

## Death 241

Death... and me

Chapter 241: Birds of a feather flock together

There was no point in hiding Malaka's talent anymore, so Rean and Malaka continued to issue challenges in the gathering. Unfortunately for them, it became harder to find opponents.

Of course, there were a few that already knew about it but went ahead and did the challenge either way. Usually, they were the disciples of sect leaders, like Malaka herself, or had assumed a high position in their own organizations. Simply put, they were the real geniuses of this gathering.

With that, Malaka lost some and won others. Finally, others realized that she wasn't the only monster to have come to this gathering this time around. It's just that the others hadn't shown their faces before.

Rean wanted to go to the arena and go through battle competitions for Rank Three Spirit Stones. However, Roan prohibited him from doing so.

'We already did enough by moving against that Calina girl. I don't want others to know even more about our capabilities. I'm going to keep looking into the stalls for some more useful Skill Books.'

However, a certain someone came to challenge Malaka every now and then while they were there, Calina. Well, Valeu was always with her now.

"Malaka, one more time!"

"Sure!"

Malaka had won the previous match because Calina had stopped attacking the targets. However, Calina played by the rules this time and solely focused on defeating Malaka. Sure enough, it was as Rean and Roan expected. Malaka wasn't her match in Water Element manipulation. It wasn't that Malaka was worse at it, but her cultivation was lower, two stages to be more specific. Not to mention that the Imperial Family was bound to have much better Water Element cultivation techniques than Mia and her Dalamu Sect.

"Hahaha! It's my victory this time again."

Malaka couldn't help but admire Calina. She was the only one she lost to that didn't have that much of an advantage in cultivation. No, Malaka was sure that if they were in the same cultivation stage, the fight would probably end in her victory as well.

"Sister, you're so amazing!"

"Si-Sister?"

Calina wasn't used to be called in such an intimate way. Everyone around her would usually use her name, honorifics, or her title. However, seeing Malaka's shining eyes directed at her, Calina simply couldn't bring herself to complain. She couldn't be blamed. Even Rean, who knew Malaka for so long, would still lose to that face every time. Roan was basically the only one immune to that.

"Cough, cough. But of course! I'm not just a girl with an imperial bloodline. I also trained a lot every single day to reach this point."

Rean looked at that by the side and just smiled, not doing anything. They had already obtained quite a lot of Rank Three Spirit Stones anyway. Even though Malaka lost a few times, she still won more, so they had amassed around 1500 Rank Three Spirit Stones.

Malaka then nodded her head vigorously.

"I know, I know! My brother and my Master make me train as if my life depended on it. It's so painful that I feel like crying every single time. I lost count of how many times I tried to escape, just to receive and more training as punishment."

Calina's eyes immediately shone as much as Malaka's.

"What?! You too?!"

Valeu, who was beside Calina, immediately warned her through a Spiritual Sense message.

'Princess, you can't tell others such things.'

Only then did Calina come back to herself and released Malaka's hands.

"Ahem... escaping is not good. You have to train hard every day so that you can live up to your family's expectations."

Rean had to hold himself to not laugh. She had just admitted that she liked to do the same thing and pretended that nothing happened.

'No wonder she looks so much like Malaka. Other than their upbringing, this girl is basically as naughty as this sister of mine. Well, she's probably no more than a year older than Malaka anyway.'

Malaka didn't seem to care and began to ask questions about Calina's Water Element manipulation. Malaka could tell that there were several points where Calina was simply much better than herself. Well, that was to be expected due to her background.

Unfortunately, Valeu stopped Calina once more.

'Princess, you can't talk about the Imperial Family's techniques to outsiders.'

Calina showed a hint of sadness but immediately recovered.

"I can't talk about my techniques, but that doesn't mean I can't challenge you. If you can learn something on your own during this time, then it has nothing to do with me."

Rean understood why she didn't want to talk. Part of her high control over the Water Element was definitely due to the high concentration of Yin Energy in her body. Roan already told him that her energy was relatively pure, which showed how proficient the Imperial Family was in that area. Roan saw that man taking that Yin Ice Ore before, which was obviously for this girl's sake. From the looks of it, they

also had a way to purify the impurities in that ore to some extent. Most likely, that was some of the Imperial Family's Secret Techniques. Well, Calina's Yin Energy could never hope to compare to Roan's or the Soul Gem System.

Valeu then warned Calina once more.

'Princess, you two are from different worlds. You better not get too attached. You don't even know if this girl will survive in the Profound Abyss.'

Calina couldn't help but become annoyed.

'Valeu, can't you stop being so annoying for once? I can't do this, I can't do that, can't you give me a break? I know what you mean. Even if she survives, we probably won't see each other again anyway. But what's wrong with enjoying the moment?'

Valeu's expression darkened as he looked at Malaka. Still, he didn't say anything else.

Usually, no one would have noticed anything. However, Rean was the one present this time. Immediately, he saw the red color of killing intent appearing around Malaka. This was Roan's unique 'Death' ability from the previous life and something Rean could use thanks to their Soul Connection. It was obviously coming from Valeu.

Still, that red color only lasted for a second before disappearing. Still, that was more than enough to put Rean on guard.

But that wasn't all. Rean immediately noticed Kentucky's expression changing as he looked at Valeu. In that second, Kentucky already marked that man as an enemy and was even ready to attack.

'What?! Kentucky can see it as well?!'

Rean then sent his intention to Kentucky with his Spiritual Sense.

'Stop. Don't do anything, Kentucky.'

\*Chick?\*

Kentucky looked at Rean with a puzzled expression. Still, he followed Rean's orders and did not do anything.

It took some time to explain, but all of it happened with Spiritual Sense as a means of communication. That being said, only two seconds had passed so far.

Malaka and Calina were oblivious to those things, surprisingly.

Rean didn't waste any time and informed Roan through their Soul Connection.

'But he didn't attack, right?'

Rean confirmed.

'Yes. The killing intent only lasted for a second. Besides, it seems like Kentucky can also see it. If I hadn't stopped him, he would have attacked that guy straight away.'

Roan was surprised to hear that. It seemed like the small connection Roan had with Kentucky also allowed the Minokawa to see Killing Intent.

'That's a good thing. Anyway, he didn't attack because that girl seems to like Malaka. Of course, he also wants to kill her for the same reason. However, even if Calina was not present, he wouldn't be able to take action. Try to use your Light Skill that can perceive Spiritual Senses.'

Rean immediately did that. That was Rean's Light Element skill that allowed him to perceive any level of Spiritual Sense. A higher cultivation made no difference for Rean since he wasn't using the same method as others did.

Thanks to that, Rean could perceive all of the Spiritual Senses present at the moment.

'That's quite frightening. There are hundreds of Spiritual Senses at the Nascent Soul Realm or higher covering the entire place. There is even one of them that is stronger than Reliance's Stage Six Demon Beasts. Most likely, it is someone above the Soul Transformation Realm.'

Roan nodded in response.

'Those people are checking everything happening in the settlement. Don't forget the rule of not killing or crippling anyone before entering the Profound Abyss. That is also valid for that guy beside Calina.'

Rean couldn't help but ask.

'That doesn't make any sense. Didn't Calina try to attack Malaka before?'

Roan agreed with Rean.

'She did. However, can you guarantee that she was really going to kill Malaka? With the control over the Water Element she showed to us, it would be a simple task to dispel those Water Icicles at the very last moment. Besides, from what you told me about her behavior, I find it even harder to imagine that she was really trying to harm Malaka for real.'

'Last but not least, you are forgetting a fundamental issue. There had never been any Killing Intent directed at Malaka coming from Calina before.'

'Ah!'

Only now, Rean remembered that point. Indeed, there was no killing intent coming from Calina during the Water Icicles at all!

'We are safe while staying in the settlement. However, we will need to be careful once we enter the Profound Abyss.'

Rean nodded and finished his conversation with Roan. Just like before, this Soul Connection conversation only took another few seconds.

Obviously, Malaka, Calina, and Valeu didn't notice anything.

With that, other than picking up a few challenges every now and then, Malaka would often have a match with Calina. Not only that, but those two girls would often walk around the settlement.

Seeing that and how the two girls behaved, a thought came to Rean's mind.

Death... and me

Chapter 242: Opening of the Profound Abyss

During these days of waiting, Rean's group also bumped into other participants from the Jialin Country. They found three members of the Jialin Royal Family and two members of each of the other sects. At first, those sects were supposed to only have a single slot remaining after giving one to the Dalamu Sect. However, it seemed like they cut a layer of their own skin to obtain another slot.

Rean was also surprised to see that one of the Lagan Sect's participants was Luina herself. She was accompanied by a man using the same sect's uniform.

"Hi, Rean. It's been some time."

He still remembered that around a year ago, he and Roan went out on a mission to get rid of the Gold Hands Bandit Group. During that mission, they met up with Luina of the Lagan Sect and had done the mission together.

"Indeed. I can see that you also reached the Peak of the Foundation Establishment Realm, congratulations."

Luina sighed as she shook her head.

