

New World 331

Chapter 331: The Lottery

My armor grinned as the energy writhed inside my blood and bones. The ascendant mana shouted out with madness, wishing for death and destruction. I tilted my head at the noise before quashing the lunacy of the tiny mana blot. I raised a hand, the ascendant mana flooding into my palm. I smashed it in my hand, arcs of lightning streaking out.

I took a breath, mana flooding into my body. I pulled my helmet off my face, breathing out the red mist. I smiled at everyone, a glint in my eye,

“I’m Daniel Hillside, the Harbinger of Cataclysm, but you can all just call me Daniel for short.”

The ascendant mana oozed into the air, forming spirals and static that left the air crackling. A few gasps rang out across the rulers, the younger and lower leveled ones impressed. Most of them remained composed, and a few of them even rolled their eyes. Some murmured,

“Show off.”

“He thinks we’re impressed.”

“And what, we’re supposed to react to that?”

I restrained myself, keeping calm and confident. The ascendant Overseer tightened and loosened his hands in a nervous gnarling, peeved about me disrupting his panel of energy. A miasma of mana suffused his surroundings as the entity glowered at me. That aura reached my space, and it oozed into my skin.

No matter how I looked at, the guy attacked me. Annoyed by his impulsive reaction, I looked at him with a raised brow. I dispersed Event Horizon over my general vicinity. My dimensional wake’s density exceeded the Overseer’s mana. With that barrier between us, I spread my hands to everyone and stated,

“My guild is the Harbinger’s Legion. We’re new to the galactic scene, but we still intend on making a big splash. That doesn’t mean any of you have to get smothered by our waves, however. Know that I’m not here to make enemies. Quite the opposite, actually.”

I turned my gaze as I spoke, keeping eye contact with everyone, “Our primary objective is to establish ourselves over a large domain of fringe worlds. We’ll also be focusing on terraforming worlds to become habitable for high levels of solar system density. We have the skills and abilities to clear those places out or bring barren wastelands to life, and we intend on using them.”

I lowered my hands, “If any of you has a fringe world near your colonies or you own a terraformable planet, send me a friend request. We can negotiate a deal. After all, I’m guessing only a few of you want to actually colonize those worlds, so we can arrange something that works for both of us. If any of you want my help in other ways, then, by all means, I’ll hear your requests out.”

I gave the crowd a wide grin, “You’ve all seen the war. I defeated Lehesion, and I’m an excellent fighter. You can lease my golems as well, and I can work with ciphelic runes-“

I gestured to the glowing runes over myself, “As you can all see, I’m willing to put those runic markings over my own body. I’m confident I can help with a wide variety of problems. In fact-” I raised a fingertip, quintessence forming over it, “I can sell mana as well if you’d like.”

I crystallized the quintessence into a large, jagged sword. Taking a hand, I carved into the sword, giving it a few enchantments by absorbing mana away from the blade. I swung the edge, and it left a lingering aura, mirroring a pale glow etched in the air.

Once stabilized, I opened my pocket dimension. I placed the sword into the space before pulling it out. The blade came out coated in the dimensional fabric like dipping candy in chocolate before I flash froze it. The material released a soft squeal and hiss before I etched in more simple ciphelic augments.

As I crafted, I talked, “I’m good enough to produce pretty solid artifacts without any time commitments. I know what I’m worth, however. Come to me with a compelling offer because I’m not offering a charity here. If you treat me well, however, I’ll do the same in turn.”

I lifted the sword before channeling the mana within it. Its sharpened edge glowed a bright white, the dark matter contrasting the blade's neon glow. I generated a block of steel before slicing through it. The blade left melted metal as I stated,

“So yeah, I’ll keep in touch with any of you that feels we can arrange something that works for both of us.”

A few rulers’ eyes widened as the display of economic might. Crafting an artifact of this quality while delivering a speech, it sent a message. Taking that message to the next level, I highlighted it with one last addition. I grabbed the blade, and I grinned, “But yeah, I don’t like to keep junk like this lying around.”

I snapped the blade in half, gasps echoing across the room. As I melted it down, a few people gawked in horror. Piling the molten fabric back into my pocket dimension, I took a breath, “That’s all, guys. Have a good one.”

I turned to leave. The Overseer raised a hand as I descended, and it generated another panel of ascendant mana less than an inch from my face. Before I hovered into it, I frowned and simmered, “So what’s all this about?”

The administrator simmered, “Schema will speak for you now. Remain here until I say otherwise.”

Peeved by his attacks earlier, I reared my hand back before jamming it through the panel. A high-pitched echo reverberated through the cipher-laden ruins, silencing the crowd. Lighter, pink cracks fissured through the plate before writhing wires shot out of my arm. I engulfed the mana while turning to the Overseer.

I narrowed my eyes, “Really now? I’m stuck until you say otherwise? You’ll attack me again if I move?” Elemental furnaces revved into action under my skin, and my words rumbled like quakes in the ground,

“These little jabs haven’t gone unnoticed, and they’re not so funny after the first time. You do anything like that again, and I’m retaliating. Understand?”

The Overseer glowered at me while seething, “And what if you did?”

A fierce smile spread over my lips. I spread Event Horizon over him, suppressing his mana entirely. My tone rose in volume, "I'd break you and rip you out of that armor of yours."

The Overseer squeezed a fist, a tense silence passing between us. I spread my hands, waiting for him to attack me, and he did nothing. I turned while letting my hands down, "Alright, it's good to see you can be civil."

The Overseer lifted a hand. His gauntlet coursing with ascendant energy while it growled at me. Ready and waiting, I kneeled behind my pocket dimension's opening, the starry warp capturing the invisible power of the Overseer.

I stood back up, lifting an arm. Seven furnaces hummed along with my own mana, and a guillotine of gravity clamped over the crimson automaton. The Overseer froze in place, its ascendant energy wrestling with my own. While suppressing it, I grimaced and pooled Event Horizon over the entity. I shouted,

"So this is how you treat a new council member during their first galactic meeting, huh?"

I squeezed my hand, the metal plates whistling and bending under pressure unreal. I growled, "Come on them. You wanna have a go, then let's go."

The Overseer groaned before Schema radiated into our surroundings. The AI stated like a disappointed parent, "Don't you think that's enough, Daniel?"

I narrowed my eyes, "He launched an attack at me. He's lucky to be alive."

Schema continued, "But there's no proof of that, is there?"

I opened my pocket dimension aiming it at an empty patch of rock. The Overseer's caught attack lobbed out, punching a hole into the stone. A few of the less experienced rulers gasped, but most stared on in amusement. I raised my brow,

"As I was saying, that was an attempt to kill me. Why didn't its killswitch activate?"

A tense quiet passed before Schema said in a calm voice, “It’s a simple error in its programming. Your guild will be suitably compensated for the offense.”

I lowered my hand while keeping the gravity well over the Overseer, “Like what kind of compensations, exactly?”

Schema sighed before saying, “We can offer a personal Overseer over your home planet.”

I tapped my side before raising a hand, “Thanks for the offer, but we’ll pass. How about you recognize my guild’s structures as cities? I’ll call us even then.”

Schema’s presence spoke with annoyance, “You generate too many cities to extend that many warp centers and yearly credit incomes. Offer different terms that are reasonable.”

I spread my hands, “But you still haven’t offered us anything for our contribution during the war with Elysium. You won’t recognize my established cities either, and your Overseers are attacking me.” I put a hand over my chest,

“Exactly what am I supposed to think?”

A few whistles rang through the room, along with some satisfied laughter. Some outraged gasps dotted the room along with the low rumble of general chatter. People talked, and Schema listened. The AI stated,

“Like most outbreaks, the rewards will be dispersed after the war is over.”

I pointed a thumb at my chest, “Isn’t there usually an option to pay up early? There was whenever we fought Yawm and contained that quarantine.”

“Indeed there was.”

I shouted, “Then recognize my establishments as super cities at least. Take clusters of ten different towns, all of them evenly spaced, and ball them into one region. That can count as a single city. That should make it a lot easier to handle for you, and my guild gets official recognition along with all the perks like warping and galactic exchanges.”

Another tense silence passed over us before Schema spoke, his tone unchanged, “Those terms are...Fair. We shall proceed in that manner going into the future. Your rewards for the war will be revoked, however.”

Knowing I squeezed ‘rewards’ out of thin air, I dropped my hands, “That’s fine by me.”

I ended my gravity well over the AI’s administrator. The ascendant Overseer gasped out with its metallic voice, able to breathe again. The Overseer turned to me again, still angry at the situation. Schema spoke out as if chiding an unruly child,

“You’re decommissioned from this assignment.”

The ascendant Overseer pointed at me, “He is working with a-“

The Overseer’s words voided, no longer leaving the space it existed in. Schema’s presence muted him, the AI’s control of the area profound and dominant. The Overseer lowered its hands, its anger fading. It trembled before murmuring where we could hear, “Yes, Schema.”

A tear in dimensions opened, and a different Overseer walked out of a portal beside the ascendant. This new Overseer looked like a normal one, the pale blue armor covering it from head to toe along with the wires and large gauntlets. It shoved the red Overseer into the portal. The regular Overseer seethed,

“You’re a fool. Be glad you’re not dead like you should be.”

The warp closed behind him before the Overseer floated over towards me. He extended a hand, “It’s good to see you again.”

Recognizing his voice, I smiled while grabbing the Overseer’s hand, “Ah, it’s good to see you too. How’ve you been?”

The Overseer turned, pinching where the bridge of his nose would be, “Awful. Plazia-Ruhl created hundreds of thousands of de-systemized pockets on Svia, and I’m the one tasked with cleaning them up.”

I let his hand go, and I winced, “Ah man, sounds like a lot of busywork.”

The Overseer leaned to me, “You wouldn’t happen to know anything about it, would you?”

I shrugged with a mischievous grin, “What, me? Pshh, no. That’s a hell of a mystery. You should get someone smart to help you with that. Me? I’m just a backwater savage. Don’t let Schema forget it either.”

The Overseer shrugged back, “Then if you happen to know whoever’s responsible, give them my thanks. The time spent on that planet is time I’m not spending in the war.”

Our regional Overseer spread his hands to everyone, “This is a mishap we apologize for. The ascendant variant of Overseers is based on new technology, and that particular model was obviously defective. It will be handled.”

The Overseer turned its armored head to me, “And the terms were agreeable for you, correct?”

Calm and collected, I stated, “Absolutely.”

The Overseer gave me a curt nod before spreading his hands out to everyone, “Then contain rumors to this space, or else there will be consequences. I must go back to cleaning up an absolute mess, so excuse me.”

A few rulers waved at the Overseer, some of them rooted in our region of the galaxy. I took note of who they were, along with their faces. As I put their titles to memory, Schema announced throughout the realm,

“That model will be taken care of. Moving back towards introductions, this is Daniel Hillside. His home planet is Earth, and his age is 24.7 galactic years.”

Even compared to suppressing the Overseer, the ruler's reactions exploded. Most rulers stared at me in confusion, wondering how a Sovereign came about at such a young age. Others opened their statuses, researching and uncovering exactly where Earth was and what state it was in.

Those that researched changed how they looked at me in an instant. Before, I stood out as a rising oddity among the rulers. Maybe I'd be powerful long into the future, but for now, I was an arrogant youngster rocking the boat. In their eyes, I simply lacked perspective, and meeting other rulers would fix that.

But knowing my world hadn't even left its protective phase? Even a fool could think ahead enough to uncover my meteoric rise. The confusion turned into a sharp skepticism. Even more so, genuine interest spread throughout the room. A couple bings rang in from my side, and I stared at my notifications.

A series of friend requests poured in from a variety of rulers in the room. Forming this many connections like this exceeded any expectations I had coming here. At the same time, I swallowed down some frustration. Schema didn't expose anyone else's homeworld, which put Elysium's sights on me if that information left the area.

Peering around, I let out a breath out full of annoyance. Containing 500 different rulers wasn't about to happen. I'd have to deal with it after getting back to Earth.

Schema continued, "The Harbinger's Legion defeated an S- tier bounty while still in its formative stages. It exposed Elysium's plot for a rebellion, and the legion offered further military assistance for a time against the rebels. Despite its short time on the galactic scene, the legion has left quite a mark. Given his age and humble origins, the Harbinger is deserving of respect."

Schema chimed, "Treat him well."

Before Schema's presence left the area, I reached out with Event Horizon. My dimensional wake met Schema's dominion in an unspoken and unseen clash. We wrestled for a moment before I got control of my immediate vicinity. It required condensing my aura and its effects, but I established my own sanctity over myself. He couldn't mute me like everybody else.

Satisfied with that result, I let the aura fizzle, giving Schema its dominance back. The quiet victory was plenty for me. Having a better idea of my galactic position, I pulled myself back into the Rise of Eden. It suited meeting people better than the bloodthirsty Event Horizon.

I lowered myself back to the ground, returning to Shalahora's side. The misty aberration murmured, "It would seem you wished to be the one most remembered."

I put my hands on my hips, "It's more like that Overseer had a problem, so I had to act. I'm just glad I turned my situation into an advantage this time."

Shalahora simmered, "That Overseer affected everyone that stood on that panel to assert its dominance. You earned friends by confronting it."

I peered up, "That's good to hear."

Shalahora murmured, "And yet... You made enemies as well."

I peered around, "As always, right? Let them come."

Schema's words erupted from all sides once more, "Now, let's attend to the source of this meeting."

I took a breath, expecting the worst. It arrived with force as Schema stated, "A galactic wide conscription will be taking place. Guilds will be assimilated into Schema's primary guild, the Force of Iron. This will be a temporary measure until Elysium's been taken care of."

Disgruntled rulers snapped out,

"What? That's ridiculous."

"You never defended any guild when they needed protection. Why should we offer the same to you?"

“I spent my life putting my people in a place where we could live without fear. You’re tearing down everything we’ve built since the culling.”

Schema silenced the space around the rulers as it had with the Overseer. The AI stated, “You built your empires on my shoulders. Never forget that. I gave you system advantages from leveling to perks, and I enabled your economies via mass warping. I have even given you all protection from galactic horrors you know nothing about.”

Schema stated like stone, “And you will never know about them if I am successful in the future. I monitor trillions of lives. Septillions of sentients have been saved by me. I need to call on a few of your strengths for a time. That is all, and it shall not go without an award.”

I winced, knowing the reward paled when compared to the risk. Schema announced, “We’ll be offering doubled experience and quest completions.”

People sprang up in a silent uproar, everyone outraged but unable to speak. Shalahora linked up to me and said telepathically, “You know that those conditions are a paltry compensation for going to a war...What one gains is far less than what one loses.”

I gave Shalahora a tight grin, “It’s like I said earlier. We never got doubled experience or quest awards. They didn’t send us reinforcements either. We were on our own.”

Shalahora froze in place before turning towards the center of the room. The Sovereign menaced, “It would seem Schema is more desperate than I first envisioned...To abuse a newcomer to the system for its own gain...It is beneath one of Schema’s stature...It abused the most vulnerable among us.”

I frowned, and Shalahora raised an umbral arm. It hummed, “Schema’s actions speak more to its character than your own...There is no shame in being ignorant.”

My eyes hardened as I mouthed, “I’m not as ignorant anymore. I’m not fighting someone else’s war for free again.”

Schema spoke over the throng of rulers, “There is still a method of allocation regarding this conscription. Certain members will receive higher drafts, while others receive less stringent ones. That is what the lottery is for.”

Most of the rulers calmed down. Their anger still surged, but they listened close to the AI's announcement. Schema said, "You will all be placed onto a fringe world of an enormous caliber. The requirement is to collect a cipheric artifact hidden within the world's largest dungeon. Those that bring back artifacts of value will also not be conscripted as heavily. The ten highest placing members of the lottery will not be forced into participating within the conscription, and they will still receive the awards from the war."

The runic markings across my armor glowed as I simmered, "Ah...Then I can't lose."

Shalahora crowed, "Neither may I."

Schema radiated, "The period of this test will be three months within a gravitational sink. Minutes will pass here, and your guilds will be fine. However, the fate of your futures will be determined by your ranking."

Schema's presence left the area,

"So let the lottery...Begin."

Chapter 332: Not A Game of Chance

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Schema's presence left the area,

"So let the lottery...Begin."

Rulers around me peered around in confusion, wondering what to do next. Taking a moment to do the same, I dove deep into thought. Many of my minds kicked into action, pausing all of my multitasking outside of my rune siphoning. We all debated with each other, every Daniel headstrong against placing low in the lottery's rankings.

Each of us arrived at different conclusions on how to do that. Some of the Daniel's wanted to clear dungeons. Other Daniel's wanted to craft objects and donate those instead. That idea dominated the discussions afterward as it proved a lot easier and more reliable than the dungeon clearing. Coming to a consensus, the minds debated on how to prepare the best artifacts.

We accounted for what Schema valued the most and considering he was in a war, it'd be soldiers. In my case, supergolems shored up that need nicely. If I generated several hundred golems, there was no way I'd land outside the top ten in this competition, and that required weeks, not months of crafting.

That gave us plenty of time to work on other skills in the meantime. Still, we lacked information about this planet. We operated on guesswork about where it was, how a gravitational sink formed, or even what kind of artifacts Schema wanted on it. Before I wondered further, Schema gave us an official message about it.

You are about to be sent to a planet orbiting a black hole referred to by the moniker Leviathan. Time has dilated near Leviathan, and due to an unknown event in the past, this time dilation was inverted. Instead of stretching, time has compressed within the vicinity of this black hole, creating a strange world that's stabilized and orbited the celestial body.

This planet will be referred to as Leviathan-7(The seventh planet found orbiting Leviathan). Many species have formed on the world in previous eras, but they've fallen to nuclear war several times. This has resulted in old, developed eldritch in a radiation-rich wasteland.

Despite this, no consolidation has occurred yet, meaning eldritch still battles on Leviathan-7 for dominance. The radiation feeds these monsters, increasing their strength. Further bouts of radiation from the black hole have also strengthened the fauna here, resulting in a turbulent world. The time compression occurred in recent memory, but it has still resulted in a far older and more developed ecosystem than usual galactic standards.

Also, Schema's system will not be present while on Leviathan-7. This is a hazardous planet, but it lies well outside of Schema-owned space. This, combined with the time compression, means system updates and uploads won't be timely nor attempted. Be prepared for these inconveniences.

Initializing countdown to warp onto L-7.

5:00 minutes remaining...

4:59 minutes remaining...

4:58 minutes remaining...

I rubbed my temples as the rulers jumped into a panic around me. Giving us five minutes to prepare ourselves and our guild to warp was a joke. Another message appeared, splashing more cold water over us all.

Each ruler will be forced to leave without assistance from their guild except the pocket dimensions. The reason for this is to prevent the unnecessary loss of troops that would otherwise be conscripted. Your individual merits and abilities will be judged here, so prepare yourselves for that.

