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Chapter 240: Demons (part 1)

The other array masters nodded in agreement, their own expressions reflecting a mixture of relief and disappointment. Garok forced himself to exhale slowly, the tension in his body easing slightly.

"We must proceed cautiously regardless," Master Zephyr remarked, his tone firm. "The consequences of any oversight could be catastrophic."

With a collective understanding, the array masters resumed their work on the seal, their determination unwavering. Garok's facade of innocence remained intact, his gaze fixed on the seal as if he were fully engrossed in the task.

As the day wore on, Garok's relief was palpable. His calculated corrosion had gone undetected, and the imminent threat of exposure had passed. He couldn't afford to become complacent, though. He knew that he had to remain vigilant and continue to manipulate the situation to his advantage.

Amidst their diligent efforts, the array masters remained unaware of the sinister plot that had unfolded right under their noses. The seal's defense continued to weaken, and Garok's nefarious intentions drew closer to fruition.

Finally, after days of patient corrosion, the moment had arrived. Garok's heart raced as he sensed that the corrosion energy had reached the critical threshold. He could practically feel the surge of power waiting to be unleashed.

With a carefully concealed sense of triumph, Garok subtly shifted his focus. The seal, already weakened by his covert efforts, was now on the brink of shattering. He channeled his malevolent intentions into the corrosion energy, ready to exploit the vulnerability he had meticulously created.

The array masters, completely engrossed in their task, had no inkling of the imminent danger. They continued to pour their Qi into the seal, unaware of the malevolent energy that now coursed through its weakened defenses.

Just as Master Wie Lin was about to announce that the seal appeared stable, a sudden surge of energy rippled through the intricate patterns. The array masters' eyes widened in surprise, their focus immediately drawn to the anomaly.

"What in the heavens is happening?" Master Zephyr exclaimed, trying to make sense of the disturbance.

Master Wie Lin's intuition flared once again, now more intense than ever. "This is it! The energy flow has changed drastically!"

Realization dawned on Garok, his heart pounding in triumph. The corrosion process had reached its climax, and the seal was about to give way.

In a desperate attempt to salvage the situation, Master Zephyr and the other array masters channeled their Qi to stabilize the seal. But it was too late. The corrosion energy had amassed to an overwhelming level, and the seal's defenses shattered with a resounding boom.

A burst of blinding light enveloped the chamber, and as it subsided, the array masters looked on in horror. The hand, the ancient hands of immense power, was now exposed, floating in the air, free from the seal's restraint.

Master Zephyr and Master Wie Lin reacted swiftly, their voices resonating with urgency as they shouted in unison, "Open the array! Prepare the countermeasures!"

The other array masters sprang into action, their expressions a mix of fear and determination. They knew the consequences of the artifact's release, and their training kicked in as they raced to create a defensive array around the seal.

Garok watched everything unfold with a sinister grin, fully aware of the hand's potential for devastation. He remained calm, knowing that even just a severed hand possessed unimaginable power capable of wreaking havoc on a continent.

As the hand floated free, it began emitting a menacing aura, a dark energy that devoured everything in its path. The array masters could feel the overwhelming force of this malevolent energy as it approached the countermeasures they hastily set up.

But when the energy touched the array, terror washed over their faces. Their confident expressions turned to disbelief and fear as they witnessed the catastrophic failure of their defense. The energy didn't merely sizzle and burst; it tore through the countermeasure with unprecedented force, rendering it utterly useless.

Master Zephyr's eyes widened in horror, and beads of sweat formed on his forehead. "This... this is beyond anything I've encountered," he stammered, struggling to grasp the true extent of the danger.

Master Wie Lin's usually composed demeanor wavered, replaced by a mix of shock and desperation. "We need to reinforce the array quickly! It's our only hope!"

The array masters desperately attempted to strengthen their defense, but the hand's aura seemed relentless, an unstoppable force that overwhelmed their efforts with ease.

Garok's smile grew wider, his eyes glinting with triumph. He reveled in the chaos he had unleashed, confident that he had secured a path to ultimate power. His scheming mind already envisioned the havoc he could wreak once the artifact was under his control.

Meanwhile, the terror among the array masters escalated as they realized the gravity of the situation. This was a power they had never witnessed, an ancient force beyond their comprehension.

The hand's aura surged, causing the very walls of the chamber to tremble. The array masters struggled to maintain their composure, but fear crept into their hearts, knowing that their cultivation expertise alone might not be enough to contain this malevolence.

In the midst of the chaos, a sudden disruption occurred at the back of the exposed hand. A rift tore open in space, revealing a nightmarish void from which hordes of demons emerged. Kaelar and Althea's hearts skipped a beat as they felt the overwhelming presence of these beings, their strength rivaling their own.

The demons spilled forth from the rift, their forms twisted and grotesque. The very air grew heavy with their malevolence, and the array masters could feel the sinister energy that radiated from their beings.

"His Majesty's hand is finally free," one of the demons proclaimed with a chilling voice, a mix of reverence and excitement evident in its tone.

Another demon chuckled darkly, its eyes gleaming with a cruel light. "We are fortunate indeed to have this chance to bring His Majesty's hand back to the realm. Higher demons are barred from this place, after all."

A third demon sneered at its surroundings, its expression one of disgust. "These pitiful humans and their feeble efforts. It matters not. We shall cleanse this place in His Majesty's name."

Kaelar's mind raced as he processed the dire situation. He knew that these demons were a threat beyond anything they had encountered before. "Retreat! Everyone, fall back!" he ordered, urgency in his voice.

Althea's eyes widened as she surveyed the grotesque demons. "Kaelar, those five demons... they're at least as strong as us, if not stronger."

As Kaelar and Althea led the retreat, their minds raced to find a strategy. Meanwhile, Garok's shock was palpable. He had anticipated many things, but the sudden emergence of a horde of powerful demons had caught him completely off guard.

His mind raced as he contemplated his options. The hand was within his grasp, but the presence of these formidable demons had thrown a wrench into his carefully laid plans. His desire for power wavered in the face of such overwhelming opposition.

The demons, however, were undeterred. One of them, towering and imposing, commanded with a malevolent voice, "Kill all the humans!"

The array masters scattered in panic, desperately fending off the relentless assault of the demons. Yet, with every strike, the demons seemed to grow stronger, fueled by the malevolent energy that radiated from the hand.

Amidst the chaos, Garok's mind raced. He knew that this was his chance, an opportunity to seize the artifact even in the midst of the turmoil. With a calculated move, he attempted to slip through the chaos and reach for the floating hand.

However, his attempt did not go unnoticed. One of the five powerful demons locked eyes with Garok, its gaze penetrating and filled with a sinister knowing. The demon's voice sliced through the chaos, addressing Garok with a mix of mockery and malice.

"Hey, abomination," the demon's voice oozed with disdain, its words laced with a deliberate venom. "Are you trying to sneak in?"

Garok's blood boiled with anger. The word "abomination" was a barb that cut deep, a reminder of his mixed heritage that he had fought to overcome. His eyes narrowed as he shot a venomous glare at the demon. "Shut up, demon. I'm here to get what's mine."

The demon's laughter was a chilling echo in the chaotic chamber. "Yours? Oh, how amusing. A half-blood like you dares to claim ownership of such power."