"I've done nothing here. Back then, you and Roan were behind me in cultivation. But looking at it now, you already caught up with me in cultivation."

Just as she was about to continue, Malaka returned from another stall where she was looking at items with Calina.

"Rean, who is she?"

Luina was taken aback as she saw the clothes on Calina. Obviously, she was also informed about the participants of the Capital and the way to identify them.

Rean then introduced.

"This is a friend Roan and I made while we were on a mission. She and her other two sect members went through a lot with us to get that done. Her name is Luina, a member of the Lagan Sect."

Rean then looked at Luina and another man on her side.

"As for the two girls here, the naughty one is my little sister, Malaka. As for the other girl, she's just someone from somewhere in the Capital."

Calina didn't like that introduction at all, but the one who really hated that introduction was Valeu. Once again, a hint of killing intent appeared in his body, just to disappear soon after. Rean couldn't help but snort in response.

"What you mean by 'just someone?' I could have you jailed for the rest of your life just for this offense, you know? My name is Calina. I'm a member of the Imperial Family."

Luina immediately bowed to show her respect, and so did the man beside her.

"I see. I'm Luina, the daughter of the Lagan Sect's Sect Master in Jialin Country. Not that someone of your revered status would know about a small country like ours. Nice to meet you, princess."



Calina finally nodded, a lot more satisfied.

"Princess?"

Rean and Malaka were taken aback. They heard that she had Imperial Blood, but they didn't know she was a princess.

"Sister, you were a princess?! That's so cool!"

Calina nodded.

"Well, I'm not anyone that important, to be honest. Considering the life span of a cultivator with the Imperial Family resources, the Imperial Family already has hundreds of princesses and princes. I'm at the very bottom and don't really have any meaningful status to start with. Of course, I'm still very proud of being a member of the Imperial Family."

Valeu then said in response.

"Princess, such issues shouldn't be discussed with strangers."

Calina shrugged her shoulders.

"It's not like this is any secret anyway. Besides, Malaka is not a stranger."

Rean then looked at the man on Luina's side.

"By the way, this person is?"

The man replied straight away.

"I'm Wallad Marc, another member of the Lagan Sect. I came this time around to participate in the Profound Abyss with Luina."

Rean could tell that Wallad's cultivation was far above his. Probably at the peak of the Core Formation Realm.

"By the way, Luina. I didn't know you were the Sect Master's daughter. You didn't say anything last time."

"This..."

Wallad then explained.

"In fact, if not because of the princess' presence, she wouldn't have said anything. Very few people know about it. However, we can't lie to the members of the Imperial Family. I hope you can keep it between us."

Rean didn't mind. Everyone had their own secrets. Luina's identity was being hidden, most likely to protect her.

"Very well, I shall say nothing."

Luina couldn't help but ask soon after.

"By the way, what kind of demon bird is this?"

Obviously, she was talking about Kentucky, who was looking at everything with a curious expression.

"It's a Demon Bird from our Dalamu Sect. I happened to become its master, so I brought him to participate in the Profound Abyss as well."

As Reliance had mentioned before, it seemed like no one could tell what race Kentucky was from.

Luina nodded, not finding it strange. A lot of cultivators had brought their own demon beasts this time around as well.

She then looked around as if looking for something.

"So... where is Roan? Is he not with you?"

Rean nodded.

"He's at the stalls somewhere. He had been using this chance to get a few different skill books. I think I saw him around five minutes ago in that direction."

Rean was 100% lying. He was simply using his Soul Connection to tell where Roan could be found.

"Is that so?! Great, I'm going there to say hello to him."

Luina then bowed to Calina once more and then left with Wallad in a hurry.

Malaka and Calina then left to look around once more as Rean remained behind with Valeu. So far, he hadn't said anything to them. But this time, he gave Rean a warning with a Spiritual Sense message.

'Brat, peasants like you and your sister should not get involved with the Imperial Family. Calina is still naive. That's why she's giving you this little bit of attention. Here's a piece of advice, you better pretend you didn't see her after all this shit is over. Also, don't try to get close to her during the Profound Abyss, or I'll cut you lot myself.'

Rean narrowed his eyes as he looked at Valeu's face.

'I'll take Senior Valeu's advice to heart. Don't worry, we do know our place in this world.'

Rean wasn't the least bit surprised. After all, he had already seen the killing intent he had for Malaka and even himself a few times.

And just like that, the last two days also passed in a flash.

Finally, the opening day arrived as all the participants gathered in front of the Profound Abyss entrance.

Rean, Roan, Malaka, Tive, Weren, and Kentucky were already waiting somewhere behind with Reliance and Zunzun on his shoulder. As a small kingdom, they were positioned at the end of the queue.

Malaka then took out a blue pendant while she waited with the rest. It had a hexagram with the image of a lion inside. The cool thing was that it didn't matter from which direction you looked at it. The image appeared to move to match the direction of the person's eye.

"Hum? What is this, Malaka?"

Malaka smiled before saying.

"Calina gave it to me while that annoying Valeu wasn't looking. She said that if I wanted to see her again one day, I just had to bring this pendant to the Capital."

Even Rean didn't notice when she received that pendant.

"Is that so? Then make sure to keep it safe."

Malaka nodded as she wore the pendant and put it inside her clothes.

However, Rean and Roan noticed. Inside the pendant, some of the Yin Energy they felt from Calina was also present.

'Perhaps this is a means of identification as well.'

Suddenly, a few men and women appeared in the sky above the Profound Abyss. At the very center, there was an old man who seemed to be the leader of the group. He then moved a bit forward and stopped in front of the others.

"Welcome to the Profound Abyss Training Grounds. My name is Polian Sasamil, and I'll be overseeing the event this time."

Rean could tell with his Light Element Skill that the powerful Spiritual Sense he had sensed before came from that man.

'Roan, that's the guy I told you that's above the Soul Transformation Realm.'

Roan nodded in response.

'By his surname, he is another expert of the Imperial Family. Indeed, the Imperial Family is on another level altogether. If they already sent someone like this to watch over a small event like the Profound Abyss, just how much stronger are the real experts living in the Capital?'

Rean could only nod at that remark.

Polian then continued.

"As you know, only those at the Core Formation Realm and below can enter. Each person can bring one Demon Beast with them, too, as long as it is Stage Three or lower. Your objective is obviously to arrive at the Vermilion Pound and make use of it to improve your meridians. We don't care as to which method you use to do this. There are no rules about the difference of cultivation or numbers either. Killing, stealing, taking hostages, etc., everything is valid."

"Also, as always, we have members of the Imperial Family and the Imperial Family's forces participating as well. However, I'll swear in the name of the Imperial Family here and now that it doesn't matter what

happens to them inside of the Profound Abyss. The Imperial Family will definitely not look into the matter. This is a training ground for both you and us. If they die, it is because they were too weak. Simple as that. It has always been like that, and it will continue to be so in the future."

"Lastly, the Profound Abyss entrance will be open for two weeks. If you don't come out by the end of that time, you will get locked inside until the next opening. Well, no one has ever survived five years of Decaying Energy, so it's more or less akin to death."

"Alright, that's enough. Open the entrance!"

Death... and me

#### Chapter 243: Decaying Energy

The formation locking the Profound Abyss then began to move as the yellow light barrier slowly disappeared. Not long after, the yellow light at a specific location inside the Abyss completely vanished, only leaving a hole of a few meters in size.

Calina was at the very front with her protectors. Not only was Valeu there, but Rean's group could also see two more cultivators with the same clothes as the Imperial Family or their forces. Right beside her were a few more cultivators from other big powers from this region who were also allowed to enter first. Rean's group could tell that a few of them had never appeared in the gathering of participants in the settlement. They most likely felt that there was no point in interacting with the rest with their higher status.

Calina and her three protectors were the first ones to enter. As soon as they approached the entrance, faint ripples of Spiritual Energy covered their bodies. That was a formation made to check everyone's cultivation. It would stop anyone above the Core Formation Realm from entering. Obviously, nothing happened with Calina's group.

The next groups then began to enter one after another, quickly disappearing in the dark below. As their turn approached, Reliance warned them one last time.

"The five of you, be careful of the Decaying Energy. If you feel like you can't hold on anymore, stop somewhere, and focus on driving the energy out of your body. If that's not possible, take one of the Anti-Decaying Energy Pills that Mia gave you. Don't forget. The only place free of Decaying Energy is the

Vermilion Pools, so try to get there as soon as possible. However, there are other places where the energy is a lot weaker. You might as well take the chance to rest there if you pass by it."

"Yes, Elder Reliance."

Reliance then sent a Spiritual Message to Rean and Roan.

'Be sure to keep the Minokawa safe, or I'll skin you two alive.'

Roan ignored those words as Rean shrugged his shoulder.

'We will do our best.'

Finally, the turn of the bottom countries arrived. Rean's group then dashed forward with Kentucky, quickly passing by the cultivation detection formation. After that, they jumped inside the Profound Abyss as well.