Smuggling extra creatures or personnel onto the world will result in immediate disqualification and a descent to the bottom of the lottery's rankings regardless of the outcome. Good luck, rulers.

4:55 minutes remaining...

4:54 minutes remaining...

I leaned back from my status, gawking at the messages. Schema calling it a lottery was a joke at this point. This venture turned into a competition the moment the AI mentioned rankings. And no matter how I sliced it, Schema set everyone up for failure. Many rulers managed their positions through economic means or slowly accruing power. Obolis served as a great example of this.

Putting everyone in a dangerous world with no support may result in rulers dying while out there. I blinked, a set of realizations sparking through my head. First off, Schema may not want everyone to survive. Any leaderless guild would be far easier to assimilate, giving Schema free soldiers. Secondly, Schema would gather enormous

resources from the harvesting of this dangerous world. We'd pay for mercenaries for war with Elysium.

Third and finally, Schema pitted us against each other to add to those losses. The strongest guilds would win and not contest the lottery since they had nothing to lose. That prevented them from rebelling against Schema. In the end, the AI gained a lot from this venture, no matter how I sliced it.

We had no say in whether we left or not either. Giving us so little time to think also prevented us from organizing our own rebellion. I sighed, Schema's plot being pretty foolproof. I opened my status, sending messages to primary guild members explaining the situation. I needed everyone to get ready for a considerable change over the next few minutes.

After sending a few messages explaining the situation, I also considered some realities of my own. We didn't know where this planet was, which eliminated the ability to warp in and out. Being near a black hole also meant leaving the world physically would be dangerous, to put it lightly.

I didn't even understand how a black hole had its time effects inverted or how it could orbit a black hole safely, to begin with, either. I opened several research tabs, trying to get some understanding of the situation. It required in-depth theoretical knowledge, something I couldn't gain in five minutes.

Dammit. I rubbed my palm against my forehead, trying to consider all the possibilities. If I guessed right, we wouldn't be able to see the stars while on Leviathan-7. That prevented any would-be astronomers from knowing where we were and warping out. Peering around, other rulers did the same as me, trying to get as much information as possible.

Everyone aside from Shalahora. The misty entity sat cross-legged and without a care in the world. Considering how powerful he was, he'd be in the top ten slots, no doubt. He also handled himself on a more individual basis. Unlike most rulers, Shalahora operated as a sizable chunk of his guild's strength.

I facepalmed. Duh. So did I.

Instead of panicking, I calmed myself down. This was a fantastic opportunity for me. If anything, I could use this to catapult my guild onto the galactic scene with a huge

splash. Thinking about all of that, a smile grew on my face. If anything, the factors here worked to my advantage.

There was no system here, meaning I had free reign over my primordial mana. I could survive any environment Schema threw at us as long as it was on an actual planet. I needed no food, air, or anything really. That put me ahead of the other rulers who pulled out their grimoires and cast incantations to prevent death in a harsh climate.

I tapped my side, my nervousness melting into a vivid excitement. In a flurry of activity, I reopened my status and began messaging my guild about a plan in the works. Because of the time dilation, we didn't have long before everything would happen all at once. For them, at least.

To me, this plan would take months. For the new direction to work, I needed commitment from my guild members. I frowned as messages piled in, several guildmates giving me pushback to my idea. Torix and Krog gave me the most, so I prepared a few defenses for my scheme. We messaged back and forth, and I absorbed myself in my status.

Beside me, Shalahora coalesced into a smaller figure, becoming more physical. His sky blue eyes closed, making him a shadow beside me. He meditated or trained. I couldn't tell, and I didn't have the time to analyze either. I needed to get everyone on the same picture and immediately.

People around us began setting up alliances, and different rulers formed groups and cliques based on goals. Shalahora opened a single eye, gazing at the chatting rulers. He turned his eyes to me as I sent out a dozen different messages and guild-wide directives. Shalahora murmured,

"Would you like to join forces on this new world...Perhaps?"

I shook my head, "No, but thanks for the offer."

Shalahora peered down, a bit disappointed. The entity closed its eyes and whispered, "I understand."

I closed my status and looked at him, “I do want to form an alliance, just not within the first month of being there. I’d prefer we rally up a bit later, towards the end of our stay on Leviathan-7.”

Shalahora tilted its head at me, “Hm...Why would you postpone the alliance? It may do us no favors.”

I smiled, “You’ll find out pretty quickly, actually.”

Shalahora nodded, “I shall wait for the answers to unveil themselves then...Time always tells one’s destiny in that way.”

He returned to meditating, and I kept sending out several guild messages over the next few seconds. In particular, I mentioned an absurd influx of golems along with a sudden shift in guild priorities for the next coming months. Many of my guildsmen gave me pushback to my ideas and their immediacy, so we went back and forth.

Other rulers congregated into different groups, forming larger alliances. I zoned everything out, intent on convincing my guild of my idea. I left the partial attention of a single mind to my surroundings. That mind mentioned the names of these larger groups for reference.

Surprisingly, the new ruler Iona Joan led one of the groups. The pro Schema faction intended on donating vast supplies to the AI’s war effort through economic means. It wasn’t a bad plan. One of the other factions was run by Valgus Uuriyah, an avatar of Baldowah.

They wanted to raid the most extensive dungeons and loot the supplies within them. It was another solid idea. The third-largest group took a different approach, focusing on survival. They intended to create a fortress to prevent any of their members from dying in the harsh landscape. I agreed with that idea the most.

Even if it was apparent, the fact couldn’t be overstated; survival outweighed avoiding conscription. After all, we only understood baseline facts about this world, and the circumstances pointed to an awful environment. This faction, which I deemed the survivalists, had their priorities straightened out.

Despite agreeing with them, I didn't ask to rally up. In fact, I intended on teaming up with no one. The reasons were many, but I described them with an analogy. This felt like we were playing cards, and everyone wanted a pair of aces. At this point, I aimed for a royal flush instead. If I joined up with anyone, it limited me from accomplishing a new goal while on Leviathan-7.

So, I sent out a flurry of messages with my status. Other factions tried recruiting me but especially Shalahora. The Sovereign ignored these powerful rulers, the dark shadow being the strongest among us as far as I could tell. Well, the strongest besides for Valgus Uuriyah, who swaggered up and dripped confidence while doing so.

Valgus was a six-armed humanoid with red skin. Valgus's black hair and eyebrows looked like they molded out of dark flames. He oozed ascendant mana everywhere he walked, his skin imprinted with Baldowah's runic markings, and unlike Yawm before him, Valgus lacked the insanity of Yawm.

Instead of becoming a pariah, Valgus served Baldowah with a firm conviction. I learned that much from his title alone.

Valgus Uriyah, Baldowah's Rage | Level: 64,928 | Class: Juggernaut | Guild: The Path of Rage...

As Valgus reached us, he quaked the ground. He carried an unapologetic dominance over the landscape, each of his stomps loaded with power. They spoke out louder than words could, and each step told tales of the creatures he killed. He wore those creatures in armbands, the suppressed eldritch mirroring glowing gemstones.

To my surprise, Valgus created different dimensional pockets for each of these eldritch. I sensed them through telepathy alone, as the monsters screamed out in pain through telepathic tethers. That pain created a psionic wall isolating Valgus from his surroundings.

That combined with a dozen-plus furnaces and other strange artifacts over him. In that way, Valgus recited his legend with his walk, a myth he lived out as he paced up to an equal. Which wasn't me. Valgus stared and shouted at Shalahora, "I felt your mind trying to graze me earlier. It was impressive. Join me."

Shalahora looked up, his eyes piercing. The shadow menaced, "And why should I join you? What do you offer me?"

Valgus smirked down, small tusks jutting out from the sides of his lips. Valgus spoke with absolute confidence,

“You will join me because I am undeniable. I will conquer the largest dungeon, raid the dark core within, and return here in triumph. Joining me will guarantee you a slot in the ten immune spots. I can guarantee that. My legacy speaks for itself in that regard, does it not?”

I noted the mention of a dark core in the dungeon. Shalahora sighed and stood. The umbral shade turned a hand to me, “May he join us?”

Valgus turned to me, walking up. He stood taller than me by about a foot. At my height, it was like a few inches to me at this point. The Asura frowned in disgust, “You smell like a Ruhl. You also remind me of an eldritch with that armor of yours. Is it enchanted to be alive or something?”

He poked me with a fingertip, hard enough to make me stumble back. He seethed, “Weak. And tainted. Why should I let this thing join us?”

Not having time for this, I raised a hand without looking up from my status, “You know what, don’t worry about it. I’m not joining anyone. Do whatever you want, guys. Don’t mind me.”

I stayed busy sending a variety of messages. Valgus let out a laugh before reaching out a hand and grabbing one of my shoulder spikes. He lifted me up, the ground around us cracking and fissuring. Valgus tilted his head at me, “I changed my mind. You’re interesting. Join me or fight me. I’ll let you choose.”

I blinked, kind of stunned by his response. I frowned, “You just said I was disgusting. Now you want me to join you?”

Valgus gave me a warm grin, “I’ve been wrong far more than I’ve been right. Eldritch or not, you carry a strange smell and aura. I wish to test it or have it on my side.”

I raised my brow, “Uh, any other options?”

“No. I told you what is acceptable. Speak only to answer what I’ve told you, nothing else, child.”

I shoved his hand off me, taking a step back, “You know what, I’m kind of busy organizing my guild right now. Do you mind chatting once we’re on Leviathan-7? We both have a lot to handle before we head out, and this is a waste of time.”

He bent down, mana filling into his tattoos. He scoffed, “Then you’ve chosen to fight.” He dashed forwards and struck my torso. His fist and arm bone snapped while I dragged several feet back. I narrowed my eyes at Valgus and stated,

“Alright, you made me an enemy.”

He dashed in with a regular punch. I parried it with one hand while reaching out the other. I grasped his neck, strengthening myself with a dozen gravity wells. The Asura’s skin sizzled at my touch, my mana causing heat to build in my arm until it sheened white. Mana kept siphoning in until the glow turned a deep blue in color.

I lifted Valgus off the rocky floor. Valgus smiled down at me, “You don’t like to fight? Hah. Lies.”

He raised his arms, his cipheric runes empowering with Baldowah’s strength. Valgus swung his fists down. My arm broke and cleaved apart, the metal rupturing while silver blood splattered onto the ground. My heated blood melted the stone beneath us, and both splintered remnants of my arms hemorrhaged.

He ignored the density of my body, kind of like Althea did. Unphased by him, I tilted my head, keeping Valgus off the ground. I scoffed,

“Is that how you’re going to stop me? Swinging your arms?”

Tearing my arms off stopped my physical hold, but my grip on gravity remained intact. Wires jerked into place, reconnecting my arms as quickly as he split them apart. I tightened my grip without missing a beat. Valgus growled out with joy, “Then once more.”

Like an unstoppable force, Valgus waved his limbs with empowered ascendant mana and his cipheric runes. Whatever method he used worked well. He cleaved through my dense body with ease. In reality, it did nothing, like a child attacking a puddle. I reformed quicker than he could kill me.

Even subtle attacks of his turned me to pieces, yet those parts of myself crawled back to my body as if alive. My blood lurched back onto me, and my hand kept tightening even as he splintered my arms a dozen times over. Viens expanded on Valgus's neck. Other rulers gawked as a moment turned into several, Valgus struggling while I held him up.

My helmet grinned at him while I stated, "You're strong, Valgus. Far stronger than I am."

He kept swinging in futility. I pulled him close and murmured, "But I am beyond strength...Remember that."

The Asura loaded himself with ascendant mana, his entire body hardening. The shackles over him tethered out with psionic augments, and my gravity wells weakened before dispersing. Valgus reared his arms back and snapped three fists against my stomach. I keeled over, the physical impacts like Lehesion's tail smacks.

Portions of Valgus's mana spiraled with such density that plumes of it erupted at his sides. Those crimson streams laughed and cackled with a palpable bloodthirst. Engorged with energy, he uppercut my chest, and an ear-shattering boom echoed with a shockwave in all directions. It destroyed the ruins, the cipheric incantations, and me. I erupted out my back, my insides turned outwards.

Several rulers flew off into the distance. Valgus ripped my hand off of his neck. A bit of blood leaked off his lip, and the Asura licked it up with his tongue. He shouted with joy, "I was right. You're just an eldritch. No wonder that Overseer saw you with such disdain. Eldritch or not, you're a good fight, and that is something I crave."

With a gravity well, I pulled my body back together in a flash. I frowned, "You still have normal blood, huh?"

I frowned at him. I raised a hand, summoning a gravity well over him. Valgus grinned at me with a manic look in his eye, his body unaffected. He shouted, "No magic will ever touch me again."

I frowned, “Is that the psionic tethers or something?”

Valgus pounded his chest before roaring, “It is Baldowah’s grace. It is over me, always and forever.”

I held him in place with gravity wells seconds ago but whatever. Not having time to fight it out, I melted the ground beneath him, Valgus’s feet sinking in. I lifted my hand, pluming the magma over him before turning it to rock. At the same time, I snapped my fingers and formed a singularity in front of him.

An explosion radiated into our surroundings, casting a thick, igneous cloud of ash over us. I melted the stone beneath me before sinking into it.

Once surrounded by rock, I melted the stone while shooting myself away. I kept myself in a magma bubble to silence the process, melting and solidifying stone as I passed through it.

Staying focused, I opened my status and went back to winning over my guildsmen. I’d handle this Valgus guy later when I had the time. Above, the ground quaked as Valgus blew up the rock above. I heard him through the stone and got a picture of him from his gravitational fluctuations. Valgus laughed before yelling, “You have powers I’ve never seen. Did you perhaps reincarnate? You smell of the Ruhl’s, so perhaps you were possessed by one? A lich of one, perhaps?”

Shalahora murmured, “You intend to fight your way to victory then...And like this?”

Valgus turned to Shalahora with a wild smile. Valgus spread his hands, “Of course. To fight is to live. We do so for Baldowah, the ruler of the cosmos.”

Shalahora dispersed while haunting out, “And his cosmos...He wishes for you to destroy it?”

Valgus swung where Shalahora was, “No. He wishes for its rejuvenation. He wants us to bring about change, and that change manifests in battle. In finality. In consequence. In outcome. Baldowah exists as a reason for our immortality granted by Schema.”

Shalahora ebbed from the ether, “This is no battle, however...We must bring Schema resources.”

Valgus scoffed, “And where there is a battle, there is plunder. But do as you wish.” Valgus stared where I was, “Both of you, wherever you’ve gone.”

Valgus turned around and walked back into his group of rulers. He wrapped his arms around the shoulders of several other rulers while laughing. Valgus wanted another fight on Leviathan-7 with both of us.

Great. Just great.

Even from that initial contact, it was hard to say who’d win since we both carried many powers, trump cards, and fallbacks. The only way to know who’d be victorious was a fight to the death or multiple deaths because of the luck perk revivals. Either way, I wouldn’t let him derail me anymore.

With only two minutes left, I got my guildsmen over to my side. I even avoided the survivalist’s attempts at recruiting me by staying in my rocky capsule. As for Iona’s economists, they sent over a few messages while offering quite a few furnaces, a fringe planet, and even a warping specialist for me to use after we got back.

They really wanted my help, but in the end, I rejected the offer. None of that mattered when compared to the real jewel of this lottery; the planet itself, Leviathan-7. The world rested in a patch of compressed time, and unlike an eldritch rift, this was a planet in our actual dimension. If we established a long-term settlement in this place, we would gain an immense advantage.

This was because Leviathan-7 carried the benefits of a dungeon but lacked the disadvantages. Sure, some rifts manifested weird time scales, but if someone snatched the dungeon core, the rift collapsed. I locked away one of Yawm’s followers doing just that. Losing a settlement to that was an enormous risk. Schema could put a dungeon somewhere else as well at random. That happened to BloodHollow.

Leviathan-7 lacked all these risk factors. Best of all, Schema wasn’t even on the planet. I could finish the research for Plazia there in relative peace. As the last seconds ticked down, everyone finished any last-minute casting. Breathable air, atmospheric pressures, even some antigravitational enchantments, they readied themselves for the ensuing

struggle while I readied myself for triumph. The countdown reached a few seconds, and a strange wave of nostalgia passed over me.

It reminded me of being locked into BloodHollow, where I barely survived and time again.

But I was a different person than then. I changed from the ground up and inside out. I wouldn't be sitting there, wallowing in a dark pit like before.

I was the Harbinger now, and it was time to prove it.

Initialization complete. Welcome to the New World: Leviathan-7

Chapter 333: Leviathan-7

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Panels of energy formed around me, reconstructing my reality. The world warped and changed, the air drying out and the ground hardening. Even when surrounded by rock, radiation bathed over me in its warm glow. Gravity intensified, turning several times more potent, and I burst out of my craggy coffin, peering around.

Above me, a sight of overwhelming majesty overwhelmed everything else. The black hole, Leviathan, took up nearly half of the sky. It siphoned in matter and stretched reality, like an eclipse in the sky rimmed with stretched gold. It dominated the scene and eliminated any doubt of where I was.

Even from this distance, Leviathan radiated out with an intense light, enough to fry most forms of life with ease. Gazing at my surroundings, nothing about the life here screamed average. Clouds of squirming, fleshy kelp floated in the sky, the air here dense as water. The plant strands floated with encapsulated sacks of gas, hovering well above the ground.

The giant glowing disc around Leviathan gave them enough light to live as flying creatures scooped up the plant matter. Quite a few animals used the gas bubble adaptation in the skies. Predators with large teeth and claws aimed at the giant, grazing herbivores. They dove down from above, seeking to pin the grazers to the ground. One of these flying manta rays fought against a cloud of drill-like predators. This herbivore lost, being covered in leech-like drills beasts.

It fell onto the ground, bringing my gaze with it. I raised my brow at the 'trees' on the planet. At their peaks, they used the same gas bubbles to hold themselves upright, along with sharpened spines for leaves. Approaching a patch of these spiny plants, a giant blob swung a single appendage at the gas bubble of the spined plants.

One by one, the 'trees' collapsed under gravity's might after having their sacks burst. Once on the ground, the upward-facing spines flattened. This blob rolled over the plant, peeling off the spines. After clearing it of needles, the blob absorbed the plant's core, leaving the dense wood behind.

I walked up, grabbing the leftover bark. It reminded me of oak, but it interspersed dozens more gnarled spots than average. I crushed it in my hand, finding some resistance. Metal threaded within its trunk. Looking at the dark, rocky ground, this place carried some life, but not as much as I expected.

I hovered myself up into the air, finding it denser than water. If not for my enhanced body, the atmosphere alone would've crushed me to a pulp. Peering around, no clouds dotted the sky, only the fleshy kelp. That clear horizon exposed rolling hills into the distance along with no nearby rulers. As I inspected several colossal craters from afar, one of the flying herbivores floated over.

