

GREED 171

Chapter 171 The Gates Of Momentum.

The gates are stored on the bones of the spine. The better the formation of the gate, the lesser the number of bones it will occupy but the more the stress on the individual bones. In summary, the body will be strained no matter how refined the gate is. Because until the gate is harvested and removed, one's body will feel heavy and sluggish.

The body will actually slow down coupled with the fact that the gate will continue to absorb the momentum of the body. Only when the empowerment phase of the technique is achieved will he be able to get a steady stream of power without harvesting it. He will also be able to supply the gate with external momentum from outside the body.

The formation of the gate made him feel an itchy feeling between his shoulder blades but he ignored the craving of his body to scratch it. Then the feeling became a hot sensation as if something was branding him. The pain became searing hot but he remained still and endured it. This stage is delicate because a failure will lead to a damaged spine.

He would heal but he will remain paralyzed for the time that it takes to heal. But he wasn't nervous, he was confident and he believed that as long as he follows the procedure exactly nothing will go wrong.

The instructions are to create an anchor for the gate with a bone. Create artificial muscles attached to that anchor using vitality. Wound and weave the muscle taut using the potential energy siphoned from the body. Do not interfere with the network of nerves and make sure to keep the grip on the artificial muscles. To refine the gate, the artificial muscles must be condensed and woven tightly, like the knot of a rope. The pattern and the complexity of the weave will determine its capacity. If the process is halted halfway, then the stored potential energy will explode.

Apart from the density and the pattern of the weave, another important aspect is the synchronicity of the gate with the body. It will affect the energy siphoning rate and the conversion rate of potential energy. The siphoning rate means how much the gate absorbs from the total momentum of the body. The conversion rate determines how much of the siphoned energy is actually stored and not wasted during the process. These two factors are very important because they determine how much of a burden the gate will be on the body. A high siphoning rate will leave the body debilitated and unable to move. A low conversion rate will make the sacrifice and the burden useless.

Soverick took his time to create an impeccable gate. It had a very high capacity but was also accompanied by a high siphoning rate. The good news is that he was already able to achieve a conversation rate of 1% as soon as the gate began to function.

"I did it at last." He said.

Then he looked around. But there was no one around him. He knew he had been at it for more than 4 weeks now so it was not a wonder that SQUARESKULL was gone. He tried to stand up but was failing terribly at it. His body felt heavy and unresponsive. All he achieved was to flail about on the ground. SQUARESKULL walked in and began to laugh.

Soverick ignored him and chose to put all his mental and physical capabilities into figuring out how to perform the benign act of standing up. The more he struggled, the higher SQUARESKULL laughed. It took a whole 10 minutes before he got himself standing. He smiled and he felt profoundly proud of himself for not asking for help. He took his first step, or he tried to take the first step but he fell face first into the ground. His arms couldn't get in front of him quickly enough. So his nose smashed into the ground.

'Well, at least I am not on my back this time.'

He groaned and tried to stand back up. Which was clumsy and slow.

"Congratulations. You have built your first gate. You took more time than I expected but that's probably due to the fact that the technique is not meant for your body. I can infer from your fumbling around that you either have a high-capacity gate or you made a shoddy gate."

Soverick finally stood back up. "What's next?"

"Honestly, you are ready to challenge the ranking battles. Your basic foundation is set. All you need is experience. I'm sure you're going to do well as soon as you get back up to speed. But even then you will not be able to defeat those in the 500th ranks and above because your fighting proficiency with the spear is still lacking. You will learn quickly, sure. Actual experience from fighting will improve your proficiency with the spear But I have a better alternative."

"Fighting proficiency is something acquired through fighting and it is the key to achieving the first step of spear mastery. It is usually during actual fighting that others can gain the experience needed for the fusion of instincts and technique. You have the fusion but you lack the experience. I will give you experience by fighting you myself. You can refuse and choose to fight in the arena. That's what others do. They only come to spar with me occasionally for lessons. But if you stick with me, you will acquire the first step faster. What do you think?"

Soverick felt it was better to fight someone of SQUARESKULL's Caliber. It will make him learn faster rather than fight some other people with lesser or a little more skill with the spear than him. Fighting with vitality core stage refiners like him will feel like fighting children. A transcendent on the other hand will offer him better opportunities to learn but also comes with its own disadvantage which Soverick made sure to voice out.

"But won't you just pummel me? You outclass me in physique, technique, and skill. You're stronger, faster, and better at me with the spear."

SQUARESKULL smiled, "I know right? And I am looking forward to it. But I'll give you a chance. I can't make my physical capabilities equal to yours. But I'll limit it to be just a little higher than yours. That means I'll be just a little faster and stronger than you. I will improve as you improve."

Soverick suspected that the training won't be pleasant but he was no stranger to pain. He was also less suspicious of SQUARESKULL's motive since he was openly expressing the fact that he is looking forward to beating him up.

He tried to shrug but he fell down again. He signed and said. "Sure, let's do that."

"If you want to regain your strength quickly you should perform the spear dance. It will increase your synchronization faster. We will fight when you're done." SQUARESKULL advised as he watched Soverick struggle to stand up.

Soverick performed the spear dance, just the basic moves without the circles. It was slow going and widely comical. What had taken a single hour to execute the first time took him six hours to do this time. He noticed that his body eased up a little but the difference was minuscule. Still, it was visible progress.

Then he fought SQUARESKULL. They were like two snails fighting for supremacy. Soverick was slow so SQUARESKULL was also slow. The major problem that Soverick faced was stumbling. While SQUARESKULL was moving slowly on his own, Soverick couldn't even keep his balance sometimes. The good thing about the slow fighting is that it pushed Soverick to optimize his movement. Every single action of his body was geared towards achieving a single goal.

For a thrust, he would pull back the spear, adjust his footing, and simply tilt forward. The shift in his center of balance will make him unstable and he will fall forward. Then he will thrust in tandem with the gravity-assisted motion.

These subtle movements affected a lot more than the power of the thrust. An inexperienced person will watch the spear and his arm but might ignore his shift in position. A thrust that seems bound to fail because of the distance between them will suddenly be within the reach of the opponent and catch them off guard.

After Soverick has fought for hours and cannot move his body again, only then will they stop. The fighting might be slow but it is still exhausting. He is still using that heavy spear and he has to use more energy to move it because of the gate he built.

SQUARESKULL will then show him recordings of people fighting with the spear. Either it is two spear fighters or one against another weapon user. But the fighters are geniuses that have achieved one with the spear at the vitality core stage. Soverick got to see what is possible and what marks these people as having reached the first step of spear mastery.

Chapter 172 The Struggle For One With The Spear.

SQUARESKULL had said. "Watch these videos so that you will know what to aim for. Your ability to learn quickly can be put to good use. I can't tell you how one with the spear works because it is something that only the body knows. You will resume your spear dance after resting."

So began his struggle for the first step of spear mastery. He would spend his time resting on ruminating about what he saw. Through all the simulations he carried out, he discovered the basics of one with the spear. One with the spear is the ultimate basic instinct and the ultimate basic technique. It is a technique that the body performs without even realizing it.

And that technique is momentum redistribution. The instinct to keep the spear unstoppable by concentrating the momentum from every movement and every clash into the spear. It required them to sense momentum and empower the spear with it. This instinctual technique reminded Soverick of the

coiling momentum technique. It seemed that one with the spear is the preparation for the difficult coiling momentum technique and yet he had skipped it entirely.

One with the spear is like the reaction of the body when it is falling. A person can instinctively right themselves when they stumble. If not, they can try to soften the blow by using their hands. Every muscle in the body will move on reflex to resolve the quandary. It is not something you think about. It is simply natural to know at that point of falling, that you are off balance and that it must be fixed. Your body will have already begun the process of fixing it before your conscious mind becomes aware of the situation.

But imagine falling from a great height while you are disoriented. The lack of direction and balance will make you indecisive about what action to take. One with the spear can be likened to the ability to always know your direction. To never be disoriented. To always move forward. To aim for the kill. In a single sentence, it is the understanding that the spear is unstoppable and the execution of it, all done without the participation of the mind.

Now he knows why SQUARESKULL is making him fight with the heavy spear. With one with the spear, there is no difference between light and heavy spear, only momentum. And momentum can be initiated by the spear if it is heavy or it can be initiated by the body if the spear is light. Either way, the spear, and the body will be in a state of equilibrium. It is until he is able to overcome the constraint that the weight of the spear places on him, that he will be able to assimilate with it.