Malaka mounted on Kentucky while following everyone's descent. Not long after, they began to feel the Dark Fog around their bodies and the Decaying Energy inside it. It was as they were told. The energy could force its way through their Spiritual Energy barrier. To counteract it, they had to use even more Spiritual Energy. Still, the Decaying Energy in this place was relatively weak, so they were able to stop all of it.

As they stepped on the Abyss walls during the descent, the range of their vision gradually became smaller. That case wasn't only because of the lack of light, but the Decaying Fog became more condensed on top of that. Another thing that Rean's group noticed was that their Spiritual Sense seemed to be affected by it. The deeper they went, the smaller the range their Spiritual Sense would have.

Halfway down, Rean's group noticed that the other participants in front of them began to change direction. Everyone was choosing their own courses to begin to explore. It was also possible to see that quite a few of them separated from their groups to move ahead alone.

It was at this moment that Tuve and Weren told Rean's group.

"Alright, the two of us are going on our own from here onward. You guys will need to take care of yourselves. Whether you like it or not, Tuve and I can't waste much of our time protecting you all, nor would it be considered training anyway. I wish you three and the bird good luck."

Rean nodded without caring too much.

"It's okay, Senior Weren. We would also prefer to rely on ourselves. Good luck to you and Senior Tuve."

Weren smiled as he and Tuve selected another direction to continue their descent. For Rean and Roan, that was perfect. After all, they didn't want to have anyone close by when the Universal Restraint arrived three days later.

Turns out that the Abyss was larger than it looked outside. The chasm of hundreds of kilometers long on the surface was really just an entrance. The underground world, on the other hand, expanded for thousands of kilometers. If they were not in the Foundation Establishment Realm, covering this kind of distance in just two weeks would be impossible. That was really a training ground made for geniuses.

It took almost two hours for Rean's group to reach the bottom. Even though several hundreds of participants entered it, Rean's group already couldn't see anyone else. The Decaying Fog at the bottom was also a lot thicker. Even with their best Spiritual Energy barrier, a little of it still entered Rean, Roan, and Malaka's body.

"This Energy..."

Roan narrowed his eyes as the Decaying Energy entered his body. Contrary to his expectations, he wasn't feeling any discomfort from it at all.

'Sister Orb, this Decaying Energy has a little Yin Energy mixed with it.'



[Indeed. To be honest, I think that Decaying Energy is, in fact, a variation of Yin Energy. It is not wrong to think about it as a very impure type of Yin Energy. However, Yin Energy impurities have no use against you. That's why you are not feeling anything from it.]

Rean also let the Yin Energy enter his body. However, different from Roan, it did harm his body to a certain extent. It's just that the Light Element in his body could destroy it exceptionally easy. His own rate of natural Spiritual Energy recovery was more than enough to keep up for the consumption.

'I guess that since Yang Energy is my specialty, it's more or less not a problem for me to deal with Yin Energy.'

[Indeed. While Roan is an excellent Yin Energy generator, you are a great Yin Energy destroyer. Once again, the impurities in this Yin Energy have little effect on you. It won't be as easy for you as it is for Roan, who can completely ignore it, but you should have no issues dealing with it either.]

Rean and Roan nodded in response before turning off their Spiritual Energy barrier, letting the Yin Energy enter their bodies. Roan didn't feel anything as expected. However, Rean had to turn his Spiritual Energy barrier once more.

'I see. I can deal with the Decaying Energy that enters my body with ease. Unfortunately, I need a lot more Spiritual Energy to eliminate the Decaying Energy that enters my body than blocking it with a Spiritual Energy barrier. That's because this place makes it very hard to gather the Light Element, so I need a lot more Spiritual Energy for it. It is much more efficient to block it as much as possible and then eliminate the little bit that can pass through my protection and enter my body.'

[Well, I think you have nothing to complain about. Everyone else is definitely taking it a lot worse than you. After all, they don't really have a method as efficient as yours to deal with the Decaying Energy that enters their bodies. They will have to slowly drive it out, which will definitely make them spend a lot more Spiritual Energy than you do.]

Rean smiled and nodded. He was already happy with this outcome. It's just that he won't be as consumption free in terms of Spiritual Energy as Roan. He will have to stop every now and then to recover it with Spirit Stones.

"Right! Malaka, how are you faring?"

Rean looked at Malaka and the faint blue barrier of Spiritual Energy and Water Element around her body.

"I'm okay, but this Decaying Energy is quite tough to deal with. Fortunately, Master gave me a lot of Spirit Stones to recover my energy in the profound Abyss. Too bad she didn't give me any Rank Three ones, though."

Rean smiled after hearing that.

"That's good then. Anyway, don't worry. It turns out that my Light Element is excellent at ridding the Decaying Energy in your body. If you feel that you have accumulated too much of it, just tell me, and I can help you straight away."

Malaka nodded at Rean.

"Alright!"

Malaka was still mounting Kentucky even at this moment, so the two looked at it.

\*Chick?\*

Kentucky's head bent a little to the side, expressing his confusion to Rean's concern.

Let alone a Spiritual Energy barrier. It seemed like Kentucky was taking it as easy as Roan. Rean couldn't feel any struggles from him at all.

'Oh well... Kentucky is a Minokawa, and Minokawas can use the Dark Element to start with, so I guess he is also not affected by Yin Energy. Or perhaps, his mutation in the Soul Gem Dimensional Realm made him inherit part of Roan's immunity. Anyhow, it's one less thing to worry about.'

However, Roan approached Kentucky and put a hand on its head before closing his eyes. Rean and Malaka looked at Roan with a puzzled expression, though. Roan wasn't the type that would waste his time petting Kentucky. A few seconds later, Roan opened his eyes again.

"This bird is really something else. Not only is it not being affected by Decaying Energy, but it is also absorbing it automatically. I noticed that I can absorb this Decaying Energy as if it is Spiritual Energy. Looks like Kentucky can do it as well. In fact, it seems a lot more nutritious for him than me."

Rean approached Kentucky and looked closely. Sure enough, the Decaying Fog entered his body little by little. However, it wasn't forcing its way in like it does with him and Malaka. It was instead being slowly attracted to Kentucky's Black Scales and Feathers. However, it was so faint that even Kentucky didn't notice it.

"Well, that's even better."

Roan nodded and then selected a random direction.

"Alright, we lost enough time already. Let's go!"

Death... and me

Chapter 244: Life Style Fourth Form

The light was a rare commodity in the underground space. The only way to see something was to generate light yourself. Of course, as cultivators with Spiritual Energy, it wasn't anything hard to do. However, it didn't make things much better. The Decaying Fog around made the light stop at just three or four meters away from the origin. In some places where it was more concentrated, it wouldn't even matter that much.

What cultivators relied the most upon going underground ended up being their Spiritual Sense. It could travel much further, not to mention that it was an all-encompassing sensory ability. Still, as mentioned before, Spiritual Sense was also affected by the Decaying Fog. Even those at the Peak of the Core Formation Realm couldn't see much more than 100 meters around or so.

Rean's group was no different. Spiritual Sense carried a trace of one's element affinity, but it was mostly fueled by pure Spiritual Energy. Naturally, they couldn't escape this restriction. However, Roan still had some advantages over this field, thanks to his Dark Element and Yin Energy.

"I can't see more than 20 or so meters. Usually, I can see up to 90 to 100 meters or so with my Peak Foundation Establishment cultivation. This fog is really something. What about you, Malaka?"

Malaka nodded as she replied.

"I'm even worse. My Spiritual Sense stops at 12 meters."

There was no point in asking Kentucky since he probably didn't even know what Spiritual Sense was to start with.

"What about you, Roan?"

"I'm doing much better. Thanks to my affinity and Yin Energy, I can still see up to 35 to 40 meters. Well, if we are talking about specific detection abilities, Rean's is better than my Spiritual Sense range."

Rean nodded. Roan could indeed see much further with his Spiritual Sense. However, Rean could literally detect Spiritual Senses of a higher level with his Light Element Spiritual Sense Bending Skill. One must remember that if the opponent's cultivation was too high, Rean's group's own Spiritual Senses would fail to detect the enemy's position. Also, if Rean stopped using his Light Element Spiritual Sense Bending Skill, they wouldn't even be able to feel the opponent's Spiritual Sense either if their cultivation was too high.

However, higher-level cultivators' Spiritual Senses had the opposite effect on Rean. They would shine like a sun against Rean's skill. It was so useful that he even decided to call it the Fourth Form of his Life Style, Hidden Radar. Although pretty lame, the name was indeed quite fit. It could both detect others' Spiritual Senses and also hide oneself and even others against it. Not to mention that it could both bend Spiritual Sense and Light, so the hidden effect of the Fourth Form was able to hide from others' eyes too. Anyway, if someone with a Spiritual Sense stronger than Roan's appears, Rean would be the first one to detect it. Too bad that he could at most hide two people at once. More than that would be too hard to control, so he couldn't do it for Malaka and Kentucky as well. That being said, Rean was only using it to detect others' Spiritual Senses and nothing else.