It floated nearby, curious about what I was. I reached up a hand, finding its body smooth in one direction and rough in the other, kind of like sharkskin. It let out a few high-pitched calls, like a whale with a musical edge. Other flying herbivores came over, flowing around me and letting out a lot of calls.

I smiled as they created a hovering concert, these gentle creatures letting out strange, harmonic music. I let them do their thing for a few minutes before they dispersed back to their feeding grounds. As one herbivore hovered away, another group of predators floated over. They attacked the flying manta ray.

I killed the predators with a wave of Event Horizon. I owed the herbivores that much since they gave me a warm welcome to Leviathan-7. Over my head, A part of the accretion disc around Leviathan swelled and plumed, and it sent out a wave of radiation our way. Interrupting my thoughts, that flashing light clashed into the world.

The hovering clouds of kelp spread out into a vast web over the planet. They darkened the skies, turning day to night, and this vast web trembled. The rays from Leviathan blasted through the dense atmosphere, and in yet another expansive, majestic display of nature, an aurora borealis formed over the entire shaded skyline.

I gawked for several minutes, caught in the beautiful view. It was an otherworldly sight in every aspect.

And yet, it came with consequences. As the wave of radiation passed, the algae condensed into tiny points. Radiation glowed over them before massive creatures plopped out of the sky. These glowings beasts showed many forms, all of them huge and evolved for combat. They left remnants of kelp behind, new webs forming over the sky.

As the just-born beasts landed below, they left the entire planetside covered in scars. Craters formed from their landings, and they irradiated everything they touched or came near. The behemoths stood over fifty feet tall, each of them like walking skyscrapers. The monsters ran and sprinted towards one another, battling for dominance over the surface.

From the ground, other behemoths from the past resurfaced. They joined this wave of combat. As they swung, gnawed, and tore at each other, they destroyed portions of the landscape. Mountains leveled. Canyons formed. Blood vaporized, and air plumed outward.

While Schema didn't tell me, those titans were eldritch and robust ones to boot. Below me, two nearby ones came into focus. A giant, trembling mass of plates fought against a four-legged, armored centaur. They both covered themselves in thick hides, glowing skin oozing from between the gaps in their covers. As they ripped and gored each other

apart, splashes of their glowing blood oozed onto the ground. More minor, weaker eldritch came out of hiding and lapped up these pools of blood. Even from a distance, those eldritch evolved at a rapid pace.

They fought one another, the entire landscape devolving into an absolute bloodbath. That's why the normal creatures here survived. They weren't even worth eating when the eldritch contained so much energy. One of those behemoths flew over towards me, able to glide on the dense winds of this world. Four wings spread over its back, bright red patches of skin covering the green glow beneath. It opened a serrated beak, four clawed appendages below spreading out to grab me.

As it got near, I waved an arm in a circle. Testing my new strength, I reared a fist back before snapping a blow into the creature's center. Using telekinesis, I concentrated my fist's impact. I empowered my punch with gravity wells and grounded myself with the same magic. I pulled the creature to me, and I even used a couple furnaces to help me out.

The results boomed across the entire region.

A kinetic bomb exploded inside the raging behemoth, detonating outwards in a spiral. The force alone vaporized the beast into a fine mist. The kinetic bullet raced past it, drilling further into the distance. It diverted or destroyed patches of eldritch algae, creating a patch in the sky. As I marveled at it, the behemoths below did as well.

I rubbed my hands together, Event Horizon's eerie, crimson aura encapsulating me. I propelled myself towards the nearest behemoths, the both of them sheening with latent energy. I tackled into the writhing ball of limbs, and I grabbed them both. Event Horizon assaulted their minds while I channeled ascendant mana within my body.

A monstrous hunger came over me, so I threw one monster into the air. I waved an arm, creating a thin, antigravitational slice as I did. This blade pulled the beast apart, cleaving it in two before I waved my arm several times. More antigravitational blades cleaved it into pieces before my armor shot out bladed plumes.

Like metal ferns, my armor shot into the massacred behemoth chunks. Blood rained over me as I skewered the meat, and the blood evaporated on my glowing skin. I pulled the meat chunks to me, the flesh sizzling. I turned to the other behemoth in my grasp, the beast twice my size yet small in my eyes. It jerked itself away from me, tearing its body away from my grip.

I pulled it to me with gravity, and my armor cleaved it into mush. It growled out in raging agony, and it cooked against my glowing skin. The monster's bones fed my growth, and the beast's body melted into mana. As both the eldritch died, my eyes found other targets in the distance. Giving way to the ascendant flow, I shot towards the creatures while laughing.

A cloud of red and orange miasma fought against an island tortoise and a thin creature made of floating metal pieces. They gnawed at each other, each of them trying to kill the other by eating it alive. I shot through the miasma, Event Horizon disintegrating it as I passed by. I redirected my charge in a sudden jolt, throwing myself against the island turtle's colossal, shelled back.

I smashed through a shell hard as graphene by shoving my feet down. My legs broke against it, but they healed in an instant. I erupted a swarm of armored blades from every part of my body, blending the turtle from the inside. It hollowed out while howling at the other metal behemoth. The faceless collection of metal pieces tilted its head at the turtle's dying face.

My hand shot out of the turtle's throat, pulling the metal behemoth into the blender. I pulled it apart, its body softer than my own. My helmet bit into the metal, savoring the odd flavor before I collapsed the empty shell with gravity. After assimilating that piece, I turned to another group of battling monsters.

I threw my body through a mountain, pluming the monsters in a cloud of dust. Sparks and crimson lightning erupted from within the cloud, the sounds of battle coursing across the hills and horizon. Minutes later, I pulled myself out of the cloud, holding an eyestalk in my helmet's mouth and a leg in my hand.

I found more prey. I darted down underneath the irradiated soil, finding colossal world worms coursing in the ground. One swallowed me, its entire insides full of mana-infused, poisonous teeth. The bladed edges snapped against my skin, and I sent out armored spikes that slit the creature as it passed by.

The sliced remnants regenerated in seconds, drawing in radiation from the nearby ground. I lifted a hand and created an enormous gravity well, my body radiating out with a deep blue color. The eldritch lifted out of the land, forming a canyon beneath us before I pulled it apart. The squirming beast let out blood dry as sand before howling out in a psionic wave.

The noise passed me in a harmless drizzle before I smashed its two writhing halves together. Immense as a mountain, it growled out while crushing under the gravity well's might. Once condensed, I snapped my fingers. A singularity fed on the creature before detonating it from the inside.

It fell in a hollow sphere, forming an eclipse of sand over Leviathan-7's surface.

I spent the next few hours killing massive eldritch. These things rivaled stronger Hybrids, being enormous creatures imbued with lots of energy. The sheer number of mutations defied convention, many of the beasts holding strange powers. One of them even warped around, being difficult to pin down. I would've tried taming the damn thing, but it died in Event Horizon's aura.

Either way, I established a radius absolved of the world-ending horrors. I took a deep breath before nestling myself on top of a mountainside, finding a fantastic view of the landscape. Craters littered its surface, not really from meteorites but from eldritch spawn. They allowed mountains to form under this kind of gravity.

I set myself down from the center of a mountain formed around these craters. Giant slabs of rock bellowed out together, the eruptive clashes nearby forcing the rock higher up. Sitting there, I shifted my mana into a primordial state. The bloodlust of ascendant energy faded, and the precision and perfectionism of primordial mana engulfed me. I let out a long sigh and pinched the brow of my nose.

This simply wouldn't work.

Establishing control of this planet required strategy and finesse. I stared upwards, trying to find some map of the stars using my enhanced vision. Leviathan covered most of the sky, being bright and dark at the same time. The black hole's accretion disc ebbed out underneath the world, casting light from above and below.

The black hole covered three-quarters of the planet's surface, wrapping around it. This planet had no night and likely never would. I tapped my fingers before rolling my eyes. The best place to establish a base would be the worst place to live on this planet. The more devilish and destructive, the better.

To discover my relative location, I pulled myself into the world's upper atmosphere. My golems and I would survive the conditions no matter what, and it gave me plenty of ramp-up time before anyone investigated nearby. Giving myself this enormous momentum ensured other rulers couldn't stop me before I finished my goals here.

The air thinned before the recesses of space came in. The stars hid in a dark veil, Leviathan's glow too bright for them to be seen. Even this distance from the planet, gravitational tides ebbed in from the black hole.

I hovered myself higher, every kilometer up creating drastic differences in how gravity felt. At some point, the tide of the black hole grabbed me over the planet's own pull. I peered into the abyss, wondering what it would be like to just jump into the dark sphere. I reached out a hand before jerking it back.

A strange sensation made me do that, and it reminded me of staring at a cliff and getting the urge to jump. The oddness passed before I turned back to Leviathan-7. Only a subtle curve of the planet showed itself in the distance. I pulled myself up a bit further, having to fight the gravitational tides at this point.

Fearing the fluxes, I pulled myself back to the safety of the world, the black hole scaring me off. It stunned me how gravitational tides shifted so rapidly out here but stabilized near the actual planet. From that ascent alone, I learned this planet rested on a precise, carefully managed orbit. Even just a few kilometers in either direction would result in it being flung off into space or consumed by the abyss.

Warping was the only way out of this place, and since we didn't know the black hole's location, we were trapped. It was as I suspected – Schema imprisoned us here.

As I reentered the atmosphere, I blazed through the dense air and creeping kelp clouds. It tried infesting and gripping under my skin but ended up eaten itself. Once back on the planet's surface, I traversed over the battlefields towards the far South. The black hole surrounding Leviathan-7 showed permanent light from three different angles on its surface. I aimed for the angle with the most exposure.

While I zipped over the radioactive surface, I cooled myself. This prevented me from beaming myself out in all directions and letting far-off rulers find me. I also changed my body's shape to a much thinner, smooth line. The aerodynamic shape let me slice through the wind without making a big fuss as I did.

As I passed, I got a better vantage point of the environments of Leviathan-7. Most portions of the world carried sparse plantlife with dense clusters of eldritch. The pressure vastly exceeded Earth's, and the temperature varied depending on how much the black hole acted up. However, the temperature would've boiled blood at least.

Well, if not for the floating kelp strands in the distance. They contained most of those extraterrestrial forces, converting them into eldritch. While they smothered the planet in bloodthirsty beasts, they enabled life as well. Everything would roast under Leviathan's gaze otherwise.

As I sped past the environments, they flashed in my vision one after the other. Deserts, jungles, forests, plains, and other terrestrial locations covered most of the planet. Everything outside of oceans or lakes. Other oddities stuck out as well. In that regard, I found this planet mirrored Giess in a lot of ways.

Both planets ended up being dominated by the life forms on their surface.

However, the silvers fed on mana pollution. Here, eldritch reigned by ingesting radiation. This gave everything an ambient, gentle glow at all times as the creatures feasted on the plentiful energy source. At certain spots, these radiation sinks formed where the energy piled up into pits.

In those tunnels, dark monsters reigned and roared beneath the ground. They were the dungeons Schema talked about. I always wondered what the eldritch looked like on a planet without Schema, and this answered my question with clarity; the eldritch dominated everything. The everyday life here existed as poor feeding packs for the monsters, a stroke of luck for life here.

If they presented better meals, the eldritch would've eaten the life here to extinction long ago. They hadn't, making this a rich land smothered with cancerous creatures. It left me solemn, finding so many typical life forms trembling under the radiation that fed the eldritch. The regular life here persevered with silent suffering, their hunched backs and deformed limbs telling their story for them.

It left me saddened.

As I entered the far South, the planet's environments ramped up in intensity. The deserts held radioactive grains like tiny bits of colored glass in their red dunes. These colored bits condensed into giant, crystalline clusters between dunes. Curious about

them, I landed and tested one of them out. They mirrored the bones of the behemoths spread across Leviathan-7's surface.

I took a few of these clusters with me before moving further on. The forests here let out a permanent glow at all times, becoming irradiated pits. Every creature cranked up its mobility, speed, and power. Trees grew miles high, overcoming the limits of gravity and presenting strange colors. Some plants even grew condensed radiation fruit.

I took a few pieces, trying them out. They tasted like fruity blood and sweetened meat. Grotesque at first, the flavors grew on me after a while, though I preferred an apple or banana if I had a choice. Also, the fruits warmed my skin and stomach when I swallowed them. It was like ingesting a campfire. If I had to guess, the radiation was the cause.

Covering thousands of miles in less than hours, the glow of the black hole increased in intensity as I got further South. It evolved into a blinding blaze in the sky. Overbearing, oppressive, and permanent, it radiated out with a vast accretion disc in the sky. The kelp kept growing in density above until it formed a canopy that contained most of the light leaking in.

A forest formed beneath this cover, the fleshy kelp letting some ambient rays peak through. Those streaks of blinding brightness leaked between these vast shaded areas. This created a multilayered ecosystem. Above, the algae converted radiation into eldritch monsters. Behemoths fell down from the algae at random intervals, fighting in a forest below the algae.

This irradiated battlefield grew at an unreal pace, life-expanding in real-time. The Behemoths wrestled and fought over the growing life, keeping it trimmed. On the surface, the monsters displayed a feast of primordial forces. So much movement, vitality, and chaos, it almost overwhelmed my senses.

I killed quite a few behemoths as I passed, no longer worried about a ruler finding me. This landscape seethed at some absurd temperature. Every square inch of the ground and much of the air smothered in eldritch and dangerous spores. No one in their right mind would want to live in this hellish place.

You know, besides for me.

Crossing to the deepest part of this jungle, I found the harshest part of this planet. This southernmost portion of Leviathan-7 pointed directly at the accretion disc's origin – the brightest chunk of the black hole. This planet seemed tidally locked that way, the black hole remaining a constant in the sky.

No oceans pooled here. They'd evaporate. The water locked into the endless, abundant, and flourishing life here. Above me, multiple layers of the algae forest formed into a four-tiered hell cake. Each section of depth resulted in more energy and carnage. This made Giess look like a peaceful land, and Earth might as well have been dead by comparison.

Thousands of behemoths raged in all directions. Patches of the algae forest exploded and regenerated at all moments. If several of those patches lined up, rays from the black hole stung down like laser beams. The sheer radiation melted the stone at the deepest section, leaving cooling pits of magma interspersed far from each other.

It was...A lot to wrap my head around. The ground at the deepest part acted like a graveyard, the behemoth's broken bones piling up. In a glorious display of beauty, these multicolored shards created rolling, opalescent hills. They piled up like mountains made of prismatic opals, and in this apex of the eldritch, their final forms took root.

But instead of turning into Spatial Fortresses, they condensed into god-like creatures.

They incarnated as different elemental forms. Some radiated like stars, shining into the distance. Others raged as blizzards of ice, no longer corporeal. Featureless, shifting storms of metal feasted on the multicolored bones below. All of these titans did. One of them could've conquered Earth.

But they were in for a rude awakening.

My many elemental furnaces fueled into action, and many of my minds took on different roles for combat. I set up a line of targets, preparing a battle plan. I shifted back to Event Horizon, and I readied several minds for a psionic battle as well. Once my body saturated with mana, a plasma of energy formed around me, melting anything nearby. It was time.

I stared at these horrific monsters, and I pounded my chest to get their attention. They peered at me, and I peered at them. A silence passed over us where I mused where to put the start of my colony.

And so, the roaring began.

Chapter 334: Chaos Incarnate

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I roared with them.

A blizzard elemental coalesced into a void ice figurine. Alien and deadly, the monster sliced towards me at unrealistic speeds. Several sonic booms exploded on its path towards me, and its ice blade stabbed through my stomach. Without hesitation, the beast gouged out my eyes before slicing through my torso.

My molten blood pooled over the creature, a gravity well siphoning the superheated material onto the beast. It sizzled while we battled back and forth. My blows erupted kinetic plumes out of its back, the invisible force seen by its impact on our surroundings. The ice creature's density and hardness exceeded my own, its composition an anomaly.

The opalescent fragments below shot out like tiny bullets as our strikes ushered out booming echoes. The monster regenerated with utter vitality, the energy within the creature pulsing out in waves. It fell into a rhythm, empowering with radiation and the bone pit below.

I slammed a blow into its stomach, cracks tracing its entire body. It siphoned energy from the bone pit, healing instantly, and it even stole more power from the ground, speeding its slices to an absurd pace. One sliced through my cheeks, another through my thigh. Opening my regenerated eyes wide, my augmented senses comprehended the quick cuts after experiencing a few of them.

I parried each of its swings which left elegant ice trails in their paths. I deflected each swing with subtle movements, wasting no motion or time. I used my pocket dimension to contain icy blasts and to redirect them. I incorporated singularities at moments of vulnerability. I used the vast armada of tools I amassed since becoming a fighter.

And it matched me.

It pulled more energy from the graveyard below. It sped faster, comprehending the madness of our fight with instinctive ease. It was born for this pace, and I wasn't. I never fought anything this fast, strong, or fierce. Catching me off guard, this single eldritch pushed me back as we tore each other apart.

I redoubled my efforts, directing more mana into the confrontation with each passing second. It did the same. The spread of our battle sheared portions of the kelp layers above. The weaker behemoths above disintegrated from the kinetic waves blooming off our attacks. We splashed onto our surroundings, each of us leaving a slaughterhouse in our wake.

As time passed, the battle dragged on. This eldritch never tired. It never relented. It persevered with unwavering tenacity, the will of its mind like a raging tempest. I felt no fear. I smiled at the push and pull of battle, the deadly dance consuming me. I honed in on the fight with an absolute focus.

Wielding my ascendant aura, I appreciated a fine battle, one I hadn't had in ages. Falling into the experience, I eliminated everything else in my mind, the primordial rune calming its endless hunger. With all of my psyches redirected to this creature, we gained the upper hand.

I swung out a mana empowered strike, landing a kinetic bullet into the creature. Cracks ebbed out from the impact, but it regenerated in a second. It sliced through my torso, the cut too clean for its own good. I restored before I fell apart. Thinking on the spot, I turned the kinetic bullets I used into long lines.

This turned my blunt punches into long swords. The damage of my attacks multiplied. I landed a strike across one of its arm segments. The fragment crumbled into many pieces, joining the blizzard around us. Those crumbled fragments coalesced into an icy liquid, splashing towards me, and I raised my dimensional shield.

The pocket dimension captured the attack before I swiped it towards the eldritch. A section of its body cleaved into the portal, the warp's edge leaving a smooth slice in its wake. I turned on the balls of my feet with a whipping hook, and the creature dodged my strike. I put its captured fragment in the way of my punch, a crash and icy mist smothering us.