It is true that only the body knows what's going on when it tries to balance itself during a fall. While the conscious mind cannot accurately determine the effort that went into the act. A focused study of the phenomenon of failing and balance by an astute mind that knows what to look for, and understands what he or she is seeing, will have the proper equipment for examination and will be able to suss out the truth of the matter. That's how people learned that the sense of balance is acquired through the structure and activity of the inner ear. And that's how Soverick intends to tackle the mastery of the spear.

Now that Soverick knew what to aim for to acquire spear mastery, he started to learn about how to actually fight with a spear, or what SQUARESKULL calls Fighting proficiency. Over the days that followed, he would duel SQUARESKULL, rest and watch spear fighting videos, and practice spear dancing. He became faster as he gained more control of the gate enough to reduce the siphoning rate to 70%. He had yet to master the empowering phase so the gate was still a burden, he was still burning far too much energy for the simplest movements. His body heats up with the strain of long periods of activity.

His spear proficiency also slowly increased. He finally found the truth of one with the spear. For him, it was the grace and agility of a feline predator. Quick and deadly. But with this truth came another question, for what purpose?

A series of reflex actions go into correcting balance, it is a habit. As he had learned, habits can be good or they can be bad. All habits can be made better. And so he sought to make one with the spear better. Why not use the fall to your advantage? Even if that is unable to be achieved, is there a way to make regaining your balance better? He tried to answer these questions and many others so that he can improve on one with the spear.

He gripped his spear with his two hands and performed a horizontal cut. SQUARESKULL was about to smash his spear away but it turned into an upward slash. Its attempt to escape SQUARESKULL's defense was rebutted because of the twirl he did with his hands. SQUARESKULL's twirling rotates the spear with the point of grip as the pivot. The rotation raised the blade of the spear and tried to sweep Soverick's attack aside. It was so fast that it caught up to Soverick's spear.

But Soverick was counting on it, he let his spear be knocked upward and he did the same thing that SQUARESKULL did. He harnessed the momentum and twirled such that while the blade was going up and away from SQUARESKULL, the butt of the spear was coming from below and towards him. SQUARESKULL shifted the direction of his twirl to address the new threat but Soverick was ready. All that twirling had reduced the reach of SQUARESKULL's spear. Soverick stepped into SQUARESKULL's guard the moment when SQUARESKULL's spear was vertical instead of horizontal. Meanwhile, his own spear was horizontal and so he transformed what was supposed to be a glancing attack into a full-blown thrust.

But somehow SQUARESKULL's spear blurred, straightened, and smashed into Soverick's side. His stance was forcefully shifted and his thrust foiled. He put his right foot forward trying to regain his balance and stretched his left leg backward as support instead. His intuition told him that an attack was imminent so he didn't have the time to right himself. He did the only right thing he could in such a compromised position. He chose to attack instead of getting a proper balance or defending himself. He pushed the spear forward for another thrust.

An inexperienced person will expect him to still be fumbling with his balance, such an inexperienced person will try to move in to take advantage of his incapacitated state. That's why such an individual will not expect the incoming spear. If the individual is lucky, they will be able to react to the sudden attack. An unlucky individual will be skewed by the spear.

Too bad that SQUARESKULL isn't an inexperienced individual. He is more than experienced, he is a spear master. He planned to both take advantage of Soverick's incapacitation and also deal with any possible attack. So he jumped up and gained a vantage point from which he had his pick of attack options. He simply smashed his spear downward. The attack overwhelmed Soverick's flimsy thrust and hit him in the chest. SQUARESKULL's attack had the advantage of height and potential momentum, while he was destabilized and clutching at straws.

Soverick smashed into the ground barely breathing. One of his arms was mangled from the time SQUARESKULL hit him in the side. The other arm had various lacerations and cuts. His legs did not go unscathed either. He was missing some toes amidst the veritable amount of injuries he had. The most gruesome of his injuries is the gaping hole left in his chest due to that last crushing blow.

He was battered and bruised. But his eyes were still open and locked onto SQUARESKULL. Those multicolored eyes were fixated on his teacher and they seemed to burn with the thirst for vengeance.

So Soverick tried to stand up but he failed. It's not because of the demands of the gate now. His body is worn out and refused to listen to commands. Body control or not, his body cannot and will not rise. Soverick's recovery of his physical capabilities has led to longer dueling times. But it wasn't a duel, it was a beating.

"Do you know why you haven't achieved one with the spear after two weeks?"

Soverick just stared, intent on not answering. It was a rhetorical question anyway. That's how SQUARESKULL usually starts his lecture after beating him up.

'Must be feeling smug don't you.' he thought to himself.

SQUARESKULL continued. "It's because you think too much. You need to learn to let go. Let your body act for the purpose. Let it feel the spear. Let your spear form shine gloriously. Your mind is holding you back."

"How can I let go when that will end in failure? Brash actions are stupid. Only smart efficient actions can bring down a superior enemy." Soverick rebutted with an eye roll.

Chapter 173 Soverick Won't Hold Back.

The intention to make One with the spear efficient is holding him back. He hasn't found the answers to the questions he wants to solve and every attempt to solve them is being foiled by SQUARESKULL's overwhelming prowess. No matter what he tried, it all ended in failure. SQUARESKULL was a superior enemy and Soverick couldn't let his body act recklessly against one. That never ends well.

He wasn't angry at SQUARESKULL. His body might be broken and in pain but his mind has never been better. He had learned a lot from their fights. So he wasn't angry at SQUARESKULL, even though he knew that SQUARESKULL cheated to beat him. He won't whine about the defeat. Instead, he will learn from it and beat up SQUARESKULL one day.

"Maybe you're right. You need an opponent that you can beat. Go to the arena and fight someone. That's after you have healed your wounds."

Then SQUARESKULL turned to leave.

"I'll beat you someday. I'll beat you up badly and I'll enjoy it." Soverick said to him.

SQUARESKULL chuckled. "I don't doubt it. I'll prepare myself for it even though I know that I'll lose. That's what it means to always go forward."

'Then that's just stupid. I'll run away, avoid the battle, ambush, trick, or plan my way ahead to victory. That's how those that deserve victory win. They don't rely on luck. They live to survive another day. He who laughs last laughs best."

Soverick began to ruminate about the battle while his prodigious vitality got to work on healing him. His injuries might look heavy but it isn't too much for him to heal on his own. When he becomes a transcendent then he will be able to regrow limbs. Even an injury to his head will be just as serious as an injury to his leg. Organs don't matter at that level, only energy. But for now, he will have to make do with his slow healing.

The slow healing affords him more time to visualize his recent duels more. He had realized early on that the first step of spear mastery couldn't win against SQUARESKULL. So he asked SQUARESKULL for videos

and information about the second step. SQUARESKULL had refused and instead lectured him about trying to run when he couldn't walk. He had attempted to figure it out himself when SQUARESKULL refused to provide more information but SQUARESKULL increased his spear mastery to the 3rd step or something definitely above the 2nd stage.

He doesn't know exactly what SQUARESKULL did but he could tell that something strange happened when SQUARESKULL twirled his spear. The spear attack that destabilized him wasn't normal. SQUARESKULL's spear accelerated beyond what was possible for someone a little stronger and faster than Soverick. Either SQUARESKULL cheated in skill or in raw power.

SQUARESKULL had promised to use only the first step but he started using the third step against someone that hasn't even mastered the first. The problem with the third step is that it is the direct counter to the second. The good news is that he had already figured out some things about the third step but it is currently impossible for him to master.

The third step needs a very strong and resilient mana body. His current body is already burdened by the gate he is carrying. But he will be able to master the third step easily as soon as he becomes a mana entity. He will also be able to fulfill the other requirement for the third step, which is basic world harmonization.

"It will be good to fight someone of my size." He said as he stood up and stretched.

Fighting SQUARESKULL and been extremely helpful. Soverick's mind had been exposed to the various combinations and transitions between the basic spear skills. He realized one very important thing about basic skills. Cut, thrust, deflect, block, and bash can be turned into one another on the fly. It is a nice revelation but he would like to actually try out some of the things he learned on someone that it might work against.

It had taken a few hours but his body was back as new. He picked up his still-heavy spear and walked out of the training room into SQUARESKULL's central room. SQUARESKULL was sitting on his spear in that pretentious manner of his and meditating. Soverick took one look at him and turned towards the door.