Also, that wasn't the only thing. Rean can feel Life Forces from longer distances as well, especially in a place like this where Life Force shines like torches. If the enemy stops using his Spiritual Sense for some reason, Rean's Life Style Fourth Form wouldn't detect anything. However, his Life Force can't just disappear unless he was dead. Rean was basically a walking double-layered detector.

After hearing the explanation, Malaka couldn't help but ask.

"By the way, which one can detect others from further away?"

Rean pondered a bit before saying.

"It will depend on the range of their Spiritual Senses. I was paying attention to the people who distanced themselves from us during our descent. I can feel their Life Force up to 60 to 80 meters. It all depends on their cultivation. The higher their cultivation, the stronger their life force. The stronger their life force, naturally, the further I can feel it. If they have a Spiritual Sense that can go further than 80 meters, I will first detect their Spiritual Senses. If not, then I'll detect their life forces early instead."

Malaka nodded.

"Master told me that Spiritual Sense strength is not only related to cultivation. People's souls have different degrees of power. That gives them a longer or shorter range of Spiritual Senses. I guess it will come up to their talent whether you can feel one or the other first."

Rean nodded and smiled. Malaka was only eleven years old. Although Malaka acted happy go lucky all the time, she was quite intelligent for her age. She understood the entire explanation without even needing to ask questions in the middle.

All of a sudden, Roan raised his hand.

"Stop! There's something ahead."

Rean narrowed his eyes in response. He couldn't detect anything in there.

"It's probably one of the Decaying Demon Beasts of the Profound Abyss that Elder Reliance talked about. If it was a cultivator, I would have definitely detected it."

However, before they could even think if they should ignore or test its strength, Kentucky's eyes lit up!

\*Chick!\*

\*Vup!\*

Without any warning, Kentucky dashed in the direction of the Demon Beast. Rean's group could only sigh in response to it and follow it in the end.

The Demon Beast was very close to start with, so it only took Kentucky a few seconds to enter its detection range. It turned out that it didn't even look like a Demon Beast at all. It had the shape of a Dark Fog Blade that floated in mid-air.

As soon as it noticed Kentucky, it began to tremble. Soon after, it shot like an arrow against Kentucky's head.

Rean's group had received a lot of information about the profound Abyss from the Sect Master. All the Decaying Demon Beasts used the Decaying Fog as fuel for their attacks. It made abilities like Spiritual Energy barriers more fragile. Also, if hit, the Decaying Energy in their bodies would immediately flow inside the cultivator's body like torrents. That being said, all the cultivators participating in this Profound Abyss were warned to avoid injuries at all costs.

"It's a Decaying Slasher! Its power is comparable to an Initial Stage Core Formation Realm cultivator. However, it has very high defense, so it will be hard to break through its blade to hit the Core."

There was only one way to kill Decaying Demon Beasts, destroying their cores.

Roan nodded.

"It's a good chance to see what Kentucky can do."

Malaka wanted to help Kentucky, but Rean and Roan stopped her. They knew how strong Kentucky's defense was, after all.

The Dark Fog Blade was obviously faster than the half plumpy bird. Still, Kentucky didn't seem to be the least bit concerned. If anything, he looked excited.

As soon as the Decaying Slasher arrived in front of Kentucky's head, Kentucky's Light and Dark Element gathered around his beak. Just like in the past, Kentucky's head moved much faster than demon beasts at his stage could. Even the Decaying Slasher couldn't react in time with its speed.

\*Clang!\*

\*Shatter!\*

It was a one-sided battle. The blade-like Demon Beast broke right in the middle, where its Core was present. With that, its entire body crumbled, leaving behind just the Core, which was now locked between Kentucky's beak.

The beast then tried to gather more Decaying Energy to reform its body, however...

\*Gulp!\*

\*Burp~~\*

Kentuck swallowed it like the Core was candy.

Rean's group was quite surprised to see it.

"Elder Reliance was right. A Minokawa's beak is no joke. Kentucky shattered the Decaying Blade in a single strike."

Roan nodded.

"It's good that it can rely on itself while we are here."

Rean then came forward and touched Kentucky's head before convening his thoughts through a Spiritual Sense.

'Kentucky. Keep the Demon Core, but don't start digesting it right now. Wait for the time we come out of the Profound Abyss.'

\*Chick!\*

Kentucky seemed to have understood what Rean said. Right after, he returned to Malaka's side, who quickly mounted him again.

"Good boy! Hahaha!"

"Alright. This is just the entrance. The number of Decaying Demon Beasts will only increase as we move ahead, so pay attention. Let's go."

Death... and me

Chapter 245: Decaying Golems

Roan was right. As they moved forward, they began to find more Decaying Demon Beasts. However, their strength wasn't much different from each other.

This was a Training Ground made for young cultivators by the imperial family. Naturally, they couldn't allow too many Demon Beasts above the 3rd Stage to exist since the cultivators would be powerless against it. It wouldn't be considered training if the participants couldn't even react to the Decaying Demon Beasts' attacks.



Before starting every event, the Imperial Family's experts, led by a Saint Realm Expert, would sweep the entire Profound Abyss. They already had a good understanding of the Decaying Demon Beasts present in this place as well. They would purposely leave just a few Stage Four Demon Beasts with power equivalent to Initial Stage Core and Soul Fusion Realm cultivators.

No participant in the Profound Abyss had cultivations higher than the Peak of the Core Formation Realm. However, they were geniuses of their own powers nonetheless. That meant that they could still fight above the average level. Logically, quite a few of them have no problem matching an Initial Stage Core and Fusion Realm average enemy. A few were more powerful than that.

As for what would happen if a Stage Four Demon Beast found a Foundation Establishment Realm cultivator? Well, that cultivator could just be said to be unfortunate. Everyone had been informed about the Profound Abyss' cultivation limit. If they decided to enter with Foundation Establishment Realm cultivation, then that was their problem.

"Malaka, I'll leave those two Decaying Golems for you to take care of. They have a strength similar to a Peak Stage Foundation Establishment Realm cultivator, so you can deal with it."

Rean and Roan weren't just ordering Malaka to battle. They were battling as well. At the moment, they found a group of Decaying Golems. They were categorized by their sizes—the bigger, the stronger. While Malaka was fighting those with power equivalent to the Foundation Establishment realm, Rean and Roan were dealing with Core Formation Level Golems.

Turns out that those Golems detected their presence even before Roan's Spiritual Sense could see them. Still, it was to be expected. This was their own home, so they definitely evolved to detect others' presence in this environment.

"Alright!"

'Death Water Style, Second Form, Spinning Dragon Tails!'

Using both sides of her Staff, Malaka rotated her body while hitting body golems at the same time. She was so fast that she could create afterimages using the Water Element to confuse the opponent. The attacks were very fluid, showing the advantages of a Water Element User. Still, she was not very

proficient with it. The hitting points were quite off from the places she wished to attack. It couldn't be helped, though. She came up with this skill with Roan's help just a month and a half ago. She needed time to adapt to it in real battle situations.

The Golem's bodies broke on the sides where she hit them but did not crumble. Not only that, they didn't feel any pain to start with, so they used that change to attack Malaka as well.

Malaka wasn't affected by that, though.

'Death Water Style, First Form, Flowing Dragon!'

The same way as she did with Roan, she used the Dragon's Head on one side of the staff to defend against the attacks. She then used the counterforce and the staff's bending properties to power the attack against the golems. If there was one thing that Malaka lacked, it was raw power. She had to use those maneuvers to increase her own strength, or things would be difficult for her.

\*Bang, bang!\*

As expected, Malaka was already used to the First Form. Thanks to that, she hit the Golem at the point where their cores were located. Still, the Golems lacked anything but defense. The area around their cores crumbled as their cores were somewhat affected. However, they did not crumble. The worst part was that as soon as Malaka tried to gain distance, the dark earth under them began to move to recover their bodies.

"Don't stop! If you give them a chance to heal, you will run out of Spiritual Energy before you can do anything else."

"Alright!"

Rean and Roan were not much better. At the moment, they were using their Death Style Fifth Form, Mirage Assault, to fight several Stage Three Decaying Golems. It's just that there were just too many of them.

'It's not good like this. Instead of focusing on them all at the same time, let's destroy them one by one. Ignore the others.'

'If we leave others alone, they might attack Malaka and Kentucky. Are you sure?'

Roan nodded.

'This is a training ground. Malaka and Kentucky will not only find opponents at their level during their time here. They have to get used to dealing with adverse situations. Otherwise, only death would await them in the future.'

He then looked to another side, just to see Kentucky fighting another two Stage Three Golems on his own. Still, his beak was just so long, so his attacks failed to reach the Golem Cores every time. Fortunately, Kentucky seemed to have understood that he had to continue to keep attacking to prevent the Golems from recovering. He focused on a single golem while bearing the attacks of the second. It seemed like Kentucky's defense wasn't any worse than the Golems either.

\*Clang, clang, clang...\*

Every time he received and performed an attack, only metallic sounds could be heard. It was a real brawns only battle.

Rean then looked at Roan and nodded.