It howled out with an unearthly cry, higher-pitched than humans should hear. It spun in a circular typhoon of attacks. I parried and deflected each spiral slice, firing gut-wrenching punches into its body. As I did, my armor created zoning blades, keeping the icy fragments in the way of my attacks.

It rallied to recover, flowed through the air by turning incorporeal. I condensed Event Horizon over the monster, the floating mass vulnerable to the aura. I bent down before leaping towards its escape, and the eldritch condensed into a finite point. The sphere sharpened to a needle, and it fired through me.

Darting in and out of my body, it sliced me apart. The shifts in its speeds erupted out sonic booms in a dizzying display of velocity and acceleration. Taking a hint, I condensed my own body to the utmost extent. It pierced me still but with far less ease. It kept ripping me apart before I predicted its path. Elongating my body, I created a long section of my armor for it to pierce through.

It sunk in, reaching two third's through me. I returned to my usual form and roared forty furnaces into action all at once. My blood and bones converted to heat, mana coursing through me until I melted. The channeling mana compounded this heating effect until I smothered both of us.

Furthering the reaction, I compressed us within a tight gravity well, the mana pooling into an extreme force. It weighed me down, my body tightening into a ball. Nearby air heated to plasma, each of us turning into a glowing slush. The ascendant mana coursed to the point of absurd volatility, yet the crimson lightning no longer streaked outward.

The plasma around me captured it, turning us into some ionized mass. Minutes of boiling us alive turned into hours before the icy monster finally died with a fierce cry. I

returned to my average body, falling down onto the shards below. I gasped, the sheer brutality of the fight giving me flashbacks.

As I stared at the iridescent sheen of the bones beneath me, I felt something in my chest. I pulled three spheres out, finding three blue cores in my palm. I gawked at them, overwhelmed that three stored inside the eldritch monstrosity. Even stranger, these dungeon hearts carried an energized volatility that Schema's cores lacked.

Putting myself back in the moment, I pocketed them into my dimension before turning around. We left the entire underside jungle in shambles. The glowing bones melted into a crystalizing pit below and above, the kelp forest regenerated several layers where we blew holes in the canopy. The other primeval eldritch fought in the distance, giving me space to become the victor.

As I stood, another shining monster came by. This glowing, red star spread its arms wide. It gazed through me with one menacing eye, tinted a blazing orange. It condensed a beam of light at me. I reached out a hand and squeezed a dozen singularities in its chest. It snapped apart, vaporizing into a fine mist.

The misty remains flowed down into the piles of glowing bones. Its form reconstituted instantly, and I closed my eyes in frustration. In the distance, a dozen of these monsters fought in my field of vision alone. Clearing this place out of these monsters might take years at this rate, let alone three months.

I let out a sigh, having underestimated this place. Instead of brute-forcing my way through, I took a second to think as the shining star condensed energy. Peering around, the bones radiated out with intense flows of energy. I leaned down and put my palm on them, sensing what coursed within.

My eyes widened as I leaned back. I gawked at my surroundings, the hills whispering and speaking out with untamed cries. Every piece of shining bones was alive. They molded into an ancient, unspeakable behemoth of a creature. A monster that covered this entire side of the planet. The eldritch above fought and died, feeding it their broken bodies.

It rested as a sleeping giant, being a looming threat in the far future. But it also presented an opportunity. I formed a telepathic connection with it, but its mind dwarfed my own. Racing to find a weakness, I found gaps in its defenses. It carried millions of different thoughts, no unity present within the beast.

Shifting to primordial mana, I conquered a tiny patch of bones nearby. After taking over the patch, the star beast beamed an incinerating ray at me. Changing to Quintessence, I raised a dimensional shield. For miles behind me, the ground vaporized. I remained, having caught the energies in my dimensional barrier.

After it passed, I reached out a hand and formed singularities in its chest. It pulsed away, and I turned my hand to keep a line of sight on the creature. It beamed across the air, turning into a flashing light as it did. It shot around me at all angles, the beams flashing in all directions. It overwhelmed me and burned my skin.

Out of frustration, I growled while spreading my hands. A flash of mana coursed through me and generated a hundred singularities nearby. A tidal wave of dark blots spread out in every direction, siphoning in everything nearby. The shining stain dashed into one of the singularities, catching it off guard for a moment.

I clapped my hands at it, turning its body into gravitational implosion fuel once more. The remaining mist shot back into the bones below. Wielding a dozen minds, I shifted to my primordial state. I fought over this portion of opalescent shards, stopping the star from siphoning more energy. Captured in the bones, it wrestled to escape. Dashing forward, I generated another plethora of singularities over its escape route. The mist still survived, devolving from a dense fog to an airy ether.

A wave of Event Horizon condensed over the creature. I roared at it,

“Give in.”

It obeyed, staying there and dying in the aura. As it passed, I took a few deep breaths. As I did, four vibrant blue cores dropped out of it. Another primeval eldritch bolted towards them, and I raced the beast. A hair's breadth faster, I scooped the blue pearls up. Continuing my scooping swing, I whipped my dimensional shield over incoming eldritch.

The monster fell into my pocket dimension, the momentum sending me slamming back into the shining bones. Laid out on a pile of shards, I gazed at the ever-changing kelp sky, taking a deep breath. Circumstances changed fast on Leviathan, that much was sure.

Pulling myself back upright, I sensed the beast within my dimension. Under my complete control, the gravitational beast acted as a living shadow. Unlike Hod or Shalahora, this monster wielded gravitation. It bent time and light, neither present in my pocket dimension.

The beast couldn't have asked for a poorer matchup. While in stasis, I siphoned antigravity over the creature. Unable to regenerate or defend itself, it died over a few minutes of channeling. Four more blue cores remained from its corpse.

Having a moment to think, I peered around. At this point, I cleared out a small area of the primeval eldritch. Not needing to fight every split second, I lost track of time while fighting, but based on my estimations, it took about two days to kill these eldritch. The ice one bogged me down, and I couldn't afford to take these threats on so slowly.

I blinked before staring up. The young behemoths fought on the higher slices of this ecosystem, and their deaths fueled the more advanced eldritch below. If I cut off that endless stream of monsters at the source, I'd eliminate these beasts below. After that, I could expand and have a set amount spawn for blue core generation.

Making that happen was the problem. These abyssal eldritch could quickly kill my golems, but the behemoths above couldn't. Probably. Thinking of adjustments, I peered around at the ripping patches of kelp. These young behemoths spawned all the time and all over the place. It was an infinite loop in that regard, and fighting them was a waste of time for me.

Changing into my primordial aura, my thoughts cleared. I tapped the side of my leg, coming up with a different idea. I pulled out my grimoire while taking over this chunk of living rainbow bone beneath me. After playing a game of mental tug of war, I pulled a shining capsule over me.

In this pit, I pulled out my dimensional fabric and got to work. I looked over our team's runic configurations and algorithms, and I gave nods of appreciation. These were impressive works...Despite all the flaws, imperfections, and general messiness. Considering our experience levels and the time constraints, I couldn't fault us.

But there was much to do and little time to do it.

I snapped my fingers, thinking of improvements on the fly. Not having days to spend on this project, I constructed several improvised adjustments. It took about two hours to

iron out some translation issues before getting the adjustments finalized. I pulled out my grimoire and stared at the new, much better cipheric engravings.

And I winced at them. Gah, ugly.

I didn't have time for incessant perfectionism, and a set of pounding impacts above reminded me of that fact. Each impact cracked the rainbow bones, but I kept pulling more of the stuff to repair it. At the same time, I let out a sigh, containing the urge to shred my new runes before I began constructing golems.

Other minds helped me execute and push past this relentless perfectionism. I ended up finishing thirty of these new golems as the ancient mind stirred from my interference. It wrestled for control of the rainbow bones, limiting my time even more.

I turned to each of my new golems, the improvements paling in comparison to my new rune. Still, these golems carried several adjustments for Leviathan-7. They worked in teams of three, each of them isolating and destroying behemoths one at a time at the kelp forest's uppermost section.

These golems also carried ascendant cores. The mana gave them hunger and the ability to assimilate eldritch energy like I did. The conversion could use a lot of work, but I tolerated it for now. Getting control of the situation took priority. Rubbing my temples, I said over the pounding impacts above,

"Now, each of you will need to go up to the uppermost layer and stop the spawns. Safety is the absolute, highest priority. Do not, and I repeat, do not go down to these lower levels. You'll die a useless death if you do."

Changing to Event Horizon, I stared at them with piercing eyes, "Understood?"

They shivered before giving me nods. I peered at them in silence before waving my arms, "Now let's move. We have ground to cover."

They spurred into the action as one of the empowered eldritch left a blooming flower of cracks on the bony plates above. Turning primordial, I raised my brow, trying to get the rainbow bones to attack the eldritch. The ridiculous shards refused me, but I expected as much. I rolled my eyes before changing back into my ascendant form.

I shot towards the pounding sound. I cut my way through the rainbow bone with my shield overhead. I timed it with one of the monster's collisions, capturing the beast within my dimension. The electrical spirit cackled and hissed from where it released a thunderstorm above.

Trapped and in stasis, I tried killing it by smothered the electrical entity with dirt. It left no impact on the aberration. Howling out over the rolling hills, three different primeval eldritch shot towards me and my golems from a distance. They aimed to destroy my golems, something I couldn't allow.

My minds racing for a solution, I came up with a game plan. I psionically synced with the other golems, and we launched up, heading towards the upper layers of the kelp forest. We darted through the algae strands, finding weaker behemoths on the second tier of the planet's ecosystem slices.

Three uber eldritch followed behind us, each of their compositions different but deadly. A ball of living vibrations disintegrated matter as it passed through objects, and another eldritch coursed through the air as liquid light like some higher being. The last one moved as minerals, having made its body out of the rainbow bones.

They homed in, and I acted as a shield for my golems. My forces escaped to the upper echelons of this place. Taking a breath, I closed my eyes as the eldritch closed in. I opened my eyes with a growl as the creature of vibration cycloned into a spiral. It erupted out with a twisting, kinetic storm that blurred our dimension.

It disintegrated three behemoths beside me, but I hid behind my dimensional shield. The monster of light shot past me, piercing through my body from the side. It left its glow within me, and it spread out like glowing poison. A cleansing fire erupted over me, yellow flames popping out over my skin.

The mineral monster came up and turned its arm into a hammer. Slicing with speed, it slammed me down into the shards below. Being made of rainbow bones, the ground only crushed several feet, and my body pulped against it. From my destroyed state, I stood up. As I arose, my body healed in tandem.

It was as if a living Daniel stood out of a dead one.

The three primevals used a combination attack. The ball of vibrations coursed onto the mineral being's hammer arm. It lifted its hammer while slamming it down to me. The light monster formed an eclipse over the hammer arm, creating a wall of light around me. This created a small tunnel.

Testing its rigidity, I smashed a fist into the wall of light. It held firm, sparking lights erupting from my fist's collision. I turned around, peering up. Panic ignited in my chest as the mineral beast shot down hundreds of feet to me. A plan sparked in my mind, and I followed it.

I swung my shield up to absorb the combination attack. The hammer fell in, a large portion of the vibration beast sinking into the abyss. I followed my dimensional shield's path with my other fist, empowering it with condensed strands of armor. I crushed my hand into the mineral monster's face, smashing it apart.

Its head crumbled, and the punching hand after it impaled the mineral monster's face. In an instant, I generated several singularities over the liquid light. Its body splintered, my attack absolute. At the same time, the mineral crashed down beside me, a kinetic bomb erupting in the tiny, enclosed tunnel of light.

Multiple minds worked in sync, letting me leap up in time to point my dimensional shield downward with my other arm. I pulled the captured electric beast out from earlier. It blocked the majority of the ensuing explosion, lobbing me upwards towards the liquid light. Passing to it in a wicked rush, I smothered the light monster with Event Horizon.

It fled up the chute of energy it created. This lined the creature up, and I lifted my dimensional shield again. I released the captured laser beams from earlier in a burst, decimating the creature of light. The blowback propelled me back down towards the other primevals below me.

I turned myself into a thin line while speeding my descent with all the gravity I could muster. I passed its initial kinetic wave with ease, strengthening my gravity wells with each passing second.

A second before I landed on the vibration and mineral eldritch, I turned myself into a flattened ball. An enormous explosion erupted, contained within the light tunnel. It pipelined the energy into an incinerating, destructive eruption that shot far above the

atmosphere and into space. My gravity well pulled in objects far in the distance, the air and atmosphere falling towards the pillar of light.

Cracks formed over the glowing tunnel before it shattered. The energy radiated outward in every direction, destroying dozens of behemoths degenerating. The kelp seas above parted, exposing Leviathan and its perpetual glow. A gash in the rainbow bones formed below, and the monsters from afar squealed in agony.

No fragment of the monsters remained. No limbs, blood, nor breathe. Only the blue cores hummed beside me, my senses fuzzy and strange. Everything unveiled around me as gravitation or mana, no physical feelings rushing in. Turning my awareness inward, I found no physical body. I existed as my dimensional wake alone, having disintegrated into nothing.

And from nothing, I returned.

My body reconstituted, phasing into existence. I stood among the liquid pit of dead behemoths and primevals. I soaked them in while turning in every direction. Nothing nearby dashed in, so I pocketed seventeen more blue cores. Other monsters in the distance stared at me. From their gazes, fear replaced hunger as their perspective changed.

My fight left a scar over this slice of their ecosystem. It tore entire miles of plant life to nothing, leaving me in an empty patch of cleared kelp. Above, Leviathan beamed down with its radiance. In its glow, I spread my arms and boomed for all to hear.

“I’m the Harbinger of Cataclysm.”

Mana crystallized around me, siphoning into a chaotic storm of violence and energy and power. I seethed,

“This is where I’ll prove it.”

Chapter 335: The Primevals’ Powers

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“This is where I’ll prove it.”

My supergolems dashed overhead, each of them vaporizing patches of the algae. Behemoths crashed against them, the giant monsters charging into my supergolems. Each crash added a cacophony of booming echoes while teeth, claws, and bone slammed into runes, metal, and mana. As clouds cleared, my golems showed their worth by purging the behemoths above.

With a patch of the algae-laden sky opened, I let out a warcry. My large body and metal makeup turned my human howl into a metallic roar, one that stretched out for miles. The primeval eldritch stormed over, and they gouged the dirt and our surroundings to attack. I funneled mana through every inch of my body, energy crystals delineating and filling out over me.

They surged with flashes of light before crumbling into powder. The powder charged further, melting to plasmic streams. A miasma of energy floated off of me, responsive to my will like an energetic expansion of my mind. Amassing a large pool of this dense

plasma, I reached out my hands and rained singularities in all directions. Incoming primevals vaporized.

From my hands, frenetic explosions expanded. Light and darkness filled the skyline. Surging echoes rained. Dollops of darkness consumed patches of my vision, chaos surrounding me. It all drained into the siphoning quiet. My blood and bones ignited as colossal flows of mana flooded through my body.

The runic marks sizzled and hummed as the sheer volume of energy overwhelmed all in my sight. Whether it was living or dead, it didn't matter. It all fell, the primevals included. They crushed and pulped. They perished in a symphony of darkness and light, and my horizons shattered into fragmented, white ignition points.

It culminated in a kinetic harmony, a sonic wave that vaporized my surroundings. Dozens of massive craters formed in the rainbow bone field below. It was like an angry god scooped out the earth in a fit of rage. Awash in bloodthirst, the primevals darted and rushed around the leftover, hissing destruction.

They flowed over with elemental shockwaves ushering off their bodies. Embodying dozens of elements, they equaled my physical strength but not the will of my mind. Wielding my advantages, I lunged to a knee and primordialized myself. In silent pulse, I sent out a psionic ripple through the unguided mass of opal bones beneath me.

The enormous, ancient consciousness roared out in anger. The fields of shining bones gained life, melding into a fluid mass that writhed and billowed like a shining sea. I peered up as the first primeval arrived. IT was a monster of mana, its plasma engulfing my body.

Pure energy converted matter to a vacuum. Another beast rushed forth. A root mass crawled through my flesh and bones, trying to sap me of life. It planted seeds in my body before a void ice monstrosity froze us both. Encased in the hardened mass, a sonic monster hummed into the capsule and shattered me into tiny fragments. I clattered onto the bones as they gouged each other for my remains.

The butchery continued. The primeval eldritch smothered me from all angles, and I stayed in the mass of enraged bones. Energy amassed below us all, the iridescent remains enraged. This ancient monster pooled planets worth of raw power, the bones shimmering. Above the ticking time bomb, my body disintegrated from a dozen different angles, everything in my sight becoming teeth, stomach, acid, and drool.

I turned into a rippling ocean, my entire being a wave amongst primal forces. Ripped. Torn. Rived. Pulled into pieces and chewed on. Bitten and swallowed. My whole being fueled the hunger of many, my body's energy turning into a culinary delight to the monsters swarming me. They engulfed me in a fury that overwhelmed my senses from all angles.

And yet, I came no closer to death. They feasted on an immortal.

The bone below supercharged into liquid light. I warned my supergolems to hide within their enemies as protection. Below me, the rainbow bones snapped out. A layer of spines wrenched into the primordials like roots from a tree, piercing those below. Those iridescent spines hummed with reality-warping violence. Just before the abyssal below detonated, I recollected my body and thinned it down to the size of a needle.

Flowing out and around the elemental constructs, I rushed above the horde. After a few seconds, an engulfing, absolute, and destructive plume of energy expanded. Radiation erupted, and a gamma burst fired off from the bones. As it passed, it decimated everything it touched. Once more, I hid behind my dimensional shield. Blocking a direct hit, the side burst still made contact.

It wrapped around me, an invisible wave that expunged all life. It stripped and bubbled my skin before scorching my bones. The raw radiation heated every shard of metal that made me. It disintegrated my exposed innards. It cooked my body. My golems fried within opposing behemoths, but those giant flesh shells absorbed most of the radiation.

As the burst of energy passed overhead, Leviathan's radiance beamed down above me. With my surroundings quiet, I pulled my shield down and admired the destruction below. A dozen ancient eldritch died, glittering blue cores sizzling above the opal ossuary. Those orbs cackled and hummed over the eerie silence.

As did three primevals, three different star variants of the primevals remaining. They soaked in the lingering radiation to restore their bodies, becoming whole once more. Before they restored to full force, I reached out with my arms, ripping more singularities through the eldritch masses. They dispersed and refocused on regeneration, giving me valuable time. Slicing through the air, I bolted from blue core to blue core, scooping up dozens in the blink of an eye. I tossed them into my personal dimension like a greedy child pocketing their favorite candy. While I flicked the last core into storage, a star eldritch rejuvenated.

Its form billowed rays of light, each wave like solar flares scattering into the distance. Those light flows expanded over the sky, particles erupting in different colors of light. Aiming itself at me, the primeval fired towards me in a violent, ripping dash. I reacted to it after it happened, the monster faster than my eyes could see.