He never thought the display was impressive from the first time he saw it. But now that he knew more about the spear mastery, he realized the display was even less impressive. SQUARESKULL was just taking advantage of the innate perfect control of transcendents and the first step of spear mastery to do it.

It might be difficult for a mana entity or impossible for a vitality core stage to do but it is normal for a transcendent. If it is normal for a transcendent, then it is subpar for Soverick. He has a much higher standard.

Soverick ignored SQUARESKULL and walked out of the central room into the school hall. He has already been given permission to challenge someone on the ranking list, so he accessed his wrist logger for challenge options.

He found out that he could challenge any person for his first ranking battle and the person he chooses must accept. If he wins then he will take the ranking of that person while the person falls a rank. If he loses then his options for challenges will be limited to 1000th rank, the 1st milestone fight, and below.

"Only someone at the 13th milestone and above can be a challenge to me. They will have acquired one with the spear. Anything beneath that is a waste of time." He thought to himself.

His foundational fighting proficiency and basic spear skills have been polished to the extreme. He just needs a little push to bring it all together. Someone that has already achieved one with the spear might be able to give him that push.

He felt someone ahead of him as he was considering how to challenge someone in the 10th and above ranking for his first ranking battle. He didn't need to look to know that it was SLEEP DEPRIVED DEMON. She just rubbed him the wrong way.

"You have finally come out of your turtle shell." She said to him.

There was a smile of derision on her face that irked him more than the strange feeling he was getting from her. And it was getting him angry, yet it didn't show on his face or in his demeanor.

"Do you think I was hiding from you?" He asked calmly.

"What else would you be doing in there all along? You dishonored my heritage and you're scared of the consequences. So you stayed cooped up and tried to gather strength. You didn't even come out once to rest. Too bad for you that you're unlucky. You just happened to encounter me."

Soverick remained silent as she droned on. He continued to examine her. He wanted to figure out what was wrong with her but he couldn't use the full power of his divine sense in the battle academy. That will just get him in trouble. He had a feeling that he was being watched but couldn't pinpoint where or how.

"So now, will you face the consequences of your action and duel me as a rival in a ranking battle?" She asked him.

Soverick didn't find anything out of place about her with his surface scan but he frowned at her wording. Maybe it was his innate pride but he hated the word rival. How can such a person be his rival when he is trying to reach the realm lord? No one is his rival apart from the realm lord. He has yet to meet someone of that caliber outside of the realm lord. But there was no need to bicker with her. There's only one way to prove his worth.

"Sure, let's fight." He agreed.

She had progressed farther than him in the vitality core stage but what that means is that she should have more mana within her than him which is not the case. He has a larger vitality core so he has more of everything than her. His spear mastery might not have reached the 20th rank but she was below the 300th rank, So he outclassed her in every way.

SLEEP DEPRIVED DEMON smiled at his reply then she frowned. She did not feel the acknowledgment of being a rival from her bloodline. That means that Soverick did not consider her worthy of being a rival. He might have agreed to the challenge but he was still looking down at her. She would only be able to steal his talent if he acknowledges her as his rival himself.

Soverick noticed her frown. "What's wrong? Did you just realize the foolishness of your actions? If you want to back out now do so. I have better things to do. If you enter that arena with me, I won't hold back at all." He warned her and he meant it.

Chapter 174 Scolding SQUARESKULL The Bully.

SLEEP DEPRIVED DEMON fumed. She was already feeling disappointed that the fight will be a waste. It is one thing for him to not consider her his rival, it is another thing to not consider her worth his time. She knew he was prideful because of the confidence he had in his talent but it didn't placate her.

She might not know the extent of his talent but what can his talent achieve in weeks of training? She had been training her fighting proficiency for years. To her, Soverick couldn't come close to her level of skill, yet he was disrespectful to her.

In ancient times, before the era of the sages who pioneered the mana stage, the first step of spear mastery is what the most talented of fighters spend their whole life to achieve. The best of the best can maybe reach the second step.

Things have changed since then, the talent and capabilities of battle sage monkeys have improved with royal bloodlines. But even so, people need years to reach the first step. Soverick as not even spent a year or half a year and he was already behaving like mother high heaven's mythical child of the plane.

"I will take you down" She growled at him.

She decided then and there that she might not get what she wanted in this fight, but she will scar him. She will demolish his pride and he will consider her a rival then. She will become a shadow over his heart and mind. He will be the one to challenge her to regain his pride but she will demolish him again and finally steal his talent. Then he will never be able to defeat her again.

Soverick sent the challenge to her and she accepted it with relish. He noticed the hungry anticipation in her and he shrugged. There was no harm in wishing to rip someone up and taking pleasure in it. Heck, he was doing the same thing. He is also looking forward to practicing his deadly spear skills on her. Then they left for the arena. Both of one mind and accord.

Back within the Central Room. A few moments after Soverick left.

SQUARESKULL received a notification and he became solemn. He made sure there was no one around and he locked up all the doors to the central room. He accepted the request for a meeting and several holograms appeared.

The holograms were virtual projections and only the central figure was blurred in a pink shade. They were 7 of them and SQUARESKULL knew them to be the director of the battle academy and the various headmasters of the Battle Academy.

SQUARESKULL stood ramrod straight in respect. He didn't need to bow to these figures because it didn't matter. They don't care if you respect them or not, only their strength matters. If they want something

then they will get it, your respect or not affects nothing. But a sign of respect is always welcomed. Especially in front of such volatile beings.

It will be a bad thing if they become your enemy. There's nothing more dangerous than an enemy that has no fear for his or her life and is willing to lose everything just to cause you harm. Sovereigns are calm and can be reasoned with, these people on the other hand can be everything but calm.

The central figure spoke first. "You went too far with your actions. Do you know why I did not step in?"

SQUARESKULL answered. "Because you did not need to."

"Correct. Because I did not need to. The boy remained unbothered. His body might be broken but his mind wasn't. It was sort of unnerving to see such a thing in a 2 years old boy but it was reassuring to see him display such willpower. But have no doubt, if I needed to, I would have stepped in."

The pink figure continued. "The importance of the boy has increased in priority. It has been decreed that he is to be nurtured to the best of our ability without negatively affecting his growth. He did not need us to step in so we did not."

Another figure joined in. "Yet it cannot be disputed that you went too far. Your training methods turned out well but you were too harsh in your duels. You were even using the third step. He is just a small boy, and yet you were heavy-handed with him. Explain yourself."

SQUARESKULL roused himself to answer. This is a new addition to his life and it started ever since the academy AI made Soverick his student. These terrifying figures drop in once in a while to question him. He doesn't like this meeting but he knows they don't mean him any harm. They just want to know his thought process and his opinion about Soverick.

"It was the only way to force him to quit trying to skip the first step. I didn't want to simply beat him, I wanted to beat him back." He answered.

One of the figures asked. "Won't that make him want to skip the second stage too to beat you?"

SQUARESKULL answered. "He will listen after his upcoming battle. Either he wins or fails, he will either get what he wants or admits that I was right."

Another figure chuckled. "You may be naive to think he will listen. He broke all training records. He faced the famed unbeatable attack of the titan frog and he escaped it. He will not listen because he considers himself unparalleled or maybe he sees things from a different perspective. As long as he believes he can do it, then he will do it. Nothing has been able to tell him otherwise."

"Is his sight special in any way? Those eyes of his are peculiar."

"His sight isn't special yet. He has yet to reach the mana stage."

"That is true. Too bad we have to limit our interactions with him. I would like to know what he is actually thinking."

The figures began to talk amongst themselves until the central figure called them to order.

"The development of the gate is impressive. Your suggestion of it is excellent but even more excellent is the ability of the boy to execute it. In one go at that without any failure. Truly impressive. What are your thoughts on the progress of the gate?"

That's the thing about this group of titans. They don't intend to lecture him about how to teach. They just want him to understand the gravity of his situation and the consequences he will face if he fails. But they will also reward him for a job well done.

SQUARESKULL considered his words before answering. "He was able to build the gate which no one thought was possible at this stage but I think he has reached his limit. One gate is the limit of his body. It is not a matter of body control but energy requirement. His body cannot provide enough energy to build and sustain another gate. His vitality might be exceptional but it cannot even support a single gate. The conversion rate of the gate is horrendous because the technique was meant to be used with mana, not vitality. How he did it with vitality is beyond me but he can go no further."