The twins then looked at the largest Golem in the group and changed their targets. As soon as the twins and their mirages changed direction, the Stage Three Golems on the sides changed targets as well. They were not thinking much, just choosing the targets that seemed to be the easiest to kill. Naturally, they charged at Malaka and Kentucky.

Rean and Roan ignored it, though.

'Focus on its core!'

The four of them dashed at full speed to increase their attacks' power.

'Death Style, First Form, Stellar Piercer!'

Stellar Piercer was commonly used for long-range attacks. However, this attack's real power was at close range. If they considered single target damage, none of Rean and Roan's skills could beat the Stellar Piercer.

Four Stellar Piercers came at the Golem Leader from all sides, all of them aiming at the place where its core was. However, the Golem understood the danger and immediately assumed a boulder-like form, covering its core with its enormous dark stone body.

\*Bang, bang, bang, bang!\*

All the Stellar Pierces connected, leaving deep holes into the Golem's body. However, they still failed to reach deep enough to touch the Core. Soon after, the Golem opened its arms and rotated its body, sweeping Rean and Roan's group away. However, at this moment, another Rean and Roan appeared right under this guy's body in a flash!

"Idiot! Who said that we can only make two copies?"

'Death Style, First Form, Stellar Piercer!'

The Golem was already slow to start with, so it simply had no time to react at all.

\*Puchi, Puchi!\*

The twins' attacks pierced right through the layer of dark rocks, hitting the enormous Golem Core head-on!

\*Crack!\*

\*Boom!\*

However...

\*Roar!\*

The Golem looked at Rean and Roan as it brandished its arms at them. Rean and Roan didn't have time to change the attacks into a defensive form, so they could only move away.

"Jump back!"

\*Bang, bang!\*

Even though Rean and Roan were fast, they were still a little too slow. The Golem's attack was powerful, which immediately made some of their bones break on impact. That's already considering that the twins mitigated some of its power by moving in the same direction as the attack.

"Focus, he isn't the only one."

Roan didn't lose his calm. He kept his Spiritual Sense locked on the other two Stage Three Decaying Golems that didn't change target and followed them. Not long after, the two controlled their mirages that were free and blocked the Golems' path.

'Death Style, First Defensive Form, Reversive Arcs!'

\*Bang, bang, bang, bang!\*

The four Mirages were sent flying for trying to stop those Golems' attacks head-on. Still, it brought the real Rean and Roan more than enough time to land and reach a safe distance.

It turned out that they hit the Golem's Core, but they lacked the power to shatter it. In the end, that Golem only had its Core cracked, but not destroyed.

'Life Style, Second Form, Instant Recovery!'

Rean and Roan's body began to heal, and their bones mended together once more. However, there was really a significant lacking of the Light Element in this place, so it would take at least a minute to finish.

'That thing's level is probably at the Middle Stage of the Core Formation Realm, but its defense is probably at the late, no, Peak Stage.'

Rean then looked at Malaka and Kentucky. Rean was surprised to see that Malaka had defeated one of the Stage Two Decaying Golems before the Stage Three ones arrived. After that, she assumed a defensive form and kept retreating in circles, holding one Stage Two and two Stage Three Golems occupied. However, it was evident that she was also reaching her limit. There were also a few injuries on her body, proving that she was hit at some point.

As for Kentucky, Rean noticed that it had also destroyed one of the Stage Three Golems it was fighting previously. However, with the addition of another two, Kentucky held its ground against three Stage Three Golems. Rean noticed that Kentucky's scales began to crack already as his blade feathers were broken everywhere.

"We might need to retreat from this place."

Death... and me

Chapter 246: Surprises

Rean and Roan weren't really preoccupied. The Golems were relatively slow, so it wouldn't be a problem for them to retreat. Even if they didn't have the chance to do that, they could drag Malaka and Kentucky into the Soul Gem Dimensional Realm. After that, they just needed to wait until the Golems leave for them to come out as well.

However, it was at this moment that the Golem Leader acted.

\*ROAR~~~~!!!\*

All the other Golems then looked at it and immediately dashed back to its side. The Golem Leader then looked at Rean and Roan as it used its arms to cover the place where his Core was located. Soon after, it turned around and began to run away with its companions.

Rean and Roan were quite surprised by that. It was not because the Golem chose to flee, but because they thought it would never do that. From Reliance's information, the Demon Beasts inside this place are in a constant semi-berserk state. Retreating would be one of the last things they'd do.

Malaka and Kentucky then returned to Rean and Roan's side. Their condition wasn't that good, but they weren't in any danger either.

"Hehe. We won! Did you see how I held those Golems back on my own?"

\*Chick, chick!\*

Rean smiled as he patted those two heads, much to their delight.

Roan, on the other hand, narrowed his eyes.

"Strange. They shouldn't have retreated. It seems like they're not in a berserk state like Reliance told us. That Golem wasn't intelligent, but it could at least understand that continuing to battle us would possibly bring its own death."

Rean nodded.

"It's probably because of the Surge. It must be affecting the Decaying Demon Beasts' state of mind. Sure enough, the Surge will arrive during the trial."

Roan agreed with those words.

"Indeed. This is terrible news. It means that the Demon Beasts will be even more dangerous from now on. Should we give up the Vermilion Pools and retreat?"

Malaka immediately shook her head.

"No! I don't want to go back like this. The others will definitely not give up just because of the Surge, so I won't either."

Roan looked at Malaka for a second and nodded.

"That's more like it. Alright, let's recover our energy and injuries first. This place was those Golems' territory, so there shouldn't be other Decaying Demon Beasts around. Let's take the chance to do it now."

Rean nodded and immediately took a few Spirit Stones out to recover his energy. After he healed his injuries, he touched Malaka and Kentucky before using his Life Style Second Form to heal them. Well, Kentucky could also use the Light Element, so Rean only had to control it to increase the effectiveness.

Roan could use the Life Style Second Form as well, but not as proficient as Rean, so he only recovered his own injuries.

Just as Rean was about to finish everything, his expression changed.

"There's Spiritual Sense. Someone is coming from there."

Everyone immediately got up and looked in the direction Rean pointed out. Sure enough, four figures appeared in their vision a few seconds later.

"That's quite impressive. As soon as my Spiritual Sense touched you three, you got up and looked in my direction. However, I couldn't feel any of your Spiritual Senses passing by me. How did you know that we were there? Oh! Wait! Aren't you that girl with that amazing Water Element control?"



As expected, Malaka's display in the settlement caught the attention of a lot of people. The man who talked seemed to be very interested in Rean's group. Rean and Roan had no idea who they were, but they could at least feel their cultivations. The frontman was at the Late Stage of the Core Formation Realm while his companions seemed to be in the Middle or initial Stage.

"Hahaha! I got a lot of fans at that time."

Malaka didn't seem afraid, but she was gripping on her staff quite tightly.

Roan didn't care about any of that, so he went straight to the point.

"What do you want? We have no time to deal with you, so make it quick."

The man narrowed his eyes. Even though his group had the cultivation advantage, those twins didn't seem to care much about them. Still, he soon recovered before saying.

"I, Doren Cantou, am not someone unreasonable that would attack kids. I saw that you guys got many Rank Three Spirit Stones during the gathering in the settlement. As long as you leave them behind, we will pretend that we never saw you before."

His companions then began to laugh after hearing that. Sure enough, they all had the same idea. Rank Three Spirit Stones were very hard to acquire by people of their level, after all.

However, Roan snorted in response.

"Too bad. We won't approve. Now that you've made your intentions clear, I have no intention of letting any of you go. I'll simply harvest the spoils from your bodies."

Of course, Roan had already reached an agreement with Rean and Malaka even before saying that. It was evident that leaving this place without a battle wouldn't be possible. Well, they were lucky that they were able to recover from the Golems' fight before these guys arrived. Otherwise, they would need to retreat, give their Spirit Stones away, or enter the Soul Gem Dimensional Realm.

'Malaka, you and Kentucky will fight the guy on the right side. Be careful, though. His cultivation is a lot higher than yours, and he is a human that can think. He will be even more dangerous than those three golems attacking you together.'

'Don't worry. With Kentucky here, I'm invincible! Hahaha!'

Rean and Roan didn't mind Malaka's words and immediately attacked the other two Initial Stage Core Formation Realm enemies. Their hair colors changed once more as they gathered Light and Dark Element between their Swords.

'Death Style, Fifth Form, Mirage Assault!'

When Rean and Roan's opponents saw that, they laughed out loud. Rean and Roan's speed was just at the level of a Peak Foundation Establishment, and so was the energy coming from their bodies. With their higher cultivation, those twins would be too easy to deal with. Let alone Malaka and Kentucky, who were attacking the other guy.

However, Doren narrowed his eyes instead. The difference in cultivation was so big, so where did that confidence of theirs come from? He decided that he would not leave it up to chance. Everyone in the Profound Abyss was a genius of their own organizations, after all.

'Don't underestimate those two. Attack with full power!'

His companions were taken aback for a moment, but they didn't dare to defy Doren's order.

'Hell Blade!'