I stared down, a glowing hole remaining in my chest. The creature whirled around and pulsed through me once more, another gaping chasm forming in my body. It turned into an explosion of light, each pass leaving glowing singe marks through me. Like gleaming swiss cheese, the star eldritch left me impaled from all sides.

I stood, a glowing titan, as shockwaves erupted from each impact. Each collision colored the same shade as the primeval. The red hues molded with the sparked remnants, turning into a fireworks display. The other primevals joined, and the destruction multiplied. Orange and yellow hues culminated with the red, and a vibrant sunset of sparks erupted from me each passing second.

Unperturbed by the onslaught, my body regenerated with absurd vitality, each second containing a millennium's worth of healing. I observed the intensity of the light swarms enveloping me when my eyes allowed it. My death would've been beautiful, at least. As I tried swinging my arms, the primevals ignored my physical attacks. I let out a mental sigh, wondering why I even attempted such a simple solution to such a complex problem.

After all, these monstrosities were more than a handful. I took a second to think and shifted back to the Rise of Eden. Wielding quintessence, I generated a liquid coating of shining, polished metal over myself, and I hoped to reflect the monsters. The lustrous layer left no impact on their piercing attacks, the light creatures impaling through my shields with ease.

Trying a different strategy, I surrounded myself with a dense sphere of lead. The primevals still ignored the shield, but I found a separate utility from my approach; the globe cloaked my movements. While piling the lead high, I psionically wielded this section of rainbow bone. The ancient, unformed mind rumbled beneath me, annoyed but not enraged.

Well, not yet, at least. Wielding the shining landscape, I wrapped a layer of bone over me. The star beasts bounced off the illuminated surface, struggling to pierce the outer layer. I piled the opal shards overhead, and the primevals bounced, thrummed, and pulsed over the shield of shining bones. They couldn't beat me while within here.

Sitting inside the protective bubble, I collected more mana. Planning on a mental onslaught, I shifted to Event Horizon. I filled my refuge with crystallized ascendant mana. Minutes passed, and more layers of bone rushed over me to keep me isolated from my surroundings. I kept piling more and more mana on myself, turning the mana into dense plasma.

The wafting energy compressed down, becoming a writhing liquid of sentience. Using my primordial form, I turned the newly formed, chaotic mana into a thoughtful servant with mind magic. Taking a breath, I opened and closed holes in the rainbow bone shield at random. These tiny pricks allowed only one star beast to enter at a time, ensuring a one on one scenario.

A few minutes passed before one of the star monsters squeezed into this tiny rainbow cave. I shut its exit behind it right as it snapped inside. Once within, the primeval zoomed around inside the bubble, bouncing around from all angles. Cracks ebbed in the rainbow bones as intense forces erupted in the tiny cage. It vaporized me like we lived in a miniature stellar core.

I tolerated the exposure, the mana-lit gloom turning into a fury bright as a blinding sun. I linked with the star beast and wailed at its mind from all directions. In tandem, the mana plasma soaked into the monster. The star beast writhed back with intense, overwhelming waves of psionic strength. It lacked any understanding of what it did, but its mind still carried a primal power.

Supporting my mana minion, I took on those crashing waves of the primeval's conscious. Other minds of mine slammed into the beast with my own psionic strikes. The ascendant plasma kept oozing in, and the star beast lost control over fractions of its body. With each piece that saturated, the primeval lost more and more cognition.

But it died in a blaze of glory. It pounded, howled, and raged like a hurricane. We tore each other apart like three honey badgers locked in a cage. We gouged and gashed and ripped each other apart in a frenzy, but

as the psionic dust settled, we were winning. After a few hours, the primeval beast's control faded.

The monster's ebb and flow of control devolved into the steady descent of this monster's ego. Its orange fury gave way to the chaotic lightning of my ascendant mana.

The star beast turned into an ascendant celestial, one controlled by me. Taking a moment to observe, I looked at it while keeping our opal shield intact.

The star eldritch was the same as before, a red sun with waves of energy erupting at all times. However, the hum and crackle of ascendant lightning showed its mental change. It oozed a darker crimson light as well, the beams almost soaking sunshine inwards instead of emanating it. The arcs of electricity even gave the monster an electric charge, and as a final touch, it opened a jaw mirroring my own helm's toothy maw.

Satisfied with the results, I stuck with this capturing technique. I saturated the inner bone bubble with mana once more. After gaining control of another mana blob, I opened other pockets within the bone sphere around us. More minutes passed before I snagged the next star eldritch. With me, the ascendant star beast, and the mana against it, we dog piled the star eldritch and converted it over the next hour. The last and final star eldritch lost its will the same way.

With the three star beasts converted, I pulled the rainbow bones off of us. Our group stood in the only desolate zone for thousands of miles. The kelp grew towards our open patch, but my surviving supergolems wiped out the algae as it returned. Peering around, these moments were precious downtime, so I used them to handle critical business.

I sent my converted star beasts towards the surface, having them assist my super golems with destroying the kelp as it grew closer. At the same time, I needed some peace and quiet to work, so I created an overhang of opal bones before encapsulating myself. Under Leviathan's dimmed radiance and surrounded by dead behemoths, I opened my grimoire and got to work.

And I stared at the pages, a blank sensation coming over me. What was I supposed to work on? Something primordial, surely, but I lacked faith in my current direction of building cities and fighters. While overwhelming under most circumstances, my golems lacked the oomph to survive here. It left me stunned.

On Leviathan-7, my super golems required constant maintenance and guarding to keep alive. Even with my intervention, a quick telepathic check showed just that, a golem's silence meaning a golem's death. I winced at the loss, the time invested in them wasted. They died because the enemies here overwhelmed even me at times.

In fact, each of these eldritch could destroy entire planets on their own if unleashed somewhere normal. To have my soldiers fight back, they needed that kind of world-

ending power as well. While considering their next upgrade, I pulled out one shining blue core from storage, which would be the key moving forward.

Inspecting the ball, the perfect sphere mirrored a tiny gas giant with many strata spiraling around it. It was a tiny, electric-blue Jupiter in my palm. It even turned and cycloned like Jupiter, mana storms littering its surface. It reminded me of the energy stored within my mana crystals, but these storms set into inviolable forms. In a sense, they seemed...incorruptible.

As a comparison, mana crystals blew up if a person bumped them wrong. By contrast, the energy in these cores felt like they'd survive the death of stars. Hell, studying these things could help me take my mana manipulation up a notch. That stability could make an excellent foundation for a golem's mind since it reduced the risk of bloodthirsty insanity.

The cores even granted an endless power source, though my golems didn't lack in that department. Those factors culminated until the dungeon hearts looked like perfect golem cores. Etching the cipher on an ever-shifting surface was a problem, however. Taking a step back, I considered my other prospects before continuing my research.

On my arrival to Leviathan, I wanted to establish control of the planet to come back. That was still my number one priority, but other concerns surfaced since I arrived. If I kept brute-forcing my initial goal, I'd just slow myself down. Instead of plowing ahead, I realigned my priorities, which meant studying time magic.

If I gained time magic soon after arriving, I could make the most out of every second afterward. Time spent on learning about time magic might end up being time saved. Another priority would be creating a growing boundary for my cities. A defended zone wouldn't be enough; my claim here needed to be absolute.

Taking a moment to consider those possibilities, I decided to take a risk by learning time magic first. Since I understood this planet to some extent, I also had a good idea of what I needed to do going forward. I thought I'd get a few golems up and running to conquer this place, but that wouldn't work. I'd expand after learning how to compress time.

To that end, I set myself up for success. I made a set of thinking chairs, an obvious necessity. I also installed a workbench with a pile of steel plates beside it. I melted

words into the metal slabs, and they recorded details about the dungeon hearts, Leviathan-7, and the weaknesses of certain eldritch.

I also established names for everything here. I kept the terms I used in my head for the most part. The newly spawned eldritch from the sky were called behemoths, and the ones below were primevals. For the kelp overhead, I named it spawn algae, and the rainbow bones kept that name too. I also created divisions for the zones.

The top zone became the void because life thinned to nothing above the spawn algae. The first layer below the algae became the breeding grounds. As for the bottom layer smothered by opalescent skeletons, I named it the ossuary. It held the bones of the dead, so the name fit. After getting everything set up and recorded, I stared around me.

This was, by far, the most comfortable I'd been since I arrived. With information recorded and my priority list squared away, I sat down and contemplated my lessons from Chrona. Based on what Chrona explained to me, time manipulation required grasping at my surroundings and bending space.

I tried that before, and I failed each and every time. These weren't subtle failures either – each attempt was like smashing my face against a metaphorical wall. Having thought about it for a while, I struggled because I was a separate dimension. Since I existed outside of my surrounding space, I played by different rules.

Everyone else, including Chrona, blended into this 'other' surrounding me. This caused some kind of rejection when I attempted to wield time. This resistance mounted more and more as I developed my armor and myself. Every bottleneck I experienced had a familiar culprit behind it.

Me.

I mean, yeah, it's kind of obvious, but it wasn't a limit in my abilities, talent, or understanding. In reality, I'd systematically stifled myself to retain some semblance of humanity. Tapping the edge of my head, I remembered my fighting style and different kinds of magic. Fighting with my fists didn't even make sense anymore, and neither did keeping a human form.

But...I couldn't let it go. I couldn't move on from who I was to who I had to become. All this time, I was afraid of something. I always thought it was of my power and

potential, but that wasn't it. It was the absurd changes that bothered me. I had an idea of who I was, but I wasn't that person anymore. I couldn't be that person anymore.

The simple-minded Daniel that beat monsters into submission, it was fun being that guy. Hell, I built a lot of confidence and progress with that persona. I stood by my guns and plowed forward without looking back. I made mistakes, but I did my best to fix them. That was the issue. I couldn't afford to miscalculate anymore.

In my hands rested the lives of billions. A quick squeeze and they'd die.

So...I couldn't live a simple life with simple dreams. Beating monsters apart didn't make a galactic empire great. I needed to be someone else entirely, which I'd made great strides in. I'd amassed the skills to use my abilities, but I never recognized the personal sacrifice required.

I'd never go back to being a child in Springfield with small worries. My concerns would expand and grow. In many ways, I came to a crossroads in life. On one road, I could grow with my worries. On another road, I could watch my anxieties slowly overwhelm me. If they ever did crush me, I'd like to know I put it all on the line with no excuses left. Otherwise, my own guilt would outweigh any burdens I bore.

Because whether I wanted those burdens or not, they would come.

Staring down, the signs of what I changed into manifested in many ways. For instance, I no longer lost my senses when destroyed, even down to a puddle. When Eonoth roared and saved Lehesion from the Spatial Fortress, I uncovered that fact. The Old One created a dimensional wave, one I wasn't a part of. As those timelines collapsed into one, I existed outside of them, so the dimensional ripple smashed me from all sides.

Being mushed and living was one thing, but it hadn't even knocked me unconscious. I remained fully aware without a body. Staring down at my hands, a shiver raced up my spine. No human could do something like that, and the longer I ran away from that reality, the less I could do in the meantime. So taking a moment, I accepted that I wasn't this body anymore. I was the dimensional wake around me more than anything else.

Blegh.

So, to master time, I had to master this...space I'd evolved into. I crossed my legs, placed my hands on my knees, and closed my eyes. I stretched out my primordial wake, the aura enveloping my surroundings with a sense of cognition and control. Going further, I took a breath before pulling my consciousness out of my body, and I responded in kind.

To my chagrin, my awareness trickled out from my physical shell and into the space around me. Despite that subtle expansion, most of my perception lingered in my head, meaning I couldn't escape my physical confines just yet. Meditating on the exercise, I fell into a pattern of reaching out my awareness. With each attempt, I gained greater control up to a point.

Eventually, my brute force approach quit giving me gains. I smiled at myself, remembering how I tackled my way through my early ventures without having to overthink. That wouldn't work here. Taking a more cerebral approach, I tackled the issue from a different angle. I detached from my physical senses, as much as I could, at least.

Touch, sight, and sound all faded into nothing as my psyche floated outwards into the ether around me. Like a fog of consciousness, I dispersed into my dimensional wake. I maintained awareness through my mana and gravitational senses. They didn't come from physical organs or anything, so I kept them even without a physical body.

Those senses gave me a different, strange view of the world around me. Tiny fluxes rippled about while moving objects created subtle shifts in an endless void around me. I interpreted these ripples, converting their esoteric machinations into a more visual understanding. Below, the planet stamped a gravitational blip on this place.

In the distance, the gravity well of Leviathan caved inward to a bottomless pit. It acted as a landmark, easing this visualization process. Gazing at the nulled center, gravity stopped holding meaning near the black hole. By becoming infinite, it stretched beyond the limits of interpretation.

Weird.

Surrounding Leviathan's pit, colossal strands of space rippled out in destructive waves. Sensing below that madness, this planet orbited the black hole at a breakneck pace, traveling on a stretched avenue of space. It mirrored how a satellite orbited the earth.

We fell towards Leviathan at an absurd speed, but we also circled faster than we fell despite being in the Event Horizon.

Well, sort of.

The planet traveled a bit slower based on our time's standards. Still, with how stretched time was here, we ended up experiencing that acceleration several times before the outside world experienced it once. If I guessed right, that's how Leviathan-7 was this close yet not within the black hole. However, I wasn't a physicist, so this was my simple observation.

Regardless, this planet was a bullet in an endless vacuum, finding an equilibrium in the utter destruction around us. Back in the physical world, my hulking body stayed stationary and lifeless below. The runes dimmed, and all motion ceased.

I took a moment before trying to rematerialize outside of my actual body. Instead of making a new body, I snapped back into my own shell, giving the husk life once more. As my eyes snapped open, I winced. I suppressed the urge to vomit, and a splitting pain pierced my head. It faded as quickly as it came while I gasped at the surreal experience.

I waved off some lingering motion sickness, and I shook my head before resolving myself once more.

Again.

Chapter 336: The Death of a Mind

Taking a breath, I detached once more. I dispersed with a struggle before snapping back into my body. A strange kind of endurance reached its limit, and my psyche hated the idea of leaving my body again. Smiling at myself, I closed my eyes, willing my egos away from my body. After another mental breakdown, I leaned back with the urge to vomit intermingling with more motion sickness.

I gave my temple a tap before leaning forward, and my mind dispersed once more. The pop back into my body happened even faster, but I shrugged off the failure. Failure wasn't getting knocked down; it was staying down. Knowing that truth, I chose to remain relentless. Many hours passed as I persisted in pulling myself up and out of my body.

The entire time, I insisted on dispersing my awareness throughout my whole dimensional wake. At first, my limited endurance fizzled out, resulting in no more time spent outside my body. Over the next while, the shortening of my mental trips inverted, each attempt becoming longer than the last. Appreciating progress, I hounded at the process, and the resistance lessened as I poured focus and attention into the task.

Putting several minds to the job accelerated my progress, turning the awful disruption into a far more casual occurrence. However, this diffusion never bordered on comfort, though I adapted to the surreal sensation with time. The intolerable became tolerable, and the extreme became mundane. After establishing a basic mastery, I attempted other actions while dispersed. The first experiment involved wielding mana while disconnected from my body, and to my surprise, I still generated mana like usual.

However, that energy spawned from my body instead of my dimensional wake. On and on, that never changed. Testing a different angle of progression, I kept piling the mana up before gaining a thick cloud of it. It fogged down along the opal bones below, surging up at the edges of my dimensional space. Like filling a bowl, the energized miasma stuffed the wake and billowed up along the limits of the unseen dome.

In time, I smothered my entire dimensional field with the dense cloud until it crackled with electric energy, turning to plasma. It stayed within my domain, ripe and usable at all moments and any angle. This much mana fought back a bit, but within my primordial wake, my mind magic showed immense potency. I suppressed the burgeoning, aimless mind and bent gravity in my dimensional wake using the plasma. The familiar tug touched even the ethereal minds dispersed in the aura.

It tugged on my body below as well. The corpse slid over in an eerie grind, clanking and thunking against shining ridges. It shifted like a statue of steel, immovable as a mountain. When I lived within it, each joint moved with ease. It stiffened up without me within, needing mana for movement.

As the body clunked into the gravity well, I accepted being present elsewhere. It disturbed me, but that was my new reality. Moving on, I sensed my mana's current source. Unlike before, I channeled from the piled-up plasma instead of my palms or runes. The mana used wasn't the same as producing mana, but it closed in on that sensation.

Adding to the plasma, I tried generating mana from outside my body using the previous experience as a reference. It worked, though only to the tiniest degree. Minuscule mites of mana dripped out of my wake, the dollops almost unseen if not for my sharp sense

for them. These microscopic mana beads built into a usable source, but the vast majority coursed and flowed from my body below.

It was drenched in volatile, humming energy, but I needed that out here. Ready myself, I let out a mental growl, setting myself on this next ability. After all, repetition was the mother of learning, and I devoted a dozen minds to the task of making mana from my wake. Unlike the mind dispersal, this process only stressed the psyche instead of morphing it. Unlike vertigo and nausea, stress and pain were familiar feelings. In fact, I mastered them long ago. Returning to those old friends, I hammered away at this odd ability. I turned the fine mist of generated mana into thicker clouds in no time. However, a piece of me avoided the other exercise as it strangely challenged me.

With awareness, I gained cause to conquer that unconscious fear. I learned both skills simultaneously. Hours passed once more as I fell into this flow of detaching, oozing mana, and popping back into my body once more. Over and over, I hit the limits of my endurance. Over and over, I pushed those horizons further.

Into a beyond I never touched, I tread. Out into an abyss, I wallowed. The comical difficulty of the process reminded me of solving a complex problem in a G-force simulator. Or perhaps in the middle of a battlefield. Either way, I kept splitting myself up and making mana in different places.

After some time passed, I learned to disperse without the same struggle. Even while detached, I oozed out mana in a generous flow. It gave me many origin points for casting magic, something I might abuse later. When I tried doing so, I found my next problem – my control suffered in my diffuse state. Even essential magic left me fumbling. Taking a moment to analyze why, I found the culprit.

It stemmed from how I spawned my mana. I felt my way through it, like relying on muscle memory. In my body, the physical senses gave me direction. No tactile sensation guided me while out in the aura, and I acted in a darkness of my own making. Without knowing my new path, I stumbled like a child with no eyes, ears, or taste. It was humbling.

I cut myself off from the physical, and my mind showed my weakness from relying on my body all this time. I laughed a little before rubbing my hands together. Many Daniels toiled and endured, so I gained many times my standard progress. That meant this was only a matter of time.

I gave it another go, a bit of my warrior spirit kicking in. I lasted a moment longer than before snapping back into my physical body. Back inside the metal shell, I took a moment to be grateful for having one. Being an aetherial blob required diligence and fervor, not qualities I lacked but characteristics I'd neglected. This exposed that lack of diligence, which I'd rectify in the future.