There was silence as the figures considered his words. "Your insight is appreciated." The central figure said.

Another figure added its opinion. "It is not too much of a loss. The gates will become largely irrelevant when he becomes a transcendent. He has already broken the norms of possibility with what he has achieved."

"That is true. I have made in-depth research and analysis into the prowess of the descendants of the sages. Their talent is usually normal at the vitality stage. They struggle to even achieve the first step of spear mastery. But things change when they become mana entities. Their perception and their eyes awaken. I'll send you the data on them later. My point is that if this boy is already this exceptional at this stage, what can we expect when he becomes a mana entity."

"Hmm, it is something to consider. His current intuition is otherworldly. I had to change the video surveillance from real-time to delayed feed because he was constantly suspicious of his surroundings whenever I watch him."

This made the figures chuckle. Then they received a notification about Soverick. Only high-priority matters can disturb them in meetings like this, and Soverick is one of them. They all looked at the notification.

"Oh, it seems he is about to have his first ranked battle. And it is against someone below the 300th. I expected better."

"Wait, isn't his opponent that SLEEP DEPRIVED DEMON girl from the eternal battle bloodline? Isn't she SQUARESKULL's disciple?"

"She is. SQUARESKULL did say she had her eyes locked on him. Let's watch how it happened. She must have approached him like the snake that her bloodline has made her."

Chapter 175 The Showdown.

They chatted in anticipation of Soverick's match. They were probably more excited than Soverick for his ranking battle. They had watched him get beat up by SQUARESKULL and it was not an entertaining sight at all.

"I'm going to start from the moment he left here. The delay should be enough to escape his notice."

A screen popped up in the middle of the right figures. It was a flat horizontal screen that produced 3D videos. It was a miniature full-colored holographic display. Soverick was displayed on it. They saw him walking with his head down considering something. Then he met up with SLEEP DEPRIVED DEMON and they began talking. Even though they were talking with their divine sense, the people here could understand what they were saying. It's because their wrist logger was recording their soul fluctuations and the titans were deciphering it.

"Hah, so funny. She just said she happened to walk by. I bet she has been stalking the entrance for him." One of the figures laughed.

"I have data of her movement pattern here and it says she has been staying in that spot for over 150hrs. If one didn't know better they'll think she has a crush on the boy."

Another one sighed and said, "Those from the eternal battle are seriously insidious. A glorious bloodline sure has fallen so low."

"It was never glorious. People just didn't know what they're Origin ancestor was doing at that time. They thought he was building momentum off of victory but they didn't know he was siphoning their fate, luck, destiny, and talent. His actions led to the death of several titans of law. Many Kings of law that his descendants fought against died when they tried to break through to the next stage and many lords of law couldn't become Kings of law anymore. It was always an insidious bloodline." One of them disagreed.

"It was already too late by the time he became an origin god. No one could eradicate that cursed bloodline anymore. But I heard he didn't have a good ending." One of them whispered mysteriously to the others.

"What happened?" Many of these titans were curious about this. They had heard that the ancestor of the eternal battle didn't have a good ending but no one knows what exactly happened. These people would like something really bad to happen to him. They understood above everyone else how dangerous refinement is. So they knew the full implications of having your chances of success reduced during a breakthrough. It can be the difference between success and death.

They were communicating really fast but so were Soverick and SLEEP DEPRIVED DEMON. So before this particular person could answer, they noticed a sudden spike in Soverick's brain activity when he was inspecting her. It drew their attention to the video again.

"That mind of his must be what's special about him. His brain lights up when he is considering a problem. From what we can see, his chances of becoming a titan of law is high as long as he keeps the number of stars to a minimum."

"But the minimum isn't enough for the family."

The pink central figure spoke this time around. "We still have time to make more observations anyway. And it is his choice at the end of the day. No one can force anyone to take a path. Even if it were possible, I doubt it will work on him anyway."

Then Soverick challenged SLEEP DEPRIVED DEMON and they left for the arena.

One of the figures asked the central one. "Should I send out a notification to everyone in the secondary school for the upcoming match?"

"You can. These children need something fun to do once in a while. Hopefully, it isn't too late by now."

It was not too late. The trainees ran in droves to watch the match. They were mostly from the preparatory and technique training stage. The ones in the fighting proficiency stage were busy with their training. The fact that a notification was sent out for this match intrigued them but they lost interest when they found out that it was the first ranking battle of one of the challengers.

They all thought that Soverick was biting more than he could chew. They had seen it happen before. The first ranking battle allowed you to challenge anyone and some arrogant people believe that they are better than people that have spent years here in the academy more than them.

There are 12 milestone fights for those that haven't reached the first step of weapons mastery. It makes it very obvious that not everyone below that level of skill is equal. There is still various level of skills, such as accuracy, the efficiency of movements, effectiveness of techniques, reaction, perception, battle judgment, and fighting instincts.

Most of these arrogant people get punished for their hubris. So they decided that it wasn't something worth wasting their time for. Only the ones in the lower stages appreciated the event.

In the fighting ring of the arena.

Soverick and SLEEP DEPRIVED DEMON arrived at the arena only to find people waiting for them already and more were still arriving. SLEEP DEPRIVED DEMON was waving and riling up the crowd. She wanted Soverick's impending defeat to be very humiliating.

"Look what we have here everyone. A newcomer to the fighting ring is challenging someone way up the rank. What do you think will happen?" She shouted to everyone.

"Defeat!""Beat him up!""Humiliation!"

Many people shouted back at her. The energy of the crowd had gone wild in anticipation.

"He has spent less than 2 months training his fighting proficiency and yet he thinks he can't beat me. I have spent 10 years in the fighting proficiency stage alone. Should I beat him up?"

The crowd began to chant, "Beat him up. Beat him up. Beat him up."

Only a few were quiet, among them are Ghaster and Litori. But even they had ugly countenances. They didn't believe that this match will end well for Soverick.

"What is he doing challenging someone so out of his league?" Litori asked.

Ghaster shrugged but answered. "You know how he is. Pompous and proud. Maybe this fight will knock him down a peg. His arrogance needs dealing with. It won't be a bad thing for him to suffer a just defeat."

Litori was worried while Ghaster chose to be impassive. He promised himself not to allow the outcome of the fight to affect him. That's only so that he won't consider Soverick a lesser person and underestimate him. A loss is not always a bad thing, as long as Soverick learns from it and improves, he will become more formidable. Ghaster doesn't think it is possible for Soverick to win though. And so did the crowd.

SLEEP DEPRIVED DEMON smiled and gripped her spear. She remembered the first lesson that she learned during the duels with SQUARESKULL. It was how to properly resolve all the basic spear skills. She remembered how tough it was to resolve her teacher's attacks which were backed up by momentum. It was a tough lesson in the power of the first step of spear mastery. She would teach Soverick that lesson.

So she initiated the fight with a spear thrust. Her body was still for one moment, then she began to accelerate as she shot towards him. She quickly arrived at Soverick's seemingly unprepared form. The debut release happened at NOV3IBiin.

Soverick on the other hand was thinking about the toughest obstacle in his duel with SQUARESKULL. It was not how to deal with the basic spear skills, nor was it how to chain attacks. It was not how to combine the basic spear skills or how to shift seamlessly from one attack to another. Or the numerous other spear skills he knows. No, all those he learned himself just to overcome that one trick from SQUARESKULL. He will perform that trick on SLEEP DEPRIVED DEMON and maybe gain some insight into how to deal with it.

This fight is just a resting point on the way to his final destination. So this fight must be useful to him in helping him overcome that hurdle. His eyes are always on the real prize, but he will allow himself to enjoy this fight. Maybe just a little bit. That's why he smirked and twirled his spear.

His hand was in the middle of the spear so the blade and the butt formed the outline of a circle as he rotated the spear clockwise. SLEEP DEPRIVED DEMON's thrust arrived but was knocked aside by the butt of the spear. She careened past him unable to control her momentum.

She would have eventually stopped behind him and attacked again, but the blade of his spear didn't allow that. It turned just as her attack was deflected, she had yet to recover when it slammed her belly. The blade cut into her stomach, lodged itself into it, and continued its upward journey.

It was just the start though. Her ordeal has yet to end. Soverick had promised not to hold back.