'Earth Asunder!'

Doren also didn't waste the chance and attacked the closest twin, Roan.

'Heavenly Wind Slasher!'

None of them noticed what was happening. No, to be more exact, none of them had ever seen the Mirage Assault before.

Rean and Roan had faked their actions. Obviously, they aren't weak to the point where they can only move and release the Spiritual Energy of a Peak Foundation Establishment Realm cultivator. Even if their opponents were vigilant, they didn't expect what happened next.

'Life Style, First Form, Enhancement!'

Suddenly, Rean and Roan's speed and power exploded, reaching the same level as a Late Stage Core Formation Realm cultivator! Doren's companions, who were about to block Rean and Roan, instantly paled!

Fast! Too fast!

Of course, Rean and Roan wouldn't give them the time necessary to react.

'Death Style, Third Form, Three Claws of the Dragon!'

The surprises had just begun for them, though.

Death... and me

Chapter 247: Life and Death Situation

Rean and Roan passed through the two guy's defense faster than they could react and immediately attacked.

'Death Style, Third Form, Three Claws of the Dragon!'

Three Swords made of Light and Dark Light appeared, aiming for the critical points on their bodies. However, those guys were still geniuses of their own powers. Even if they weren't a match with their

Initial and Middle Stage cultivation, they wouldn't die that easily, especially the one Roan was attacking. After all, Doren attacked Roan, giving him too little time to properly aim the Three Claws of the Dragon.

Rean hit two of his three claws but failed to land a killing blow. Of course, those two hits were still bad news for his opponent. As for Roan's opponent, he blocked one of the semi-real swords while Doren blocked another. In the end, Roan only landed one hit that was not at a vital part.

In the first exchange, no deaths appeared. Still, that was enough for Doren's group to understand what was going to happen. This will turn into a battle where no side will leave unharmed... or so they thought.

However, Doren had a foreboding feeling as he looked at Roan's face. There, he could swear that he saw a faint smile appearing. His Heavenly Wind Slasher connected, but it wasn't a clean hit. Roan had used that explosion of speed not only to attack but to also dodge Doren's attack.

Roan wasn't the only one. Rean also had an expression of ridicule aimed at the guy who dodged his fatal strike just a split second ago.

Their plan worked better than they thought. During that moment where they used the First Form of the Life Style, their enemies were so shocked that their full attention was focused on Rean and Roan. They only had enough time to hear the Spiritual Sense Message from Malaka and Kentucky's opponent.

'Behind!'

Unfortunately, they were too late. What Rean and Roan had used from the very start was the Fifth Form of the Death Style, Mirage Assault. However, they did not summon the clones until the very last second.

Two Reans and Roans appeared behind those Initial and Middle Stage Core Formation Realm cultivators just as they retreated to escape the real Rean and Roan's attacks.

'Death Style, Third Form, Three Claws of the Dragon!'

In that split second, another six dark and white swords of energy aimed at the back of each of them.

\*Swish, swish, swish, swish, swish, swish!\*

Their Spiritual Energy was useless against all six swords. Although the semi-real Rean and Roans only had 70% of the real ones' powers, their attacks weren't something that could be stopped with one's body alone. Heart, head, neck, if it was a critical point, the mirages hit it! However, Rean and Roan only aimed at those two guys, leaving Doren and Malaka's opponent out. Doren was at the Late Stage of the Core Formation Realm, so he might have reacted in time to avoid the blows, which wouldn't change the battle proportions. As for Malaka's opponent, he was the second Initial Stage of this group, so it wouldn't be too risky if he survived.

In the very first strike, the Initial and Middle Stage Core Formation Realm cultivators already perished. Only Doren and Malaka and Kentucky's opponent remained.

"Yo-you!"

Roan snorted as he recovered his equilibrium after dodging Doren's attacks. Roan had to pay quite a wealthy price to make the distraction plan work. After all, it was not like the clones could disappear from one's Spiritual Sense. Because of that, Doren's Heavenly Wind Slasher left a deep cut on his shoulder where the Wind Element was causing havoc. Still, Roan quickly controlled his Dark Element to destroy it. He also used Rean and White Star's Light Elements to heal his injury with the Life Style Second Form. It's just that the healing part would take some time due to the lack of Light Element in this place.

"Regretting now? Too late!"

They were the ones trying to extort their group's Spirit Stones using their higher cultivation. Indeed, Doren was the last person with the right to complain about the outcome of their actions.

Roan didn't even wait for his injuries to heal as he dashed at Doren. Rean, who had also killed his opponent, did the same thing. Of course, the four clones of the Mirage Assault also changed their target and pounced at Doren.

Meanwhile, on Malaka's side, her opponent was shocked by what happened to his two companions. Seeing his companions dying made him go crazy, increasing his pressure against Malaka and Kentucky even more.

"Die!"

He stomped his feet on the ground, releasing an enormous amount of Earth Element that made the ground under Malaka and Kentucky give in. Malaka tried to keep her equilibrium as Kentucky immediately opened his wings to take flight. However, that guy was waiting for that exact moment! Kentucky's movement was instinctual, so it gave the guy a small window to attack Malaka alone! He immediately used an Earth Movement Skill that allowed him to travel in the middle of the flying rubbles in a flash!

"You first, brat!"

Earth Element gathered around his spear as he unleashed his attack.

'Myriad Earth Spears!'

Not only did his own spear attack Malaka from the front, but three additional spears that were almost identical also came from under her as she tried to regain her balance.

'Death Water Style, First Form, Flowing Dragon!'

Without any other choice, Malaka could only use her attack in that situation. She could feel that although the spears coming from the ground had similar strength to the one in her enemy's hand, they weren't as dangerous. Those earth spears were firm, but they were there basically to distract Malaka with their higher number while her enemy landed the main attack.

Kentucky immediately noticed Malaka's situation as his body exploded with Black and White Flames. Kentucky then flapped his wings, disappearing from his position in a flash! Still, that wasn't fast enough to stop Malaka's opponent's attack.

Rean and Roan also noticed that, but they were surrounding Doren, trying to prevent him from escaping. Even if they gave up the attack right now, they would take even longer than Kentucky to arrive there.

In the end, Malaka's decision to block the spear head-on was right. The Dragon's Head of the Flowing Dragon Skill parried that enemy's attack. Malaka also did her best to use the opponent's force to rotate her body as much as possible, giving up the counter-attack that she could use with the Flowing Dragon. Thanks to that, the three additional spears still hit and passed through her body, but fortunately missed the critical points. Of course, Malaka was immediately severely injured because of that.

"Malaka!"

Rean was just about to move to help Malaka, but Roan immediately stopped him with a message through their Soul Connection.

'Stop! It's not over yet.'

Malaka's opponent didn't expect her to survive in that situation. After all, not only was she taken by surprise, her cultivation was also a lot lower than his own. Still, her injuries were not light, so he immediately turned around to give the final blow.

However, he didn't have time for it. Malaka's last desperate struggle bought Kentucky enough time to arrive!

\*Creeeeeeeeeee!\*

The amount of Black and White Flames coming from his body made the cultivator immediately give up attacking Malaka at that moment. Instead, he decided that he might as well use the inertia to attack Kentucky as well!

"Dumb bird! You dare to attack head-on against a spear user with your Stage Two level?! Die for me!"

Earth Element and Spiritual Energy gathered once more around his spear as he used another one of his skills.

'Earth God Spear!'

As a single target attack, this one was even stronger than the spears that attacked Malaka!

\*Boom!\*

The spear and Kentucky's beak smashed against each other. Light, Dark, and Earth Elements exploded on both sides. Still, neither side was victorious in the exchange.

"What?!"

The energy of the attacks sent both Kentucky and the enemy cultivator flying backward. Sure enough, Kentucky's beak was as strong as ever! Even with the difference in cultivation, Kentucky was still able to bring his strength up to par with his opponent.

However, it wasn't over there. Right behind the guy, Malaka stood up once more! Fountains of blood came out of the three holes on her body, but she gritted her teeth and bore with the pain.

"Roan's punishments hurt much more!"

'Death Water Style, Second Form, Spinning Dragon Tails!'

The man was taken aback once more after seeing that. Because of the explosion of Spiritual Energy and the Elements, he was knocked with his back turned in Malaka's direction. All he could do was try to spin his body to defend Malaka's incoming attack. Unfortunately, he was in mid-air without any contact with the ground. He had just finished a powerful exchange with Kentucky, so he couldn't redirect his Spiritual Energy to bring out the Myriad Earth Spears that fast either.

\*Bang, bang!\*

Surprisingly, even in that condition, he was still able to defend against two of the strikes. However, he saw one thing that he couldn't believe. His spear... shattered after that! Rean's High-Level Equipment showed its prowess at this moment, more powerful than what Malaka's opponents had. Besides, Kentucky's attack just a moment ago didn't help with the situation either. In the end, the spear simply couldn't resist the pressure.



Malaka didn't try to be merciful this time. Her conditions simply didn't allow her to do so. Kentucky was sent flying away because of the previous strike. Rean and Roan were even further at the moment. If she didn't make sure to finish him here, she would definitely die since she couldn't do anything after that anymore.