Taking a breather, I laid back and closed my eyes. Using my gravitational awareness, I gawked at Leviathan beyond my shell of rainbow bones. The gravitational anomaly always cut me down to size, and it acted as a celestial reminder of my mediocrity compared to the forces of nature. It left me in awe, both at its brilliance and my benign being.

To it, I was nothing.

And I aimed to change that. Those primordial elements needed to be within my palm, so I stretched my awareness outwards once more. This time, I stayed in my body, but I kept a kind of sphere of my consciousness dispersed out. As I'd hoped, I retained my physical form while soaking into my wake's extent. In a way, my body grounded the process, giving me a much-needed point of reference.

In that ethereal air, a few minds floated about. One thought of themselves as an astronaut sent into space, and it radiated back to me,

"Pshhh, Houston, the launch is a go. I repeat, the launch is a go."

We laughed before getting back to work. As many, we persevered with the exercise, the difficulty like an exorcism of our weakness. That vulnerability oozed and trembled out while strength took its place. Eventually, we maintained several minds floating in my aura's domain. The more egos out there, the more mana coursed out of the ether as well.

In a sense, the disembodied minds acted as beacons for mana generation. They worked as wills, each guiding the input and control of magical energies. Despite becoming accustomed to the pionic dispersal, we struggled to control the mana while out there still. Finding a loophole, I kept us all out there while linking up via telepathy. This gave a slight tactile sensation to those drifting, allowing them to control mana as we always had.

The web structured the experience as well, making it less unstable, and those factors made the variety and intensity of our sorcery far greater in the ether. Reassessing our current state, my psyches popped back into my body, each of them exhausted. As they recuperated, an idea whipped up in my head.

I gave the diffusion another go but with a slight alteration. I kept that telepathic web active between me and the minds. We lived as a psionic network, all the egos connected while at disparate points. As the outer egos fatigued, I sent other psyches out to replace them. This shifting schedule let me maintain the psionic loading while occupying my body.

The arrival of that breakthrough marched in with a breakdown. While I extended my endurance from partial to limitless, I also multiplied my exhaustion. Several minds recuperated at all points in time, and that weighed on me no less than usual. As the weary egos piled up, they arrived with a terrifying concept that I had never contemplated.

I could now suffer more than any single mind could. If anything, this enabled torture on a scale unbounded. Imagining thirty minds being tormented with psionic slaughter sent chills up my spine. In the end, A Manifold Mind was worth it since I could tackle many times more work.

However, I could also experience several ego worths of doubt, pain, and suffering. The agony of many exceeded the pain of one, and unfortunately, I was many now. That meant owning their miseries, fears, and weaknesses, and it meant my vulnerabilities split open like rotten wood hammered with a steel wedge.

Each second illustrated this disturbing reality to me and in vivid detail. My flaws magnified, each lapse magnified as if viewed with a microscope. And it happened by turning small doubts into significant fears. They rushed in from all angles. A plethora of questions assaulted me, weakening my resolve.

Did time really slow down on Leviathan-7? Would time pass here faster than usual? If so, would Yawm's contract kill me? My psyches effused those worries without meaning to, each of them trying to hold in their discord. After all, my time on Leviathan-7 was of the utmost importance, and we absolutely had to push forward.

There was no time to sit here and wallow, even if I wanted to. As the resistance on my mind mounted, I centered on the reasons I continued in the first place. My time here

wasn't about me; it was about my guild and about making up for all the delays on Earth. I'd much rather eliminate that growing guilt rather than let it fester further.

Besides, this was only the beginning. I had to trek many more miles before I rested. Aware of that reality, I took the next step forward. With a few minds still left in my body, I tried moving my dimensional wake while several psyches inhabited the aura. The ether shivered and trembled while I maintained control of it. Pushing my abilities, I extended my dimensional wake as much as possible. In a sudden rush, the minds returned to me instead of wallowing in that shifting aura.

And they bled, torn apart at the psionic seams.

Their disturbed, mutilated forms haunted me for a moment. Each one carried mental wounds as if something crushed and pulped them. Without meaning to, I minced them to pieces. They communicated what it was like out there, and I understood the depth of their disturbance. It was one thing to inhabit a dimensional space instead of a body, but it was something else entirely to have that space move and shift while residing in it.

The movement collapsed a person's mind, inducing madness as one's frame of reference changed and altered. The ensuing insanity acted like mental wounds, ones that required time to recover from. The shifting of the aura blended the healing sanities, turning them into a mash of sentience.

Which, you know, sounded pretty unpleasant.

At this point, I questioned the utility of even learning this bizarre ability, but then I remembered Chrona's lessons. To hasten the flow of time, she compressed her surrounding dimension, but to slow it, she expanded said space. In essence, the density of the dimensional fabric decided the speed of events occurring within it.

The minds had to be out there to control my dimensional wake at that level. Otherwise, it was like trying to maintain a body with strings.

Sure, a puppetmaster could get pretty respectable at wielding their figurines, but they never gained the mastery of someone within their own body. In that same vein, I was imbuing my aura with life, giving me genuine autonomy over it.

It was an unfortunate reality that being a dimensional wake happened to suck.

Peering around, it dawned on me how much tolerance this would require. Inhabiting the aura acted as the first step. Going beyond that, progression necessitated both finesse and mastery while molding my wake. Or stretched. Or worse, compressed. I shivered at the idea of being in the ether while condensing down. Despite that innate fear, going out there and getting smashed was crucial.

That would be my way of achieving time magic.

Before sending more of myself out there, I came up with a few strategies for maintaining our morale. I extended my psionic net out, allowing them to spread the pain over all of us. I gave every Daniel a mental drill, ensuring they were ready and willing to go out. I even prepared better shifting maneuvers, so Daniels could cycle out of there faster than before.

Even then, we all dreaded the task, so we took a breather before readying ourselves for it. Having rested a few minutes, we set forth and mangled our minds. Like troops walking onto no man's land, the Daniels saturated my dimensional space before I moved the aura around. The consciousnesses within dismembered, disfigured, and pulped into pieces.

They rotated back into our body, healing as others replaced them. The Daniels resting in our physical form honed in on controlling the procedure as much as possible, but we met our limits. In time, dozens of attempts turned to hundred, then thousands. Each time we failed, several of us died psionic deaths.

It was like putting my brain and awareness in playdough then mushing it around. We stepped into the aura's edge each time before being sculpted alive. I was shoving us into a box before mish-mashing its shape in a fluid fashion. Those within the box broke bones, split skin, and dripped blood. This stressed a different kind of tolerance than simple suffering. Training that unknown resilience took on this alien form of psionic pulping, and to my horror, we adapted to it. However, the adaptation arrived in a slow, steady dribble, like learning the depths of pain.

We applied different techniques to ease the process, and mental grit replaced our previous naivete. It hardened us like any undertaking. In time, we gained more comfort with the ability. We also expected the worst while receiving something just shy of it. That combination of grim expectations and rising tenacity gave us the mindset to push past this plateau.

So, hours passed like that, each second inching by in a slow, steady march. All the while, many minds practiced psionic butchery. I obtained more fluidity as I practiced, moving my body and wake as one. The psionic loading purified, and my entire being no longer separated into them and us.

Though diffused, we all connected via our telepathic web. It evolved from a loose connection to a dense cluster of interconnected consciousnesses. This mental mist extended my persona into the wake's edge and the wake's edge into me. In that abyss, I remained a single person, and I bore this transition as a unified entity.

It changed the way I viewed the world. I seeped into it, my aura as physical as my body. When I fully dispersed, I soaked into my surroundings, and it was as if I engulfed whatever existed there. I sensed my periphery through the rainbow bones below while stepping over the ground. When I moved, my dislodged intellects swirled around within my wake.

Existing in this state, I learned the merits of this diluted form. I could control my wake in new ways while out there in it. Even complex incantations could be cast from anywhere I dispersed to, and I maintained absolute perception wherever I inhabited. It gave several reference points for my gravitational and mana awareness, giving me a clearer picture of everything around me.

Oddly enough, I gained an aerial view of my surroundings. It also earned me exceptional dominance over the rainbow bones. The opal shards bent and molded to my mind's pressure because I didn't send out telepathic attacks anymore. I occupied the bone within my wake, making it a part of me.

That disturbed me because the psionic loading could be used in horrific ways. For instance, if a person existed in my wake, I could force my ego into their head until their mind within splintered. That's what I did to the rainbow bones, actually. With the ego within wiped, only I remained. The body left behind devolved into my flesh puppet.

It was an evolution of necromancy and in a dark direction. I needed no death for control. I required only for my victim to succumb, and even just thinking about that technique made my skin crawl. I let that unease pass over me, choosing to let it go. I could use this technique for unspeakable acts, but it also unlocked many other abilities.

It mirrored a knife, being a tool capable of creation and death. In the end, my decisions determined this newfound tool's outcome. Setting that outcome on time magic, I made my focus inviolable. I continued my attempts for hours, and those hours inched by in a slow, dreadful crawl.

I found myself gazing up at times. I wanted to build golems or fight primevals, each process more dynamic or peaceful than this. Instead, I pulled my mind out of my body and moved it around. This was like self-induced torture on a mass scale, for weeks on end, and without company. Despite my absurd willpower, it stung after a while.

But I dealt with it as I usually do – with brute force. Putting myself back in the moment, I gave my head another thudding blow. The ringing sound reminded me of where I was and what I did. I narrowed my eyes while working, knowing this was only temporary. It would pass in time, becoming a memory of my perseverance, a piece of my story.

Remembering my history, I contemplated the many times I did something similar. This wasn't my first undertaking, and it wouldn't be my last. Besides, golem crafting would bring me solace after this was over. I held onto that, continuing on.

Forgetting how long I stayed there, I took a deep breath. It was time for the next step. I extended my consciousness throughout my dimensional wake, cool and calm. Nausea and discomfort passed before I willed my aura into a strip. My minds endured, many of them cracking. Testing their fortitude further, I compressed that wake into a denser blob.

They smashed into one another, blending into a psionic smoothie. All sense of egoism faded as they became a single, fractured entity. Rushing away from the onslaught, those blended egos poured into my body. Their disturbed, warped visages sank into me, and I collapsed. The sense of rejection and disgust seethed from the minds, their outrage making perfect sense.

The psionic compression blended their senses before shoving them together. It was like having their bodies blended into a paste, mixed with other people's corpses, and then everyone operated the giant flesh hunk that remained. In a word, grotesque, but in action, it strayed into the eerie and vile.

It seeded doubt in my mind about continuing on. Already, I let go of my physical form and became intangible. I stepped further, relinquishing the stability of being one mind

in one place. I occupied a vast swath of territory at once, becoming inhuman in every regard. At that point, it disturbed me how far I trekked onto that path because it glorified my own mutilation.

And yet, I needed to go even further. The minds that smashed and mixed in my wake had to let go of even being a mind in the first place, which was a terrifying prospect. Instead of being sensical streams of thoughts, my psyches smashed into a psionic amalgam out there. What lingered from their remains mirrored madness.

The sane minds had to make sense of it while forcing the psionic mash to keep the wake compressed. It was like shoving my body into a meat grinder, maintaining awareness, then making the pulp handle a complex task. Honestly, it's difficult to fully convey what it was like. It kind of defied anything I'd done prior, and it ended any illusions about being human.

A human would never return to sanity from that abyss. A person's mind wasn't made that way. Once a person's psyche broke into pieces, it never recuperated in its entirety. Cracked lingered, and that ego relied on an external structure to grant rationale from then on. Unlike a person, my mind popped right back to normal from the brink of death in less than a second.

The psionic deaths acted like vivid nightmares that left no impact on me. I awoke in a cold sweat simultaneously for ages, yet my tolerance for that evil never waned. I kept pushing myself into the nightmare, but somehow, the nightmare never seeped back into me. It should've left me a broken shell.

It didn't. I stayed strong.

I didn't think I was capable of tolerating that kind of mental pressure, but there I was, doing it all the same. At that moment, I stepped into the realm of monsters. My entire life diverged utterly from the norm, so nothing connected my experience to humanity anymore. Hell, to people anymore. I disconnected in my entirety, but I embraced a new form in doing so.

Stepping into my role as a dimension, I psionically loaded my wake once more. I molded it in a slow, subtle manner. Dread drenching me, I compressed the psionically loaded aura. My egos pulped before rushing back in, each of them broken. They shouted out what it was like out there in the trembling ether.

I was shoving their bodies into a container that was too small. Within, they broke. They bent. They shattered. Once smashed inside, I coiled the box downwards, inwards, even outwards. At the seams, those minds disintegrated into a psionic mush. We all existed within a shrinking cage, one that pressed through skin and nerves alike.

It gelatinized the frame of my psyche, an awful fear pouring through me. My skin crawled. My hands trembled, and I shook with a palpable terror as I continued mutilating my mind. The abuse continued, and I wobbled my wake while within it. After another round of psionic compression, I stopped, pulling the minds back in.

Using the same strategy, I exchanged the destroyed psyches for fresh ones. The Daniels going out carried a fearful gaze at their recovering brethren. With white-knuckled determination, those incoming egos smashed into the warped wake, and they suppressed their screams. The tormented minds of the other Daniels seeped in, and their aches radiated through me. They infused into my being, a chorus of pain.

In a sense, I crushed several of my bodies before absorbing their pain. In fact, I was almost certain a human couldn't even experience this much discomfort. I bunny hopped into a different dimension in that regard. I dealt with it, but it burdened me all the same. Schema wasn't here to give me a mental resistance skill either. No, I endured the full brunt of psionic liquification and fusion.

It left me regretting my regeneration and tenacity. I recovered in an instant even from utter mental collapse. This allowed me to put the minds back into the line of fire right as they returned to normal. Again and again, I smothered the minds in the suppressed wake. Desperate for a different solution, I pulled all the psyches within me. I tried compressing my dimensional extent without having the consciousnesses stretched out.

It was like foregoing a pen while writing elegant words. Instead, I tried dashing down calligraphy with an unwieldy, ink-dipped brick. Reverting back to my previous strategy, I loaded my wake and compressed it.

And the strain suffocated me.

I existed under the ocean, all fading away aside from this one experience. I lost sight of my surroundings, all turning into a blur. Time inched by in slow motion, each moment an eternity. Despite that dragging crawl, I tolerated the molding better with time. Make no mistake, it wasn't any lesser; I merely accustomed myself to it.

In the corners of my mind, cracks, snaps, and pops snapped through my skull. I collapsed but returned to my full form in a flash. I trembled before straightening up. Sharp spikes of heat radiated out in my head, unlike pain but perhaps worse in how unfamiliar the sensation was. The feel mirrored discomfort and disgust that somehow molded into a singular phenomenon.

It kept shoving my body into a small box. Bones, blood, and pus, I pushed myself in like a butcher. Unlike a human, I remained alive while smashing down. To my chagrin, I fit in that box. The fact that I was capable of this disgusted me, and I rebelled at the unnatural mashing and smothering. For some reason, I continued this process until I pushed too hard and snapped back to my baseline.

Insult added to injury because even my usual form didn't feel right either anymore. Broken and alone, I fell down, laughing at myself for a second. I grabbed my hair and pulled until my scalp ripped. The sound of metal shearing erupted in the tiny cavern, my entire body made of metal. I closed my eyes while shaking my head.

I'd go insane here if I kept this up. Remembering what it was for, I let myself experience the welled-up discomfort, horror, and disgust. I shook for a second before sitting back up. After collecting myself, I marched into the process once more. Dispersal, compression, cracking, breaking, snapping, ripping, and writhing. It continued.

Each time I gave my all, but I conditioned myself to fear it. Before I even began, I trembled at what was to come. Even if the sensation left me, the memory remained embedded deep in my consciousness. In this cave in a different world, I whittled away at my sanity. When one consciousness collapsed, another took its place.

I evolved into an internal carnival of horrors, slaughtering one ego after the next. Many minds acted as a blessing, but they also allowed for torment on this scale. It was more than one person's pain, like the ache of many. It carved into my memory, and looking for an escape, I questioned my existence.

Did I enjoy my own pain? Was this worth it? Was I still alive? Those questions assaulted me, and I had no real answers to them. Despite those doubts, I persevered because of a growing sense of comradeship. Without it, I'd have crumbled. When one mind weakened, another picked up the slack. When one mind questioned, another believed.

My doubts were weakness disguising itself as reason and rationality. I already clarified my questions and doubts long ago. It just so happened that my answers didn't feel like they were enough at that time. It didn't matter what I felt, however.

What mattered were the results, and they were immense.

When the compression of my wake reached my skin, I fell back with surprise. My egos rushed back into my body, the mangled minds wanting nothing more than to return. My focus splintered, and my dimensional wake burst outward from its compressed pit. I gasped as my psyches snapped back in a violent, grotesque rip.

As if lightning shot through my consciousness, streaks of vivid pain erupted out, into, out of, and inside my head. After a few seconds, I laughed at the sensation. It was like an old friend telling me a bad joke. While a bit offputting, I still enjoyed hearing from them again. In a way, that's what pain was to me now.

That pain arrived with the palpable rush of victory. I clasped and swung my fists and celebrated the milestone. My progress continued even as I failed to mark it, and with its arrival came a renewed sense of vigor. Tackling the sensation once more, I pulled myself outward before condensing the aura again.

I put several minds to the task, compressing the wake further. Once more, my dimensional extent pressed against my actual body. Ready and waiting, I kept my psyches condensing my dimension. Under that pressure, I remained in place for a few seconds before releasing it. I laughed again, and it was a peal of booming laughter, one of dominance and madness.

I did it. I finally did it.

And I would master it. Another two hours passed, and I found myself tolerating the psionic squeezing. I wasn't putting every bit of myself into the task for the first time. I gained familiarity within the unfamiliar. I gained comfort in the uncomfortable, and that left mental energy for perceiving my surroundings.

And I gasped in awe. I perceived a different world.

It was a world numbed by time's slowed passage. Hearing dulled and dimmed, high-pitched sounds droning on for long spans. Hot and cold turned to warm and cool, the

flow of energy slowing. It mirrored wearing insulation from my environment, a barrier between it and me.

In my opal cave, the shards' glimmering slowed. This was why I hadn't noticed the effect of my dimensional compression. What marked my progress weren't sharp, explosive booms. Instead, it was the lessening of sensation that exposed my advancement. As I gawked at the surreal shifts, another violent shear erupted across every mind in an engulfing wave.

My mind snapped back. Like ripping my psyche in half, I gasped as the mind-rupturing faded. While the pain subdued, my new competence didn't. The process drove me insane for a while, but I'd done it. I compressed my timeline, making everything else slow down by comparison.