Chapter 176 The Game Of Spear Mastery Is Momentum.

Her body had leaned forward during her thrust so the force of the hit to her stomach lifted her 5 meters above the fighting ring. Soverick had stolen the accumulated momentum of her attack and transferred it to her through her belly. If she couldn't use her momentum well, he might as well use it for her.

Such was the hit that she almost blacked out, but she didn't neither did she see what Soverick did next. Her mind was still trying to process how and why her stomach was damaged so much. She was falling and she was disoriented. She lacked one with the spear that will let her figure out how to right herself.

So she was unaware of what was coming for her. Even if she did, she wouldn't be able to do anything about it but shout in fright. Soverick placed his spear in a vertical position just beneath where he predicted she would fall.

Her momentum ran out and gravity took over. She began to fall to the ground, then she impaled herself on the waiting spear. The spear went through her already-opened stomach and split her spine before coming out through her back.

She was tottering at the edge of consciousness already. Having a gutted stomach is not a pleasant feeling at all. The massive pain of having a large foreign object pass through her body and breaking her spine succeeded in pushing her over the edge into the unconscious.

The arena was in an uproar. His fight had set the spectators off. Soverick stilled as he was considering the fight. He didn't learn how to resolve the twirling trick but he learned why he couldn't overcome it. It was the same reason why someone without any spear mastery cannot defeat someone at the first step. It is also the same reason why someone at the first step cannot defeat someone at the second.

It is because spear mastery allows you to toy with the opponent. Your spear will move better according to your will while your opponents will look like fumbling babies. Spear mastery makes your opponent inept, out of their depth, ignorant, unlearned, naive, foolish, failures, and many other negative assessments.

The matter that stumped him could have been anything other than a twirl. Any simple action performed with spear mastery would have seemed incomprehensible to him. He could have been stumped by anything that SQUARESKULL did. He had never been able to realize this point because he was always the one being toyed with. He just thought SQUARESKULL was overwhelmingly better than him.

And with this understanding came a subtle change. Now that he knows the answer to the question, What purpose is the first step for? He became able to harness momentum himself. He achieved the first step and his gate entered the empowerment phase. Not only that, he sensed he has already achieved the second step too.

If the first step is becoming one with the spear and harnessing momentum, then the second step is fusing mind, technique, and instinct so that you can use that momentum efficiently. The foundation of spear mastery is learning the rules of a game. The first step is becoming able to play the game. The second step is becoming an expert at the game. In spear mastery, the game is momentum.

His mind has always been his strongest aspect of him and to add it into the mix made SLEEP DEPRIVED DEMON look like a joke. He has some guesses about the third step which he plans to inquire about. So he began to leave the arena, his steps felt more powerful than usual. Just a little bit stronger, but it was increasing.

His sudden movement roused the crowd into a frenzy. They began to scream and applaud. Someone ran to check up on SLEEP DEPRIVED DEMON so that she wouldn't bleed out. The fight had been quick but it was sensational. They had seen SLEEP DEPRIVED DEMON blur forward before she was suddenly airborne. Then she was suddenly impaled. It was like Soverick was playing with a lifeless object that someone threw at him and performing tricks with it. When that lifeless object turns out to be someone with over 10 years of training, it makes for a spectacular sight.

Litori was shocked still with her mouth opened wide. Ghaster on the other hand, to his credit, appeared no different. But he was struggling with an internal shock more severe than Litori's. His mentality is currently pushing against the tide of hopelessness that is threatening to overwhelm him. It seems to be a losing battle because there is the advantage of reason on the side of hopelessness while there is only stubbornness on the side of his struggle.

He refused to believe that SLEEP DEPRIVED DEMON is truly strong. Maybe she is weak. But she definitely isn't on par with Soverick. The fight had proved that. If she were really strong, then that must mean Soverick is out of his league. He couldn't even beat Viki the lady that just entered the third stage of training. How is he to compare to SLEEP DEPRIVED DEMON?

So he promised himself. "I will also defeat her one day just like Soverick did. I might not be able to reach Soverick but I refuse to believe she is better than me. She will be my rival from now on."

With that conviction came victory over hopelessness. He felt good because he had a seemly much closer goal to accomplish. If he can't defeat SLEEP DEPRIVED DEMON, only then will hopelessness return, but with a greater might that could destroy his worldview. SLEEP DEPRIVED DEMON, his rival didn't realize that she had become someone's rival at that point because she was still knocked out. Her wish to become the rival of a talented person had been fulfilled but she was unconscious to appreciate the development.

Within SQUARESKULL's Central Room.

One of the figures shouted excitedly, "Wow, did you see that? Did you see that?"

"You're not a child anymore so calm down." He was swiftly rebuked.

"I saw it. He has already mastered the first and the second step."

They all saw what made him so excited.

"Wow, he basically played with her. I was wrong. This fight was not a disappointment as I thought." The excited figure continued to speak.

He pointed to the quiet SQUARESKULL, "Do you see that SQUARESKULL? You were the one holding him back. Imagine that."

"The second stage isn't supposed to be achieved by the vitality core stage. Mana entities have a much larger processing capability. They use mana as the medium for momentum and as the bind that fuses technique, instinct, and the mind together.

"If he has already mastered the 2nd step, what will he master in the mana stage?"

They began to discuss what they should do about Soverick.

"Even more important is what is left for him to master now. Do we let him fight the 14th milestone fight?"

"That still isn't a challenge for him. He will beat it easily and leave behind an impossible task for future challenges. He is obviously an anomaly, hoping for another one of him to come forth is unlikely to happen."

The central figure sighed and said, "If we take that fight from him then we have to let him participate in the battle of the divine dungeon. We didn't think he will be ready for it so soon. But now that he is, we have to inform him and let him decide."

Some of them thought it was not safe for Soverick to be sent there.

"But that's too dangerous. He could die there."

Others thought it didn't matter.

"If someone of his level of skill dies there, then no one is safe in there."

"That's what a battlefield is supposed to be like. Unpredictable and full of danger. If something of this level kills him then so be it."

The central figure spoke again. "That's it then. SQUARESKULL will inform him. The decision is ultimately his."

The others had no choice but to agree. They were silent for a while before one of them asked.

"What were you about to say about the ancestor of the eternal battle? What happened to him?"

The figure that answered laughed first. "The fate of the ancestor of eternal battle is very similar to what just happened to his descendant. Origin gods with a vendetta against him hunted him down again and again. They tracked him down whenever he resurrected and killed him. They made him suffer until one day someone paid a world god to capture him and imprison him. He did not have a good ending."

The figures all laughed. It seems that the actions of the ancestor of Eternal Battle had offended a lot of influential people in the upper realm. No one could do anything to him in the lower realm but that changed when he ascended. He received plenty of retribution for the suffering he had caused.

The figures dispersed on a happy note leaving SQUARESKULL in his room alone with his peace and spear. He did not like the powerful attention on him but it gave him knowledge. There are a lot of things he didn't know before attending these meetings, but the casual things they mention always broaden his horizon.

Chapter 177 Steps Of Spear Mastery.

SQUARESKULL hadn't known about the effect of her bloodline on SLEEP DEPRIVED DEMON in the past few years of being his student. It wasn't until when he mentioned it in the meeting that she had a spat with Soverick. They had casually mentioned her motive and he had honestly been terrified about the powers of such a dangerous bloodline.

He asked them why they even allowed someone like that to exist in the battle academy where they were supposed to improve the potential of the trainees. They informed him that she wasn't dangerous until she reaches the mana entity stage. Which made him ask why they allowed such an insidious bloodline to exist at all.

What they said was that there are a lot of dangers in life. If they start eliminating them all, then they will be spending a lot of manpower to prevent their offspring from growing. Those threats and dangers are meant to sharpen them and make them stronger.

Besides that, it is not anyone's fault who their parents are, only what they do will they be faulted for. And SLEEP DEPRIVED DEMON has not done anything worth killing her for. The plan is to wait until she becomes a mana entity. If she goes off rails then, they will send some talented mana entities to kill her. The ones that fail will have their talent siphoned, they will probably die so their talent doesn't matter anymore. While the one that succeeds will have his or her talent improved, reaping the fruits of her accomplishments.

That's how the way of the world is. The strong eat the weak.

SQUARESKULL shook his head. He resumed his meditative stance while he pondered a question that one of the titans of law asked. What will Soverick master when he becomes a mana entity?