\*Bang, Crack, Crash!\*

The first strike caved inside the man's heart. The second broke his neck, and the third crashed his head! It was instant death!

Malaka couldn't celebrate after that, though. That was because she passed out before the man's body could even hit the ground. The two fell on the floor together right after—one girl with severe injuries and one dead body.

Death... and me

Chapter 248: Premeditated

Doren, who was doing his best to find an escape route, felt even more pressure after seeing his last remaining companion falling. Rean and Roan could even fight a Peak Stage Core Formation Realm for some time with Mirage Assault on, let alone a Late Stage.

First, Doren resisted so far because he was a genius of his own sect. Second, he was a Wind Element user. He was proficient in his own Wind Movement Technique, one of the best elements for speed.

Nevertheless, Rean, Roan, and the four copies they created kept blocking Doren's path time and time again. Doren hoped that his companion would force at least one of them to go and help the girl, but who could have thought that she and the fat bird would win in the end?

Roan also noticed when Malaka gave a finishing blow to the guy's head and nodded with a satisfied expression.

'It seems like Mia had been training her better than I thought. In that last second, I saw no hesitation in her movements.'

Rean also sighed in relief. He could feel that Malaka was in a terrible condition, but she would resist for some time still. That was enough time for him to go there and heal her up.

Rean and Roan then returned their attention to Doren and increased the pressure.

"Wait! I'll give you everything I have! Let me go!"

Roan snorted in response as he said

"Keep dreaming."

'Death Style, First Form, Stellar Piercer!'

Rean didn't say anything as he also attacked. If they were not strong enough, they would be the ones on the ground now. Doren's group definitely had no intention of letting them go to start with.

'Death Style, Third Form, Three Claws of the Dragon!'

Their Mirages also used the same skills, attacking Doren from all sides. Finally, Doren wasn't able to hold back anymore. The injuries on his bodies were too severe for him to keep his performance up.

\*Puchi!\*

Finally, one of the Mirages' Stellar Piercer passed through his chest. Doren's eyes opened wide as he looked at the hole in his chest. Although it missed his head, it was still a match-ending injury.

\*cough.\*

He vomited blood and kneeled on the ground, trying to not fall. Unfortunately for him, it was already over. He had no strength to move anymore. Knowing that begging would make no difference, he closed his eyes and waited for the final blow. However, that final blow that would take his life did not come as he thought. Instead, he felt a cold sensation on his neck. Something was faintly touching it.

He opened his eyes again, just to meet Roan's cold eyes, while the White Star pressed against his throat.

"Aren't you quite lucky? I have a few questions for you, so you still have a few moments to live."

As for Rean, he wasn't there anymore. The moment Doren gave up any resistance, he canceled the Death Style Fifth Form and rushed to Malaka's position. Kentucky was already there as well, making sure to watch for any danger that could come in Malaka's way.

Rean then looked at the pool of blood from Malaka herself and her ragged breath. At the same time, Rean could see the little bit of Light Element coming out of Malaka's body. Almost none was left. One must remember that Rean was also capable of using his First Form of the Life Style, Enhancement, on others. That being said, Rean and increased Malaka's combat power before the battle started. That's why she was able to match a Core Formation Realm cultivator with her Middle Stage Foundation Establishment cultivation.

Of course, Malaka was quite strong herself. It's just that her opponent turned out to be much stronger than ordinary Initial Stage Core Formation Realm cultivators. In the same way that Malaka could fight those about her realm, so did her opponent. If not for that, her battle wouldn't have been so desperate.

He immediately laid her on his lap and touched her injuries. Soon after, a burst of Light Element came from Rean's body and began to enter Malaka's injuries.

'Life Style, Second Form, Instant Recovery!'

Kentucky looked at Malaka with some worry. Seeing that, Rean smiled and comforted him.

"It's okay. Malaka will feel weak for a while, but she isn't in danger anymore."

Although Kentucky couldn't understand words well, he could at least catch Rean's meaning.

\*Chick!\*

Kentucky then sat down on Rean's side and closed its eyes. Right after, faint ripples of Light Element began to gather on his body. Turns out that Kentucky began to heal his own injuries as well. Of course, he was far from being as good as Rean.

Back on Roan's side, he already started to ask his questions.

"So, why do I feel like you did not find us through coincidence?"

From what Rean said, Doren's group was already rushing in their direction by the time he felt their Spiritual Sense. In a normal situation, the opponents would first pause to assess the situation with their Spiritual Sense. Only then would they decide whether to attack or defend. After all, they had to first check the cultivation levels of Rean's group.

"You have never had any intention of letting us go to start with, that much I can tell. You only asked for Spirit Stones to make us drop our guard. That would make it easier to catch us by surprise and prevent anyone from escaping. Speak, how did you find us? Why were you following our trace?"

Doren smiled bitterly after hearing that. He still had some hope after he heard that Roan had some questions. However, he didn't expect that this 'kid' would have seen through the entire scheme.

"If I tell the truth, will you let me go?"

Roan laughed coldly after hearing that.

"Of course not. However, I can at least give you a painless death. Believe me, you don't want to see what I'm capable of doing when I want some information."

Doren felt a chill on his back after he looked at Roan's expression.

Torture? It would be hard to find a single existence in this world better at it than Death himself.

Death... and me

#### Chapter 249: True Reasons

As Rean healed Malaka, he began to hear some muffled screams from behind. He didn't need to think to figure out what was happening there. Rean was the one to come up with the issue of the pursuit. After all, it made no sense that Doren's group came straight at them from the get-go after finding them with their Spiritual Sense. He might not like Roan's methods, but he couldn't risk being in the dark about what was happening either.

Instead, he focused his energy on healing Malaka. Because of the lack of Light Element in the Profound Abyss, it took longer than he wanted. Not to mention that healing others was already much slower than healing himself to start with.

Sometime later, the screams stopped and what followed next was the sound of a sword being waved around. Soon after, a thud could be heard. Rean knew that Doren was dead and that the sound was his body hitting the floor. Roan appeared by his side a few moments later. He looked at Malaka's injuries and then asked.

"How is it?"

Rean nodded.

"She's fine. She lost a lot of blood, which my Light Element can't recover. But as long as she rests, she will recover eventually."

Roan nodded as well.

"She did well. At that moment, she was still able to rotate her body and avoid her body's critical points. Indeed, there is no better way to practice other than real combat."

Rean sighed. He didn't really want Malaka to pass through this. However, he already understood how the cultivation world worked. Since Malaka had become a cultivator as well, this kind of situation would most likely happen again in the future. If she doesn't become ready now, it will be too late later.

"By the way, how was it with the interrogation?"

Roan narrowed his eyes as he explained.

"Well, it won't be of any surprise to you. The one who ordered Doren to come after us was none other than that guy who is always with Calina, Valeu. I asked why he would go to this extent to get rid of us. From the looks of it, he wants Malaka's pendant back. Of course, if that was the only reason, there would be no need to kill us. You noticed it as well, didn't you? He's the type that doesn't want to mix himself with no named people like us."

"Because Malaka had somehow managed to become friends with Calina, a princess of the Sasamil Empire, he probably thought of it to be disgraceful. Of course, this reason for killing us is just a theory of mine. He might have another reason altogether. Still, Doren certainly received an offer to kill us instead of just recovering the pendant."

Rean couldn't help but ask.

"Why is this pendant so important?"

Roan shrugged his shoulders.

"Doren also asked the same question to Valeu, but the latter did not answer, stating that he didn't have the status to do so. Nonetheless, it's definitely something with significance. From the looks of it, Valeu only found out about the fact that Calina gave it to Malaka a few moments before the Profound Abyss opened."

"How so?"

"Simple. With Valeu's background, he could have tried to buy it from us instead. However, now that we are inside the Profound Abyss, there is a risk that we will lose it here. After all, Valeu only knew about our cultivation and not our fighting prowess. He probably thinks that we will die. Still, he can't come here by himself since he has to protect the princess. That being said, he offered some rewards so that stronger cultivators at the Core Formation Realm would recover it and keep it safe."

Rean narrowed his eyes in response. Of course, Roan noticed it.

"What's the problem?"

Rean shook his head as he said.

"I don't know. Something tells me that something isn't right with this guy. How can I say it... during the days we followed Malaka and Calina, I felt like he wasn't pleased just because Malaka was interacting with Calina. Oh well, this is just a gut feeling anyway."

Roan did not spend any time with Valeu, nor did he ask Malaka and Rean about the guy. He simply didn't care about him. Once the Profound Abyss was over, they would never see each other again, or so Roan thought. Because of that, he hadn't given any attention to Valeu before. However, Rean spent a lot of time with him because of Malaka and Calina's relation.

"Whatever. The problem here is that Doren's group isn't the only one contacted. More Core Formation Realm groups are coming for us as well."

Rean nodded.

"By the way, how did they find us?"

Roan then pointed at Malaka's collarbone.

