions then began to head towards Rean's direction. Naturally, Rean's group had never heard about this 'second stage mark' requirement. With that said, he couldn't let the opportunity pass up and immediately pretended to be worried as he took a few steps back, asking, "What do you mean by second stage mark?"

Roan and the others naturally noticed what Rean was doing and did the same thing.

Another Transition Realm cultivator in Gigo's group, a guy named Klinfan, laughed in response, telling him, "Hahaha! For the third and last mark, just finding the beasts' pools isn't enough. To gain the recognition of the beasts in the pools, you have to let your mark absorb someone else's mark from another beast. Also, it has to be a mark in the second stage, which means you guys are just perfect. It's

quite unfortunate that you only have four instead of five marks. In any case, we won't complain about the free meal."

Roan couldn't help but coldly smile after hearing that.. "Oh, is that so? Indeed, we really can't complain about the free meal."