The first step was supposed to only be mastered by the vitality core stage geniuses. The second step is normal for hardworking mana entities to master. The third step is meant for really talented mana entities.

It is without a doubt that Soverick will master the third step easily. What about the fourth step? It is meant to only be mastered by transcendents. But if Soverick could break the norm for the second step, can't he also do so for the fourth step?

SQUARESKULL dares not to say it is impossible for Soverick to achieve the fourth step as a mana entity. But where does that leave him, the teacher? He has been stuck in the fourth step for a long time and yet, there is a distinct possibility that his student will catch up to him soon in spear mastery. He thought he was prepared for the eventuality of Soverick catching up to him and beating him, but he didn't think it could happen so soon.

A notification informed him that Soverick was at the door and was requesting entrance. He smiled and shook his head before giving the access. Soverick entered and his gaze immediately found SQUARESKULL's figure. He started walking towards SQUARESKULL.

SQUARESKULL shook his head in wonder. He noticed the changes in Soverick's steps. They were light as if he was not in a hurry, but he was still covering ground at a normal pace. Soverick sat in front of SQUARESKULL.

"Have you reached the empowerment phase of your gate?" He asked Soverick.

Soverick nodded.

SQUARESKULL clapped and said, "Congratulations. We have a lot to celebrate. You achieved the first and second steps of spear mastery. You also reached the empowerment phase of your gate. You will start to see returns on that investment."

Soverick shrugged. "It's ok I guess."

"It's ok. That's all you have to say? You're a buzz kill. What do you want now?"

"I want to know all the available steps of spear mastery. Make it the ones you know for sure. I don't want the wrong information. I believe I am entitled to it." Soverick asked with that same apathetic attitude of his.

SQUARESKULL considered the question. And he considered for a brief moment whether to answer or not. He suspected that he was at a crossroads. His decision to answer will affect Soverick and will inadvertently boost his growth.

He had long noticed that as long as Soverick has an aim and the requirements to achieve it, then it is just a matter of time for him to achieve it. But withholding information will not hold Soverick back. It has been shown that he can work it out himself. Plus Soverick can easily get that information from someone else. Most important of all is that this moment will be watched and reviewed by those titans of laws. He doesn't think any excuse can get him out of not doing his job of teaching Soverick.

"You think you're a big boy now. Are you sure you should know? You may deserve the knowledge but it can hinder you later on."

Soverick nodded.

SQUARESKULL sighed. "Fine. The first step is known as one with the spear. You become capable of harnessing and controlling momentum at that stage. You will be able to control the pace and the rhythm of battle with it. It requires the fusion of technique and instinct. You should know that already."

"The second step is called seamless. It is when you have reached such efficiency and infallibility in control of momentum that every single action of yours will lead to an expected and inevitable end, the defeat of your enemies. Technique and instinct are fused with the mind which transforms the reflex reaction of one with the spear into a conscious effort of seamless. Usually, only the powerful mind of a mana entity can handle such a task. But you did it anyway. How did you do it?"

SQUARESKULL asked after his explanation. His gaze was locked onto Soverick as if he was interrogating him and he was a child that will crack under a heavy gaze.

The key to Soverick's success lies in his understanding of seamless and the control of his body.

Technique comes from the mind, it is a voluntary execution of skills driven by the conscious mind. Instincts come from the subconscious mind and it drives the body involuntarily to execute skills. Both of them originated from the mind and are executed through the body. He had perfect control of his mind and complete control of his body.

He didn't say all this. In fact, he didn't say anything. He continued staring back at SQUARESKULL silently. He wasn't a child that will crack under the pressure of such a weak gaze. SQUARESKULL finally had enough of the staring contest and continued his explanation.

"The third step is called one with the world. It was pioneered by the sages. They were the first mana entities of the battle sage monkeys and they remained relevant till today through their innovations."

"One with the world involves harnessing the momentum of the world to fight. You probably know that the plane is moving. It is rotating and revolving around the ancient battlefield. All that movement gives it a huge amount of momentum, almost unlimited. Tapping into that momentum will make you so much stronger than what you can achieve by hand."

Soverick raised his hand and asked. "Do you mean world power?"

SQUARESKULL. "What do you know about world power? Do you know what it really is?"

"Isn't it the power of the world? You need to become a titan of law and have the seed of a concept before you can come in contact with world power."

SQUARESKULL nodded. "You know what it should be, not what it is, which is understandable. The best explanation for world power requires an understanding that a vitality core stage refiner or transcendent don't have."

"But no, they are different. Imagine riding a bull. The strength within the muscles of a bull is world power, the momentum of the bull as it races forward is, well, momentum. A stationary bull will still have that inherent strength of its muscles and body, but it will have no momentum. Do you understand?"

"Yes." Soverick replied.

"Good. Now let's move on. If the seamless step is about fine planning then the one with the world step is about brute force. After all, the bane of every careful plan or scheme is pure strength. It is not unheard of for someone to skip the second step and go to the third one. Some people are just not capable of thinking ahead. So they double down on sensing the momentum of the world and skip the second step."

'Like Ghaster.' Soverick thought to himself.

SQUARESKULL continued talking. "Those that have mastered coiling momentum and have built their gates can siphon momentum from the plane instead of their body. It is something to look forward to since you have a gate already."

Soverick suddenly remembered something.

"Sorry to interrupt, but were you using the third step to bully me during our duels?"

His teacher sighed and answered. "Yes. I thought you were taking on more than you could handle by tackling the second step at your stage so I wanted to show you the error of your ways with brute force. It turns out I was wrong."

Soverick nodded. "Please continue."

Chapter 178 What's The Hold Up?

He just wanted to confirm that what he understood about what SQUARESKULL did when utilizing the third step is really the third step. If he was wrong, then the data he collected will be for another thing entirely.

SQUARESKULL continued. "There is a mythical step after the third step called the nullification step. It has never been achieved by anyone but the first sages. It is said to be able to nullify momentum and render any fighter powerless but it might just be rumors. No one has seen it being used in recent times even though the College of Sages claims to have the techniques needed for it."

Soverick became intrigued at that possibility. The ability to nullify momentum sounded like a direct counter to the third step. No matter how much momentum someone can harness, if it is nullified, then they will lose all their spear mastery. Momentum is the core of spear mastery after all.

"The widely agreed upon fourth step is called the mind spear step. It is where I am currently. It doesn't counter the third step but amplifies it. It can only be achieved by those that have also mastered the second step. So those that skipped the second step will be stuck."

'Good luck overcoming that, Ghaster.' Soverick smirked inwardly.

"It involves the fusion of perfect control, solidified spiritual energy that a transcendent has, and world momentum of the third step to create an uncountable number of spears that perform both physical and spiritual damage."

"There is a way out for those that haven't achieved the second step. It is rare that a transcendent cannot acquire the second step but it happens. Someone like that can rely on the quality of momentum of the third step instead of the quantity of attacks to fight someone at the fourth step. It is possible since the fourth step doesn't counter the third. This fact gives credence to the opinion that a step is missing."

"Now onto the second to the last step. The fifth stage is called the formless spear. If the previous four stages are the foundation of your images, then the fifth stage is the birth of your image. At that point, you no longer need a spear to fight."

"Your image can empower a small stick. Everything in the world becomes your spear. The most important requirement for this step is synchronization with laws. I have not been able to achieve this basic requirement much less the more stringent condition of the strength of will. That's all I can safely tell you without errors."

"You should know the last step. It is called the spear concept. It is something only titans of law can achieve. You will be able to use world power at that level. Your chances of becoming a titan of law will soar if you have achieved the fifth stage. That is all. Are you satisfied?"

Soverick nodded and began to consider the information he just acquired. Those that cannot harness momentum will be toyed around by those that can. Those that can harness momentum will be toyed around by those that can harness it efficiently. Those that can harness momentum efficiently will be toyed around by those that can harness the momentum of the world. That's what he could confirm for now. He would make more research himself to determine the truth of the nullification and the mind spear step.

As for the formless spear mastery, he had seen something like that in his past life. The advantage of his bloodline in his past life made him lose contact with weaker things. He never fought when he was weak. There was no need to, he didn't lack anything. Training was also not important to him back then.

It was until he started taking things seriously that he became aware of some things but they were high-level skills and techniques. The problem with that is that, at the level of lords and above, it is very difficult to tell the difference between a technique and the manifestation of law. But the information he has just gotten will help him parse the things he has seen.