"The pendant. It has some kind of energy that can be detected from a certain distance."

Roan then took out a small bluestone. It seemed to be made of the same material as the pendant. After Roan injected Spiritual Energy into it, the stone began to release a few specks of blue light. Those specks of blue light then started to float in Malaka's direction. Or, to be more specific, the pendant's direction.

"From Doren's words, he found our location when he was around a kilometer away. This is by far much farther than what we could normally perceive.

Rean pondered a bit before asking.

"Should we get rid of it? No, maybe we can put it inside the Dimensional Realm, and it won't be detected there."

Roan shook his head as he showed a faint cold smile.

"Why should we do that? Excellent practicing targets will be coming for us on their own, isn't that perfect? We need battles to help stabilize our cultivations. This is a golden opportunity. Let them come! The more, the better!"

Rean couldn't help but laugh as he listened to his words. Everything was a training opportunity in Roan's eyes.

"Fine. But I will put the pendant in the Dimensional Realm until Malaka recovers. That much is fine, right?"

Roan nodded.

"That's good enough. By the way, feed her this."

Roan then took a small pill bottle from the Dimensional Realm and passed it to Rean.

"What is this?"



Rean asked as he put the pendant inside the Dimensional Realm.

"Neutral Blood Replenishing Pills. Although they aren't as good as Water Element Pills of the same type for Malaka, it is very close. From what Old Worm said, my Dark Element is the best he had ever seen for the concoction. Its capability of eliminating impurities is unmatched or something like that. Not to mention that your Light Element helps me protect the herbs and other materials' properties while I destroy the impurities. That being said, it seems like my Neutral Pills have around 90% of the efficiency of Elemental Pills. I don't even need to tell you how much good our Dark and Light Element pills are either, right?"

Rean was quite surprised to hear that. Not with the pills' effects, but that it was quite rare to see Roan bragging about anything at all.

"It seems like I was right in the end."

Roan looked at Rean with a puzzled expression.

"Right about what?"

"What else could it be? Old Worm was probably your wife in another life. Look just how much you like to spend your time with him."

Roan's mouth twitched in response.

"Couldn't you just say that he was my father or brother at least?"

Rean shrugged his shoulders in response.

"Where's the fun in that?"

Death... and me

Chapter 250: Like a Shadow

Rean fed Malaka a Blood Replenishing Pill and used his Spiritual Energy to help dissolve it in her body. Of course, he also used his Light Element to get rid of the Decaying Energy that entered Malaka's body. After all, she was unconscious. She wasn't controlling her Spiritual Energy to form a barrier to block it. Those few moments that Rean and Roan took to deal with Doren was enough for a lot of Decaying Energy to get into her body, primarily through the injuries.

Soon, the dark color of Decaying Energy disappeared from Malaka's skin, revealing her pale face once more. A few minutes later, Malaka's pale face even regained a bit of its color.

\*Guh...\*

Eventually, she regained her consciousness as the pain washed through her body. She then opened her eyes, just to see that she was lying on Rean's lap while he healed her injuries. Even though she still felt some pain, she had to admit that Rean's Light Element felt very good.

"Hehe! Is this my reward for doing a good job?"

Rean shook his head helplessly.

"What reward? If you were alone, you would have died because of those injuries, you know? In fact, you probably would have died to the Decaying Energy first."

Malaka then noticed Roan standing guard on the side with his arms crossed, his expression as cold as always.

"Will I get extra training because of these injuries?"

Roan looked down for a moment before shaking his head in the end.

"You did better than I expected, so there's no need for extra training... for now."

Malaka smiled with a satisfied expression. In the end, she only felt this safe when she was with her brothers.

Kentucky, who had also been recovering on the side, finally opened his eyes as well. He then noticed that Malaka was awake and rubbed his big head against her.

\*Chick!\*

"Hahaha! You're such a jealous chick."

Rean then patted the chick on the head.

"Alright, I finished closing up your injuries, so get up already. However, you lost a lot of blood because of that fight, so you will feel a bit dizzy for some time. I already fed one of Roan's Blood Replenishing Pills to you, though, so you should be back to normal in two or so hours. Here, take this."

Rean then passed another Blood Replenishing Pill to Malaka.

"A single one will not be enough. Take another one hour later."

Malaka nodded and took the pill. She was just about to put it into her bag when suddenly, she noticed that her Pendant was missing.

"Ah! Calina's Pendant! It's not here!"

Rean laughed and put his hand inside his bag. Of course, that was just a pretext to take the Pendant out of the Dimensional Realm.

"I have your Pendant here. However, I'll be holding it from now on."

Unfortunately for him, Roan's hand moved in a flash and took the Pendant from Rean's hand.

"I'll take it. It'll be safer if I carry it instead."

"You could have just asked, no? I know you're stronger than me."

Roan didn't answer and put the Pendant around his neck.

"Why can't I carry it, huh?"

Rean was about to create an excuse when Roan intervened.

"Calina's protector wants to take it back. He's using it to track us down and wants us dead."

Malaka was shocked to hear that.

"What? Why? I've never done anything bad to him."

Rean sighed and shook his head.

"We don't know. We think Valeu doesn't like cultivators from small countries and powers like us. Besides, the Pendant appears to be something important to him. Anyway, let Roan carry it from now on."

Malaka nodded in the end.

"Okay. But... isn't it better to throw it away instead?"

Roan snorted as he looked at Malaka's face.

"Do you really want to throw it away? It doesn't look like you want to."

Malaka couldn't help but smile.

"Thank you, Roan!"

She didn't want to throw it away. After all, it was a gift from Calina. Malaka didn't believe that Calina had anything to do with her protector's actions.

"There is no need to thank me. This is all for our own training. As long as I keep it with me, more cultivators will deliver themselves to us. It'll be an excellent opportunity to polish our abilities. Anyway, we stayed still for almost 30 minutes already. Let's go."

Rean shrugged his shoulders and said nothing.

As for Malaka, she jumped on Kentucky's back, and the group of four continued their journey.

And just like that, two days passed as they moved deeper into the Underground World. On the way, they encountered even more Demon Beasts and Cultivators. There isn't even a need to say that the demon beasts always attacked as soon as they saw a cultivator. Still, they weren't as hard to deal with as those Golems. Although there were quite a few Stage Three Decaying Demon Beasts, it wasn't that hard to reach their cores.

As for the cultivators, some moved in groups like Rean's group, or duos, like Tuve and Weren. Others moved on their own as well. Of course, not all of them were enemies like Doren's group. Well, at least not until they find a Vermilion Pool. If that was the case, neither Rean's group nor the other cultivator groups would let it go at all.

Still, three of them decided to attack Rean's group in the end. One of those groups simply did that because their leader recognized Malaka. He knew she and Rean had a lot of Rank Three Spirit Stones. After confirming the average cultivation of Rean's group, they thought it would be easy to take it from them. Unfortunately for them, they also went ahead to meet Roan's friends in the underworld. Their strength wasn't even comparable to Doren's group, having only a single cultivator in the Middle Stage of the Core Formation Realm.

Also, it turned out that the other two groups had the same blue stones as Doren. Of course, these two groups had a lot more strength than that unfortunate one. Still, by using the same surprising attack, Rean's group was able to get rid of them. Malaka was a lot more careful this time, though. Roan had discussed with her everything she had done wrong and how she should have averted that outcome. He even forced her into a bit of training on their way here. Sure enough, that near-death experience was of great help to her as it would be to any other cultivator.

As one could imagine, Roan also interrogated their leaders.

"Alright. It seems like Valeu entered in contact with 11 groups in total. However, none of them were part of the forefront runners. It's probably because those who could enter the Profound Abyss first had significant backgrounds. None of them would care about the rewards that Valeu could give them. After all, Valeu isn't really part of the Imperial Family, but one of its subordinate clans."

"As for their strengths, both the two groups we dealt with before knew much about them. Well, that's to be expected since this is a gathering of many countries at once. They are separated by thousands, if not tens of thousands of kilometers. It would be weird if they knew so many details about each other."

"Well, that just means we need to be careful. Anyway, according to the information Sect Master gave to us, this open space is only a small part of the Profound Abyss' underground world. It sums up to 20 to 30% of the total distance. The part that will take the longest to move through is the Decaying Energy caves."

Roan and Malaka nodded in response.

"That's fine. We have been moving for two days already. Considering the time needed to use the pool and come back, we should find a few of them anytime soon. I can even feel the concentration of Decaying Energy increasing."

It was then that Rean's group heard a loud sound.

\*Roar!\*

Immediately, everyone looked in a specific direction. However, the sound came from quite far away, so even Roan's Spiritual Sense couldn't tell what it was.

"Seems like another group got into trouble."

\*Chick...\*

Rean, Roan, and Malaka then looked at Kentucky and could see that he had a worried expression. It was the first time he acted like this since he entered the Profound Abyss.

Roan narrowed his eyes before saying.

"I'll take a look with Rean. Malaka and Kentucky, wait here for a moment."

Before Malaka could say anything, Roan and Rean already disappeared in a flash.