Pressing my hands together, I toiled and worked at the process, grasping on the cusp of fluid time manipulation. I kept getting closer and closer to pushing my saturated aura down without effort. As I did, the rumbling echoes outside my cavern slowed down once more. They droned in like haunting echoes. As those howls hummed in like a sweet symphony of sirens, I listened in anticipation.

The slower the drone, the greater my dimensional compression. Those signs of progress switched exhaustion to strength. My contempt turned to courage. After getting some kind of freedom while compressed, I peeled a hole in the rainbow bone to view outside. The breeding grounds for the behemoths crawled by, the once vicious, explosive activity turning into a manageable mess.

Their overwhelming speeds turned into quick sprints and dashes. My golems fought behind the converted star beasts. From this distance, they floated in the air like lazy pieces of dust. Using my golems as a reference, I guesstimated that I sped up my sense of time by double. However, as their fight moved, I couldn't continue watching.

I grimaced, my focus so intent on temporal manipulation that I couldn't even move my head or eyes. I took a moment to rest while sending out a quick psionic pulse to pacify the rainbow bones. That tamed it for the next while, letting me continue my training. Taking a breath, I kept my awareness, perceiving everything in the distance.

I couldn't move yet, the dimensional pressure overwhelming me, but my senses still gave me information. Those facts leaked in, along with plenty of time to think about them. The dulled, dragging sensations emphasized that further, letting me catch details

I'd otherwise miss. Mana flowed through the golems, and their sigils lit up with crimson light. The primevals reformed in splashes of energy and color. Even the pulses of power rippled across the horizons at a slowed pace.

Dwelling in that strange world, I found time manipulation mirrored diving deep into a planet. The constant pressure, the freeing isolation, even the bombinating hum resembled swimming through a planet's core. After hearing the sounds for a while, I grew accustomed to the continuous noise. Everything else quieted by comparison.

In that subtle silence, I found a measure of solace.

Sitting in that kind of meditation, I tried moving. Each step required exhaustive mental effort. It added another layer of strain to the mind mush in the ether around me. By how this felt, it could take years of practice before I maintained this insane compression while fighting. At least it gave me a goal to strive for.

With intense time magic off the table, I eliminated the dimensional squeezing altogether. Testing a theory, I walked around while my wake loaded up psionically. While still challenging, psionic loading was a break compared to condensing. The minds whirling around in the ether agreed, though they still disliked being wounded out there.

After suppressing the Daniels' concerns, I pressed my wake down a tiny bit while walking. Once again, the surge of difficulty rushed in. Taking bite-sized chunks of progress at a time, I developed the skill of moving while condensing myself. Taking routine breaks, I repeated the skill with a relentless, unending march.

One attempt led to another, and many hours passed. After a while, I maxed out the effortless gains I garnered from simple repetition. The uphill struggle began from then on, but at least I could move, think, and channel mana while condensed. It was enough to actually apply the time magic in real-time.

Within a few steps, I found even a slight temporal acceleration made a palpable difference. My surroundings softened, and the air thinned. I moved with momentum behind every step, fundamental forces transferring at bizarre speeds. I mean, I'd never noticed my feet pressing into the ground before, but it took forever when slowing time.

Testing more differences, I spoke, and my voice sounded the same to my ears. I repeated my shout with temporal acceleration before ceasing the ability. My echo

bounced back, and it pitched higher as if I spoke through a voice modulator. I kept talking with more and more dimensional compression, testing out the limits of my abilities.

After a while, my shrill words sounded like I breathed in helium. Laughing at myself, I controlled the rainbow bone around me. My psionic mush filled into the bone, the pulped egos finding a haven in something physical. They moved the bones out of the way, and I viewed the outer world.

Pulling the Daniels back, I sped up my timeline while peering above. The eldritch and golems steadied into a more casual stream of information. Easing the dimensional condensing, I hopped out of my opal cavern. I walked and soaked in my different state of being while on the ossuary of Leviathan-7.

Primevals battled in the distance, bits of light leaking through the algae above. This world was once a roaring river coursing by at a frothing pace. The clear water thickened into thin honey, making it much more comprehensible by comparison. I probably experienced time at about 10% to 15% faster than normal, but I learned that time magic worked well even in small doses.

An easy to feel but hard to explain difference was the snapping point of objects. Confusing as that sounded, it was a very simple idea. Take glass as an example. If someone put pressure on it slowly, it held up against immense loads. If someone put pressure on it quickly, glass shattered into fragments. Most materials worked like that, having a snapping point to them once a set amount of stress was applied in a certain timeframe.

Temporal magic allowed me to reach that snapping threshold with much greater ease. Testing that, I stomped down with all my strength, and my foot imprinted into the rainbow bone below, cracks ebbing outwards in every direction. I clapped my hands, the force in my palms springy and immediate. In every capacity, I felt snappy and powerful. In a sense, my slow turned into everyone else's fast.

Testing other abilities, I tried moving my primordial wake like normal. As always, it shifted but only up to the limits of my dimensional compression. In that way, speeding up my timeline limited my dimensional wake's range, but it was well worth the trade-off in most situations. Testing my primordial wake, the aura's powers augmented even further while condensed.

Ideas about that utility seeded in my mind. Movement was difficult while accelerating time, but mana generation wasn't as challenging. Generating matter and carving runes in this condensed state might result in some serious gains, but I put theorycrafting on a mental backburner. Instead, I considered my options for a moment, and an idea popped into my head.

After snapping my fingers, I stopped moving and pressed my wake down, giving me some extra time. While standing perfectly still, I contemplated how to wield this new ability within its limitations. Honestly, just making the most of my thinking time was a good start.

Practicing that ebb and flow, I expanded my loaded wake, moved a bit, then pulled my wake back down. When standing still, my surroundings slowed to a crawl, but while moving, everything sped back up again. The surreal, otherworldly sensation made everything feel like slowing down a video. It displaced me a bit like I walked through a dream. The strange surroundings of Leviathan-7 didn't help me in that regard since my surroundings were already vivid and surreal.

While I perfected this real-life pausing ability, an eerie sensation crept over me. The feel of gravity and space changed. Each time I stood still, this odd sensation crossed over me. Well, the lack of sensation, really. The elemental forces around me thinned, but my own abilities thickened. It was as if the rules and principles of the world weighed on me less.

Though subtle, it omened an immense potential. Breaking the laws of nature might be the next step in the Daniel progression program. Time would tell.

Loosening my wake, I sat down and took a deep breath of fresh air. It wasn't fresh at all because the fumes here were toxic, but whatever. I leaned back, supporting myself with my arms. I rewrapped the shining opals over me, and I let the insanity of my situation soak in. Even the eccentricities of gravity paled when compared to time manipulation.

This entire process only complicated further because I was a dimension. I smiled at myself, knowing I learned time magic in less than three months, but that grin hollowed. I learned temporal acceleration that fast because I was a dimension. That's also why many physical forces came so easily to me.

However, dying thousands of psionic deaths wasn't something anyone could do. That set me apart, letting me accelerate my learning by leaps and bounds. Peering around, I

wondered how much time remained for conquering Leviathan-7. I had no idea since my sense of time was warped to all hell and back.

My gauge for how much I manipulated time was also terrible since nothing on this planet was familiar. After all, my points of reference offered little to no comparison. It made this already wild, crazy process into more of a mind-bending experience than it already was. Giving myself a moment, I sat in this opal shell for a few minutes with no magic running.

I soaked it in, recognizing how disjointed I'd become. Going further into that sudden tranquility, I centered myself into one mind. Without time magic, many psyches, or charging runes, I sat still and just existed. I remembered my normal was this; being one person in a single wave of time. This was me, and I shouldn't forget that.

After a while, I split my ego into egos. They marched into my wake before being pulped down. Taking a second, I dribbled mana into my primordial rune, trying to charge it. It pulled at my mana with visceral violence, collapsing my temporal acceleration. Wincing at the experience, I sighed.

I'd eventually power my rune and hasten time in tandem. However, it was too much at that moment. If anything, that would be an exercise to train time magic while supercharging my sigils. I saved that for later before pressing my wake down once more. Breathing in the sensation, I molded it in and out, gaining more fluid control of the collapse and the crush.

Once I gained some comfort in that, I moved between the periods of confinement. When my endurance hit its limit, I let my dimension extend back to comfort. Back and forth, this ebb and flow continued like a ceaseless tide and cycle of seasons. Stretches of time passed, and I maintained dimensional collapse while walking, then running, and finally jumping.

It was a modest temporal acceleration, but it made me faster, stronger, and snappier. I practiced interspersing those movements with With stalls in my movement. Once I got the hang of it, I peeled back the protection of the opal shards, heading into the outside world. I didn't fight yet, choosing to keep some distance between the monsters and myself.

Instead of rushing in, I let myself adjust to the ability, and for good reason. I'd remain in this state forever. Well, maybe not forever, but for the foreseeable future at the

minimum. While on Leviathan, every second was precious, so capitalizing on my temporal acceleration was essential. Adjusting to it took a long time, but I had enough time to spare.

While exploring Leviathan-7's ossuary, I acclimatized to the oddities of temporal manipulation. Walking around, I took note of what golems and star beasts remained. Even after I sat in a bone bubble for so long, most of them were still locked into combat with the primevals. Each side existed as inexhaustible fountains of intensity, and so far, a good portion of the super golems died from it.

I frowned at the sacrifice, a pinch of guilt welling in my chest. It was a necessary sacrifice to keep this place from spawning more primevals. We couldn't afford to spend any more time building ourselves up. We had to conquer from here on out and peering up, some of the spawn algae returned overhead in the meantime.

Despite my golems relentless work and pace, we hadn't gained any more ground than when I retreated beneath the bones below. In all honesty, I expected as much since the primevals gave me trouble. Without my converted star beasts, there's no chance the golems would've survived at all.

Stilled and temporally accelerated, I dove into thought, my surroundings sauntering about in a slow crawl. First off, conquering a city was of the utmost importance since our time limit on Leviathan-7 could end at any point in time. However, conquering the land would be meaningless if we couldn't hold it.

The primevals would smash through my golems and current fortification strategies. Strengthening my cities general defenses was my next pivotal step to dominance here. Set on that goal, I decompressed my wake and tore off one of my arms. The metallic, deep shear rippled over my surroundings at a higher pitch than I expected.

Arm in hand, I stared up while melting the limb, and my golems and star beasts struggled above. Itching to test my new abilities, I smiled and gave myself a break. Crafting golems required some safety, after all. Otherwise, I might be interrupted, and I couldn't have that happen.

Floating myself up, I cusped on the primeval's combat range. I spread my hands and soaked the sight in. They moved without their previous, rampant pace. Leaning over, I soaked in a sensation of density, strength, and utter lucidity. In a sense, I stepped into a different realm from those around me.

And it was time to feel that change in all its fury.

Chapter 337: Scorched Earth and Shining Soil

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With a slight temporal acceleration, I flowed fast while the world coursed slow. I crashed into one of the star primevals, and its main body dispersed into an airy plasma around me. My psionically charged wake pressured the star beast from all angles, the floating egos seeping into its body. At the same time, my own star eldritch fired a bright beam through the bulk of the diffused enemy.

The primeval disintegrated, the bright bolt cleaving through the upper layers of algae far into the distance. Behemoths stared back at us, each of them enraged, and they saw the primevals before deciding to ignore us. Above them, the black hole stared at us with its blinding radiance, the dark center bearing down like an enraged eclipse.

Flowing between me and that sight, the star beast's body dispersed into my vision. That disruption waned as my ascendant aura soaked it in. I followed those shining pieces that lingered, and they floated onto the ossuary beneath us. From the opal shards, the chunks of light-laden eldritch swallowed energy in great gulps.

Emboldened by the sudden surge of vitality, they burst forth from the wisps, coalescing in its full fury. With blinding brilliance, it radiated energy, power, and anger. That rage faded as pieces of its body soaked into the rainbow bones below.

It stared down with a sun-shaped eye, the primeval dismayed. I lifted a hand, the opal shards below bending at my movements. They coursed in and around the beast, using

the energy it sapped in to attack the monster's mind. The wispy tendrils of the primeval met opalescent spines as the beast tried beaming away.

Trapped in its bone prison, the eldritch jettisoned the uncorrupted pieces of itself away from its opal-pierced center. From that main body, the disparate fragments collected into a smaller beast and recuperated using the radiance of the black hole above. Where it bathed in light, it found darkness instead.

I spawned a singularity over its chest, my palm aimed in its direction. I piled a series of black holes over the beast, swallowing the creature's regenerating form. At the same time, I dashed towards it. A kinetic shockwave plumed out from the gravitational implosions, but I pierced them. Surrounded by the star beast's nebulous remains, I shot out plumes from my armor in all directions.

My entire body turned into thousands of zigzagging branches that stretched across my wake's entirety. Each branch split several times, fine wires stretching out towards the edge of my dimension. I sapped the life force from the creature while smothering it in Event Horizon. My star beast zapped any remains leaving my area of control, and minutes passed while my enemy and I fought for dominance.

I was victorious, whittling it down in time. Finding it close to death, I commanded my own star monster to bathe us in its rays. It did so, and we both soaked in energy beams from all directions. As the last fragments of the enemy star beast's life dwindled, I swallowed its body. As it died, its mind collapsed under my passive, psionic pressure.

A portion of my mind bled into its depleting body. Inhabiting two entities at once, I experienced the flow of fire and fury the primeval possessed. It was a monster with epic potential. That palpable power fizzled as I experienced its death as if it were my own. The sharp collapse froze me in place, all the sensations overwhelming me for a second.

Snapping out of it, I looked down. Blue cores fell in a loose pile from the enemy eldritch, and I floated towards them, catching the spheres with my dimensional warp. Near the bone shards, I turned to find another one of my star beasts locked in combat. My golems supported my ascendant eldritch, the bones glistening below them both.

Before rushing in, I inspected the area. My eruption of singularities still left a depression here. However, the giant bone pile smoothed the craters out, the bones healing the wound like an old scar. However, the land wasn't the only part wounded.

With the support of my supergolems, my converted star beast whittled down a stone primeval.

The dense rock monster survived the onslaught throughout the entire time I trained. Looking at their fight, I understood the reason why. In front of me, a behemoth from above crashed down. It slammed into me, a giant mass of meat that my body absorbed. As the behemoth died, I watched the stone primeval do the same.

It siphoned itself under the skin of a falling behemoth, filling it up and soaking the insides into the stone. Tinged red, it popped out of the flesh balloon, alive and well. Watching close, I found it do the same thing several times. It regenerated itself by collecting the dropping corpses of dead behemoths.

Coming into combat range, I commanded three of my super golems to collect the falling shards and behemoths. My golems zoomed overhead, becoming speeding blurs that snapped the falling debris out of the air. At the same time, I ordered my star beasts to wrap around me. They whirled as shining clouds before swirling around my arms.

We emitted radiance, our manas overwhelming in unison. Power soaked off the three of us before I bolted towards the mineral monster. It shifted into a wall of spikes, each thorn oozing toxic, liquid metal. Finding my warped reflection in the silver droplets, I watched us slam into the monster.

And I watched it explode.

From all sides, the star beasts erupted out in an enormous mushroom cloud of nuclear energy and kinetic power. The initial explosion evaporated me entirely, but I bubbled back from the center of my wake. As I frothed back into existence, parts of my body formed, the first being my head. I watched below me as a mass of glowing, dimensional fabric spit and hissed out the rest of me.

Glowing and fully restored, I lifted my arms, and a wave of mana generated into singularities around me. Bursting forth in a disruptive wave, the implosions wrought absolute annihilation. Portions of the stone primeval exploded outwards like shrapnel from a grenade, and my supergolems intercepted most of the shards.

Despite our efforts, dust particles landed on the opal bones. Countering, I controlled a large patch of the opal shards below. They devoured an even greater portion of the primeval's body, but tiny slivers of the beast landed far in the distance. From those

remnants, the monster recuperated, so I let out a long sigh, wondering if this is how it felt to fight me.

Probably.

Either way, the stone monster aimed to collect itself into a singular entity once more. Before it could, my team fired off in every direction, killing or capturing the piles of minerals. Once we snatched them all up, we pooled them together. Since blowing this thing up wouldn't work, I snapped the writhing rocks and shining stones into my dimensional storage.

Like putting it into a furnace, I disintegrated it in my pocket dimension. I couldn't hold many primevals like this, but a few would fit. It was more about having a good uptime for this utility anyways.

Having handled that threat, I peered around to find my last star beast. While I couldn't see it, I heard it. Floating towards the sound of thunderous booms, I found liquid water forming into a series of lakes below me. Befuddled by the liquid, I dipped into it. It tried coursing under my skin, the liquid alive and hungry.

But so was I. I soaked it in, doing the same to any nearby lakes. I cleaned the entire area until I hovered near the precipice of the booming echoes. I found their cause; my last star beast faced off against an amalgam of primevals. A lightning eldritch infused into the body of a water primeval, probably the one causing the lakes.

They wrapped around the solid core of an ice eldritch. The trifecta whittled my poor star beast into a shadow of its former self. Literally. Instead of glistening like a sun, the shining eldritch simmered like an ember in a campfire. Without my golems or the rainbow bones below, The star eldritch would've died long ago.

Flying in, we added to its reinforcements. My two star beasts, my golems, and I rushed in like a tidal wave over a crumbling house. As we charged, the triad lifted an arm, mana surging through it. The energies collided into its palm before rupturing out of the icy core. A bolt of lightning exploded out of it, clashing with me.

Whizzing tendrils of lightning spattered in every direction. As the flash subsided, I peered down. My left arm, leg, and side charred to ash, the edge of the marks mirroring the end of a cigarette. While I sizzled away, my star beasts dispersed in every direction,

their pieces reforming. Despite the attack, we bought enough time for my dying star beast to recuperate. It rested in the sea of opal shards below.

Adding to that gained time, the conjoined primeval gawked at me. Those few seconds let my three star beasts become whole. Two of them rushed over my arms, whirling around with atomic fire. The last eldritch spun around my chest, beaming outwards with flares and electric sparks. We faced the triad of primevals, our union less complete but no less intimidating.

Completing the assault, my super golems circled around us, the twenty-plus golems humming like a hornet's nest. In the center of it, I oozed energized plasma. Like holding two nukes in each hand, the star beasts flowed with solar, rumbling energy. The radiation bathed me in its warmth while I eyed the enemy primevals.

They looked back with six beady eyes, each oculus peering from different portions of itself. Without any incitement, it dashed towards me. I clasped my fists, and mana charged into my frame. Glowing a bright blue, we zapped onto the conjoined primeval's charge.

A cataclysmic eruption of force echoed out. Ice, water, lightning, plasma, and dimensional fabric shattered outward like energized buckshot. We sliced in all directions, my supergolems capturing fractions of the fused primevals. Its vitality was endless, and the patch of primevals collected itself back together in seconds.