"When do you need to create your own technique?" He asked SQUARESKULL.

SQUARESKULL answered immediately "It is not a must to create a technique, but creating one will improve your chances of mastering the fifth step. I have not been able to create one yet. The style I'm using is from my ancestral memories."

"Are the steps of mastery also similar to other weapons or the ones you've listed are unique to the spear?"

"They are largely similar. All weapons share the same progression in mastery. Their skills and techniques will differ but everything else is the same."

"Alright then. Thanks for the information. I'll go and fight the 14th milestone now. Maybe when I come back, we can duel some more. I still have a lot to learn from you." Soverick stood up and was ready to go.

"It isn't advisable to fight the 14th milestone. You will undoubtedly win and when you do, your data will be collected and used to form the opponent for future generations. It is expected that no one will be able to beat you which will render the 14th milestone impassable."

"I am yet to see how this concerns me but go on," Soverick said.

SQUARESKULL sighed. "Forget about it. Do whatever you want. But I have an alternative for you. It might fix your inability to create more gates."

Somewhere in the Virut plane.

The battle Leviathan, that enormous battleship in the shape and size of a small celestial body had moved away from where it was stationed before. This isn't the first time it had happened, the battle Leviathan moves according to the whims of the son of legends.

Sometimes it is to position themselves in just the right spot to catch the Godhood of a celestial god that fell from the divine plane. Other times, it is to hunt small pockets of religious fanatics. Where it went, something important was to happen there.

People can do foolish things whenever they are desperate. You would think the lack of gods due to the recent sieges on them, will make these weak people look inwards and find strength within them.

Instead of acquiring strength that is theirs and not relying on others, these weak people turned their pleas towards demons since the gods couldn't answer them. This situation has caused a spike in demonic activity within the plane. The racial council determined that the eventual fall of the gods will lead to demon invasions, so they sent more battle leviathans to guarantee the safety of the plane.

This particular Battle Leviathan has put out threats of demons at the opportune time. They stumbled upon demon summoning and demonic cults, either by chance or unseen plan. But this first battle leviathan has not joined in patrolling the plane for quite some time now.

The son of legends has ordered it to move towards a particular location which they have been staying at for weeks now doing nothing. Still, no one questioned the decision of the son of legends. Well, almost no one.

The son of legends is not a titan of law, he couldn't be having mood swings. There had to be a reason why he made this decision. That's what almost everyone else used to placate themselves during this period of inactivity.

Not everyone chose to placate themselves. Especially not Guntu. Periods of inactivity like this are like mental torture to him. He had gathered everyone on the ship that he could gather and he had regaled them with stories. He enjoyed doing it, and because these people had never heard his stories, he spent the first couple of weeks telling stories. But the suppression of the plane didn't allow him to be content with that for too long.

So he approached the son of legends as he had done several times recently.

"What are we doing here again?" He asked as he scratched an itch.

An Origin god shouldn't have an itch, they should have lost that phenomenon when they became transcendent. But after long periods of exposure to the suppressive force of a plane, their mental itch and discomfort turn into a physical one.

The worst part is that no amount of scratching can satisfy them or mollify that itch. Nothing they do will help them. They wouldn't be able to ditch that itch until they leave the plane.

So what are they doing right now, standing around instead of fighting?

The son of legends replied calmly. He said the same thing he had said for the past 874 times. "I don't know WHEN. I only know WHAT, HOW, and WHERE. This place must be secured. Don't worry, it will happen anytime now."

Guntu observed the Son of legends for any trace of discomfort but he didn't see any. The son of legends had been standing in that same spot for weeks without moving. The white of his eyes indicated that he had locked on to a favorable future and the direction of his gaze showed where that favorable future is supposed to come to fruition.

'It had better happen soon because this wait is killing me.' Guntu thought to himself.

Chapter 179 The Advent Of The Last Days.

Guntu followed the gaze of the son of legends and saw nothing but a forest. The Virut plane is mostly forest except for the places with cities. There are no roads on the ground since their transportation system is mostly airborne. The need for wood is also low so the forest has been kept mostly alone. Cutting down a forest can antagonize an old monster that used to live in these woods so it's not worth it to tamper with the forest.

The love for trees is still deeply rooted in the hearts of many in the race of battle sage monkeys. Times may change, and eras may be swapped, but some individuals that lived through it all are still alive. Trees might have lost their purpose, but there are world gods who still love the trees they had to fight tooth and nail for. You can imagine what such powerful entities can do to you if you dare touch what they have very fond memories of. If you are an Origin god, you will wish you could die.

So the trees are left alone. No one tears down old structures and forests to build new, hip things like parking lots or shopping malls. It doesn't change the fact that the forests have lost their use. What could be special about a forest that is enough to make them stand around doing nothing for weeks?

Guntu didn't bother to ask that because the rehearsed reply of "You'll see" did not interest him. What interests him is how the son of legends didn't feel restless and sickly with the suppression. He had been holding back because it might be personal. But now he can't hold back anymore.

So he asked, "How are you not affected by the suppression, or is that you are affected but you don't show it?"

The son of legends answered immediately as if he was expecting the question, "Imagine a lake in a frigid region. The surface of the lake is frozen over due to the cold temperature and the wind is howling like ice blades."

The white eyes of the son of legends remained locked onto the forest but his actions and voice became more animated. "Beneath the lake is a dormant volcano that is somehow keeping the water in the depths warm. Living on the surface will be tough and no matter how resilient you are, the freezing wind will continue to sap the life out of you."

As he spoke, an image of what he was describing was being outlined in the air. Guntu considered how he did it as the air shimmered with vibrant colors as if it were a painting.

The display looked simple, something that could be easily achieved by a transcendent with their solidified divine sense but Guntu is sensitive enough to know that this creation is not entirely based on a divine sense. Instead, the son of legends used his divine sense to split the water droplets in the air and held each individual dot still while the rays of light are diffracted through them. It is how rainbows are formed but the son of legends was forming a vibrant painting with it.

The arrangement and angles of each dot are such that the light they produce is amplified in some places or eclipsed in others to create this fine imagery. The son of legends had turned something simple into something difficult and it was amazing how easy he could achieve it.

'He has to be holding more than a billion dots of water in place with his divine sense and yet is still able to choreograph their effect. Is this the difference between me and someone ready to become a world god?'

Guntu was half impressed and half depressed. Destruction is easier to do than creation. Destruction had always come easily to Guntu but he knew it would not lead him forward. Destruction for destruction purpose cannot lead him forward. He has to temper destruction with creation but he could not see how to.

A world god cannot create a world with just destruction. Guntu can't even weave the tapestry of an image using the laws of water, air, light, darkness, and earth. Anything he touches is destroyed.

The son of legends continued to talk, oblivious to the emotional turmoil within Guntu. Or maybe he isn't, someone with the eyes of sages cannot be underestimated.

"Normal space is the area above the frozen lake. It is specifically the space of a plane. The freezing wind is the force of suppression. The thick frozen top of the lake is a high energy barrier, it is difficult to breach."

"As its name suggests, you need to have achieved a high energy state to breach the barrier. But once the barrier is breached you get access to the warm depths. You are safe in the depths, the freezing winds can't reach you and the volcano keeps you warm. But you need to be able to survive underwater without air. Only those that have achieved a high energy state can traverse the depths. If you can survive in the depths, you can now control a lifeless puppet to remain active on the surface from the safety of the depths."

The images depicted the new additions to the story. It showed a person with the same likeness as the sun of legend in the depths and another one on top of the ice. The only difference between them is that the one in the depths is 3 dimensional while the one above is 2 dimensional, like a cube and square cardboard. One is fleshed out while the other is surface thick.

"No matter how cold the wind is it can't affect me and the puppet is lifeless so it can't feel a thing. What you're seeing right now is my puppet. The real me is within the depths of space. You can still kill me but it will require more power than usual. The conversion of a low energy state into a higher energy state is horrendously inefficient."

"But the suppression of the plane cannot affect me as long as I don't return to normal space. If I were a true world god then I'll be unapproachable to you no matter how short the distance between us seem. Now do you understand why I don't feel suppression sickness"

Guntu nodded solemnly. Anyone would understand with such an over-the-top explanation and a showy display of painting skills.

The son of legends continued. "I am only halfway there and I am longing for the same thing as you. I want to become the volcano instead of the person seeking refuge in the depths. I want to be Immovable and calm while hot lava brews within my depth. An eruption of mine can turn the entire frigid zone into lava and ash. Imagine that, lava and ash."

Guntu didn't have to imagine it. The images showed the profound effect of the eruption and Guntu watched as the law of fire wove itself seamlessly into the tapestry. The image depicted scenes of destruction but there was no actual destruction in the tapestry. It was just destruction being mimicked by creation.

Guntu felt sore. Even his specialty can be mimicked. "At least you're halfway there. With creation anything is possible." He said.

The son of legends laughed and waved the images away.

Within the Divine Plane of the Virut Pantheon.

God King Ode, the supreme god of the Virut pantheon finally made his decision. After weeks of agonizing indecision and no forthcoming help, he decided to activate the "Last Days" protocol.

"Nothing has changed for the better. It is out of my hands." He lamented as he checked the state of the divine kingdom.

There have been more celestial gods due to the forced battles between grand gods. But no miracle happened. No special celestial that can change the course of battle appeared. The celestials they acquired are also being starved of divine energy. Faith in them had long reached rock bottom.

Then there are the demons. The demons are assaulting the gods like predators moving in to finish a wounded prey. Their eternal rivals sensed weakness in the god's defense and were locked on to them like a canine beast on a bone.

Ode suspects that someone is feeding the demons information. Even if the gods somehow repel the main plane, the demons will rip them apart. Their losses in the battle with the main plane, internal fighting, and desertion, coupled with their loss of faith have made them too weak to face their real enemies.

The main plane is never supposed to be their real enemy. Even if those from the main plane barge into the divine plane, they will be highly suppressed. This suppression is higher than that of the main plane. But the demons are not suppressed in the divine plane at all. So while the demons remain largely intact, the gods have become fractured and impoverished.

God King Ode began to stroll around his divine kingdom one last time. He looked at his vast wealth and sighed. "I'm going to miss you the most."

Chapter 180 WHAT, HOW, WHERE, BUT NOT WHEN.

Then he called for a council meeting which the remaining gods were eager to attend. They had been clamoring for a direction, for a purpose, but their god King had shut himself off from the world. Now that he had returned, they were looking forward to his plan. For most of them, it will decide if they finally go through with the fall or not.

The Colosseum of the gods was quiet like it never had been. There was a stifling and depressing air about the gods. They all knew what condition they are in and that it will require a miracle to get them out of it.

Ode began. "I appreciate your presence here, for you are the ones that have stood with the divine plane through this trying time. You deserve a reward for your loyalty."

The gods agreed wholeheartedly with that statement. They just hoped that their reward will be a way out.

"I know that you are all worried about the fate of the gods. You don't think we have a significant chance of overcoming these challenges. We might be beset on all sides by enemies but we still have a way out. We can still survive."

The gods began to cheer and clap.

Then Ode said, "By my authority as the Supreme Celestial God of the Virut Pantheon, I declare the onset of the Last Days of the gods."

Power beyond what he used to have coursed through him. This power is due to the increase in the number of celestial gods under his control. He had never been this strong but even his increased strength couldn't hope to match their enemies. He doesn't even have the divine energy to use such power for a prolonged period. Instead, he will use all his power and available divine energy to increase the effect of the Last Days of the gods.

The gods started to weaken as he activated the Last Days protocol. From the weakest low god to the strongest celestial god, they all felt their Godhood weaken incredibly. They began to panic but they couldn't move to stop Ode because whatever he is doing was draining them of their power and authority.

The gods were not the only ones suffering this dilemma. The entire divine plane began to weaken and morph. It became smaller and smaller as all sources of energy and power within it were siphoned for the purpose of the protocol. Even the divine kingdoms of gods shrank down and the host of angels was reduced drastically to fuel the transformation. Then the entire divine realm warped and popped with a sudden change.

Ode the god King was sitting on his throne in what used to be the colosseum of the gods. The former grand edifice has become a smaller hall without impressive structures or seats. All the gods have disappeared except Ode. In front of Ode is a giant floating ball around 10 meters in diameter. The ball is brightly lit in glorious light like the biggest Godhood ever. The surface of the ball is like that of a gem with each face showing different scenes in the divine kingdom. Most of it is filled with scenes of panic of the gods.

Ode sighed in defeat. "It is out of my hand now. It is up to the people of the Virut plane."

This ball represents all the power of the gods and the culmination of their divinity. The person in control of the ball will be able to decide the fate of the gods. The ball cannot be used by any god, it can only be used by a mortal. That means a mortal will have to reach the final level of this dungeon to use it.

The divine plane has become a dungeon and its gods will be preserved until someone of incredible powers clears the dungeon. But not to worry, Ode had sacrificed a lot to ensure that only those from the vitality core stage and body forging stage can enter this divine dungeon. Some other mechanisms have been put in place to ensure that a favorable outcome for the gods will be reached if a mortal reaches this final level.

Turning the divine plane into a dungeon means the era of the gods has officially been put on hold. It may end with the decision of the mortal that reaches the dungeon core or it may resume, better than what it used to be. But this change ensures that the gods get to live a relatively peaceful life until that moment of decision. They get to spend their last days waiting for a savior or a condemner.

He raised his hand and felt the lacking strength in them. He smiled wryly, "How low have I fallen?"

Even he wasn't exempted from the drain. When you give up your power for peace, you also give up your fate. No more is he a celestial god, he has weakened to the level of a mana entity. Yet, he is still the strongest god.

"The other gods must have it worse. Time to explain their new existence to them."

The gods were panicking because of all the changes. He couldn't tell them about his plan beforehand or some of them will have bailed on him. He needed all their powers to be concentrated in a single point so that the rules of the dungeon can be enforced.

The gods have changed. They are weakened and yet they are still immortal somewhat. They needed information about their new existence so that they will settle into their new life. As the former God-king who caused all these, it is his responsibility to enlighten them. So he touched the god core and started speaking to them.

In the Main Plane. On the Battle Leviathan. The Moment When Ode Activated the Last Day's Protocol.

The son of legends smiled. He looked at Guntu beside him and said.

"A seer can peer into fate and destiny. We usually know WHAT about the future. Sometimes we also know HOW or WHERE, but WHEN eludes us. It is almost impossible to know all the factors of an event. Do you know why this is so?"

Guntu considered the question seriously all too happy to engage in an interesting conversation.

"Because the future isn't fixed and you can't know every parameter about it. It is the barrier between precognition and omniscience. To know all four factors is to be omniscient."

The son of legends smiled. "Correct. I am usually picky but I have to admit that you answered my questions correctly."

Guntu puffed up noticeably.

"We seers must understand the two concepts of destiny and fate to not go mad when we peek into the river of fate. It is the hurdle that all titans of law with the path of seer must understand. We must understand them and know the difference between them. Do you know the difference between them?"

Guntu answered quickly. It was common knowledge. "Destiny is unchangeable while fate is subject to change."

The son of sages nodded. "That is also true. There are multiple lines of fate. That means, for every action, there is an equal but opposite reaction which could have variable effects. Fate is fickle and of infinite possibilities, but destiny is the overarching theme of life. Destiny is the cumulative effect of all the events that take place in a person's life. It is the aggregate purpose of the randomness of fate. If fate is Chaos, then destiny is order. Destiny is inevitable, fate is infinite."

"This is interesting and all but what is your point?" Guntu asked impatiently.

"I'm getting to it. To become a seer, you must first master your destiny before you can control or find meaning in your fate. Then you use the hold you have over your destiny to influence the fate of others. You can't influence their destiny no matter what."

"But that's all you need because when an individual becomes an Origin god, they also cast off the shackles of destiny. They become masters of their destiny too. The death that is supposed to be the end of all story and the destiny of all life, loses its power over them. Imagine that, the thing you struggled to acquire becomes almost obsolete. You don't have an advantage over them anymore and the absence of order makes their life more chaotic. The absence of destiny makes it very difficult to persevere their fate. But all is not lost, there is a way to fix this. Of course, that way isn't necessary for people that haven't broken their destiny like the gods of the plane. That is why it is so easy to manipulate them."

"Manipulate them into doing what?" Guntu asked. This time he was about to snap. He wanted to know what all this talk is about.

What were they waiting here for? What has the Son of legends manipulated the gods into doing? He wanted to know.