I watched it happen, my body having already healed a while back. Raising a palm, I plumed out an antigravity well at its center, preventing it from convalescing. Adding to my carnage, I spouted dozens of spiny tendrils and pierced its remnants. Like hooked fish, the shards tumbled towards me as I yanked them in.

A whirling ocean of black, I absorbed and disintegrated the beast within myself. The monsters unleashed explosions from within, and we tangled into a web of chaos. Plumes of ice pierced my body. Lightning melted and burned my blood. Water coursed into my lungs and flowed through my eyes and ears. I stayed within the elemental construct's inferno, and I faced it down.

As I did, the time magic showed why Schema kept me from it. The swirling monsters slowed, no longer overwhelming my senses with their speed. Their frenetic pace turned into a quick dashing, and I comprehended the mess with clarity. More mana flowed out while I dodged energized strike after energized strike.

Without holding a human form, I turned into my own whirlwind of death and destruction. I didn't let my human form restrain me, so I coursed into the monsters. We became embodiments of battle, no longer living for life but for war. Like hurricanes colliding, we both collapsed into turmoil. From that chaos, carnage erupted in all its forms.

We stayed at the center of it, each of us tearing at the other's throat. We created a desolate hellscape of fury. In that elemental rupture, I kept myself temporally accelerated by a slight bit. It left me feeling as if I fought with an unfair advantage, one I nevertheless exploited.

My star beasts whirled around us, hissing out beams that blew the enemy apart any time an opening presented itself. My psionic wake oozed into the three primevals to rip apart their connection points. From within, I summoned singularities into their bodies in a neverending flow. As their blows bat air and mine hit hard, they fell while I remained.

I noticed something I hadn't expected from time magic in that fury – the primevals brittle. Once dense as steel, they softened to stone. It was odd seeing them shatter from my attacks, and in time, the three primevals dwindled in size and mass. Not needing to ensnare them any longer, I returned to a human form.

My storming body gave way to calamitous fists. My strikes popped with kinetic radiance, a beautiful display of physical force. They chained into a presentation of many skills, magic and might molding into one singular stream of destruction. Each strike used telekinesis, gravity, elemental surges, technique, and timing to eliminate the enemy, and they worked well.

On the other hand, the enemy's assault turned from a series of blinding blows to fast strikes. Seeing their attacks, I could actually evade them. They whirled past me, each of us like motion incarnated into physical forms. Despite my time magic, the primevals maintained their dominance regarding strength and power.

But the gap closed enough that my technique came into play. The years of practice showed its worth, my subtle movements returning. With my eyes opened wide, I stared at their attacks as they flowed by. I adapted to their frenetic, instinctual movement with my own, and they no longer touched me.

The pressure from my psionically charged wake distracted the amalgam, and it paired well with Event Horizon. Just as this triad whittled my own star beast down, we did the same to it. With the trifacta roaring out its death throes, it unleashed a charged hailstorm in my direction. It coursed over me.

And I glided through it. The wind, the rain, and the hail, I ebbed around them. I melted myself and flowed from all sides like glowing magma. I coursed into its eyes, chest, and body. Once I encompassed the primevals, I turned my glowing, liquid form into a matte solid, flash-freezing myself. My state of matter rapidly reconstructed, fragments of the primevals hissed and howled within.

My body imprisoning them, they wrestled once more to escape. It struggled against me, but after a few moments, it threatened to break out of its cage. Before it could, another idea popped into my head. I stayed perfectly still, pressing my wake down further from every direction. The psionic pressure multiplied, as did my temporal acceleration.

The sharp cries of the primevals stretched out into low drones. The primevals slowed to a snail's pace, their attacks barely budging me anymore. Event Horizon burned through them, and the psionic pressure poured into their minds. Several times stronger, those effects broke down the ensnared monsters in a quick fashion.

Their dying wails droned for ages as I remained fixed in position. In the end, their innate tenacity became their greatest burden as they died. Staying in my hastened temporal flow, I inched my gaze around, even the slightest movements burdening me. Our battle left behind a few craters, but overall, the battle's destruction paled when compared to my singularity storms.

Another plus, I hadn't fought the primevals for days either. Time magic paid off, mainly when used with a bit of creativity. So did disconnecting the primevals from the sea of opal shards both above and below. Once cut off from their supply, the primeval's regeneration dwindled.

Either way, the dust cleared, and I gazed at an area large enough for a respectable city. Landing in the middle of it, I took no rest, getting to work. I rallied up the rest of my allies to inspect their conditions, and starting with the converted primevals, I set up telepathic links to them.

The ascendant mana I left behind waned to less than half its initial size, so the star beasts nearly regained control of their bodies. Before they did, I psionically charged my

wake and flooded the bodies of each star beast. From within, I infused ascendant mana into their minds. It was like shoving my mind into theirs.

I happened to have a vast mind, so large, in fact, that their egos struggled to maintain themselves. The mana kept building inside each eldritch, and each dollop of energy put them another foot in the grave. Within a few minutes, their minds stretched to their limit. After an hour, those limits broke.

Their minds ruptured.

It was like filling a balloon with too much air. Within their heads, I experienced their psionic deaths because I inhabited their bodies. However, their pain left no mark on me. I died this way a thousand times before. In me, these mindless constructs would find no mercy. After blending their minds, I stared at three ascendant eldritch. Blinking at myself, I stared down at my hands.

What the hell was I doing?

I grabbed my temples, stunned at my cruelty. I hadn't wanted to psionically drown them in the first place. I called it that since it felt like filling someone's head up with an ocean of thoughts. The stream of consciousness kept piling up until the resident psyche 'drowned' in them. Not wanting to become a complete monster, I vowed not to take over more eldritch.

These three would be my limit, and I'd much rather improve my golems anyways. Doing just that, I sat down with my legs crossed. I fiddled with my grimoire before a gravitational flux rippled across Leviathan. The algae rode the wave, the layers of kelp becoming several layers of stormy seas.

The flux reached me, flinging my grimoire into the distance. My entire workstation exploded. The ball of floating molten fabric splat over me. The rainbow bones shivered and trembled, spines erupting out and through me. Even the air itself condensed and thinned, my ears popping.

Adjusting in a split second, I reached out a hand, snapping my grimoire back into my hands. I melted my dimensional fabric again before stuffing it back into my pocket dimension. Standing up and looking around, a behemoth fell down beside me.

Its massive body was a slimy mass of tentacles and teeth. As it stood up, it roared at me with said tentacles and teeth, its maw dripping acid. I sighed while lifting my hand. A matrice of opal spikes plumed into and out of the behemoth.

Before it died, it vomited green blood onto my face and my grimoire. Wiping my face, I frowned. The behemoth gurgled before erupting pus and snot over me. It kept hacking up slime before I poked my grimoire and blew it up with a singularity. Buckshot of shining bones sliced into my body before I grimaced.

Yeah, maybe building the city first was a good idea.

Chapter 337: Scorched Earth and Shining Soil

Arm in hand, I stared up while melting the limb, and my golems and star beasts struggled above. Itching to test my new abilities, I smiled and gave myself a break. Crafting golems required some safety, after all. Otherwise, I might be interrupted, and I couldn't have that happen.

Floating myself up, I cusped on the primeval's combat range. I spread my hands and soaked the sight in. They moved without their previous, rampant pace. Leaning over, I soaked in a sensation of density, strength, and utter lucidity. In a sense, I stepped into a different realm from those around me.

And it was time to feel that change in all its fury.

With a slight temporal acceleration, I flowed fast while the world coursed slow. I crashed into one of the star primevals, and its main body dispersed into an airy plasma around me. My psionically charged wake pressured the star beast from all angles, the floating egos seeping into its body. At the same time, my own star eldritch fired a bright beam through the bulk of the diffused enemy.

The primeval disintegrated, the bright bolt cleaving through the upper layers of algae far into the distance. Behemoths stared back at us, each of them enraged, and they saw the primevals before deciding to ignore us. Above them, the black hole stared at us with its blinding radiance, the dark center bearing down like an enraged eclipse.

Flowing between me and that sight, the star beast's body dispersed into my vision. That disruption waned as my ascendant aura soaked it in. I followed those shining pieces that lingered, and they floated onto the ossuary beneath us. From the opal shards, the chunks of light-laden eldritch swallowed energy in great gulps.

Emboldened by the sudden surge of vitality, they burst forth from the wisps, coalescing in its full fury. With blinding brilliance, it radiated energy, power, and anger. That rage faded as pieces of its body soaked into the rainbow bones below.

It stared down with a sun-shaped eye, the primeval dismayed. I lifted a hand, the opal shards below bending at my movements. They coursed in and around the beast, using the energy it sapped in to attack the monster's mind. The wispy tendrils of the primeval met opalescent spines as the beast tried beaming away.

Trapped in its bone prison, the eldritch jettisoned the uncorrupted pieces of itself away from its opal-pierced center. From that main body, the disparate fragments collected into a smaller beast and recuperated using the radiance of the black hole above. Where it bathed in light, it found darkness instead.

I spawned a singularity over its chest, my palm aimed in its direction. I piled a series of black holes over the beast, swallowing the creature's regenerating form. At the same time, I dashed towards it. A kinetic shockwave plumed out from the gravitational implosions, but I pierced them. Surrounded by the star beast's nebulous remains, I shot out plumes from my armor in all directions.

My entire body turned into thousands of zigzagging branches that stretched across my wake's entirety. Each branch split several times, fine wires stretching out towards the edge of my dimension. I sapped the life force from the creature while smothering it in Event Horizon. My star beast zapped any remains leaving my area of control, and minutes passed while my enemy and I fought for dominance.

I was victorious, whittling it down in time. Finding it close to death, I commanded my own star monster to bathe us in its rays. It did so, and we both soaked in energy beams from all directions. As the last fragments of the enemy star beast's life dwindled, I swallowed its body. As it died, its mind collapsed under my passive, psionic pressure.

A portion of my mind bled into its depleting body. Inhabiting two entities at once, I experienced the flow of fire and fury the primeval possessed. It was a monster with epic potential. That palpable power fizzled as I experienced its death as if it were my own. The sharp collapse froze me in place, all the sensations overwhelming me for a second.

Snapping out of it, I looked down. Blue cores fell in a loose pile from the enemy eldritch, and I floated towards them, catching the spheres with my dimensional warp.

Near the bone shards, I turned to find another one of my star beasts locked in combat. My golems supported my ascendant eldritch, the bones glistening below them both.

Before rushing in, I inspected the area. My eruption of singularities still left a depression here. However, the giant bone pile smoothed the craters out, the bones healing the wound like an old scar. However, the land wasn't the only part wounded. With the support of my supergolems, my converted star beast whittled down a stone primeval.

The dense rock monster survived the onslaught throughout the entire time I trained. Looking at their fight, I understood the reason why. In front of me, a behemoth from above crashed down. It slammed into me, a giant mass of meat that my body absorbed. As the behemoth died, I watched the stone primeval do the same.

It siphoned itself under the skin of a falling behemoth, filling it up and soaking the insides into the stone. Tinged red, it popped out of the flesh balloon, alive and well. Watching close, I found it do the same thing several times. It regenerated itself by collecting the dropping corpses of dead behemoths.

Coming into combat range, I commanded three of my super golems to collect the falling shards and behemoths. My golems zoomed overhead, becoming speeding blurs that snapped the falling debris out of the air. At the same time, I ordered my star beasts to wrap around me. They whirled as shining clouds before swirling around my arms.

We emitted radiance, our manas overwhelming in unison. Power soaked off the three of us before I bolted towards the mineral monster. It shifted into a wall of spikes, each thorn oozing toxic, liquid metal. Finding my warped reflection in the silver droplets, I watched us slam into the monster.

And I watched it explode.

From all sides, the star beasts erupted out in an enormous mushroom cloud of nuclear energy and kinetic power. The initial explosion evaporated me entirely, but I bubbled back from the center of my wake. As I frothed back into existence, parts of my body formed, the first being my head. I watched below me as a mass of glowing, dimensional fabric spit and hissed out the rest of me.

Glowing and fully restored, I lifted my arms, and a wave of mana generated into singularities around me. Bursting forth in a disruptive wave, the implosions wrought

absolute annihilation. Portions of the stone primeval exploded outwards like shrapnel from a grenade, and my supergolems intercepted most of the shards.

Despite our efforts, dust particles landed on the opal bones. Countering, I controlled a large patch of the opal shards below. They devoured an even greater portion of the primeval's body, but tiny slivers of the beast landed far in the distance. From those remnants, the monster recuperated, so I let out a long sigh, wondering if this is how it felt to fight me.

Probably.

Either way, the stone monster aimed to collect itself into a singular entity once more. Before it could, my team fired off in every direction, killing or capturing the piles of minerals. Once we snatched them all up, we pooled them together. Since blowing this thing up wouldn't work, I snapped the writhing rocks and shining stones into my dimensional storage.

Like putting it into a furnace, I disintegrated it in my pocket dimension. I couldn't hold many primevals like this, but a few would fit. It was more about having a good uptime for this utility anyways.

Having handled that threat, I peered around to find my last star beast. While I couldn't see it, I heard it. Floating towards the sound of thunderous booms, I found liquid water forming into a series of lakes below me. Befuddled by the liquid, I dipped into it. It tried coursing under my skin, the liquid alive and hungry.

But so was I. I soaked it in, doing the same to any nearby lakes. I cleaned the entire area until I hovered near the precipice of the booming echoes. I found their cause; my last star beast faced off against an amalgam of primevals. A lightning eldritch infused into the body of a water primeval, probably the one causing the lakes.

They wrapped around the solid core of an ice eldritch. The trifecta whittled my poor star beast into a shadow of its former self. Literally. Instead of glistening like a sun, the shining eldritch simmered like an ember in a campfire. Without my golems or the rainbow bones below, The star eldritch would've died long ago.

Flying in, we added to its reinforcements. My two star beasts, my golems, and I rushed in like a tidal wave over a crumbling house. As we charged, the triad lifted an arm,

mana surging through it. The energies collided into its palm before rupturing out of the icy core. A bolt of lightning exploded out of it, clashing with me.

Whizzing tendrils of lightning spattered in every direction. As the flash subsided, I peered down. My left arm, leg, and side charred to ash, the edge of the marks mirroring the end of a cigarette. While I sizzled away, my star beasts dispersed in every direction, their pieces reforming. Despite the attack, we bought enough time for my dying star beast to recuperate. It rested in the sea of opal shards below.

Adding to that gained time, the conjoined primeval gawked at me. Those few seconds let my three star beasts become whole. Two of them rushed over my arms, whirling around with atomic fire. The last eldritch spun around my chest, beaming outwards with flares and electric sparks. We faced the triad of primevals, our union less complete but no less intimidating.

Completing the assault, my super golems circled around us, the twenty-plus golems humming like a hornet's nest. In the center of it, I oozed energized plasma. Like holding two nukes in each hand, the star beasts flowed with solar, rumbling energy. The radiation bathed me in its warmth while I eyed the enemy primevals.

They looked back with six beady eyes, each oculus peering from different portions of itself. Without any incitement, it dashed towards me. I clasped my fists, and mana charged into my frame. Glowing a bright blue, we zapped onto the conjoined primeval's charge.

A cataclysmic eruption of force echoed out. Ice, water, lightning, plasma, and dimensional fabric shattered outward like energized buckshot. We sliced in all directions, my supergolems capturing fractions of the fused primevals. Its vitality was endless, and the patch of primevals collected itself back together in seconds.

I watched it happen, my body having already healed a while back. Raising a palm, I plumed out an antigravity well at its center, preventing it from convalescing. Adding to my carnage, I spouted dozens of spiny tendrils and pierced its remnants. Like hooked fish, the shards tumbled towards me as I yanked them in.

A whirling ocean of black, I absorbed and disintegrated the beast within myself. The monsters unleashed explosions from within, and we tangled into a web of chaos. Plumes of ice pierced my body. Lightning melted and burned my blood. Water coursed

into my lungs and flowed through my eyes and ears. I stayed within the elemental construct's inferno, and I faced it down.

As I did, the time magic showed why Schema kept me from it. The swirling monsters slowed, no longer overwhelming my senses with their speed. Their frenetic pace turned into a quick dashing, and I comprehended the mess with clarity. More mana flowed out while I dodged energized strike after energized strike.

Without holding a human form, I turned into my own whirlwind of death and destruction. I didn't let my human form restrain me, so I coursed into the monsters. We became embodiments of battle, no longer living for life but for war. Like hurricanes colliding, we both collapsed into turmoil. From that chaos, carnage erupted in all its forms.

We stayed at the center of it, each of us tearing at the other's throat. We created a desolate hellscape of fury. In that elemental rupture, I kept myself temporally accelerated by a slight bit. It left me feeling as if I fought with an unfair advantage, one I nevertheless exploited.

My star beasts whirled around us, hissing out beams that blew the enemy apart any time an opening presented itself. My psionic wake oozed into the three primevals to rip apart their connection points. From within, I summoned singularities into their bodies in a neverending flow. As their blows bat air and mine hit hard, they fell while I remained.

I noticed something I hadn't expected from time magic in that fury – the primevals brittle. Once dense as steel, they softened to stone. It was odd seeing them shatter from my attacks, and in time, the three primevals dwindled in size and mass. Not needing to ensnare them any longer, I returned to a human form.

My storming body gave way to calamitous fists. My strikes popped with kinetic radiance, a beautiful display of physical force. They chained into a presentation of many skills, magic and might molding into one singular stream of destruction. Each strike used telekinesis, gravity, elemental surges, technique, and timing to eliminate the enemy, and they worked well.

On the other hand, the enemy's assault turned from a series of blinding blows to fast strikes. Seeing their attacks, I could actually evade them. They whirled past me, each of us like motion incarnated into physical forms. Despite my time magic, the primevals maintained their dominance regarding strength and power.

But the gap closed enough that my technique came into play. The years of practice showed its worth, my subtle movements returning. With my eyes opened wide, I stared at their attacks as they flowed by. I adapted to their frenetic, instinctual movement with my own, and they no longer touched me.

The pressure from my psionically charged wake distracted the amalgam, and it paired well with Event Horizon. Just as this triad whittled my own star beast down, we did the same to it. With the trifecta roaring out its death throes, it unleashed a charged hailstorm in my direction. It coursed over me.

And I glided through it. The wind, the rain, and the hail, I ebbed around them. I melted myself and flowed from all sides like glowing magma. I coursed into its eyes, chest, and body. Once I encompassed the primevals, I turned my glowing, liquid form into a matte solid, flash-freezing myself. My state of matter rapidly reconstructed, fragments of the primevals hissed and howled within.

My body imprisoning them, they wrestled once more to escape. It struggled against me, but after a few moments, it threatened to break out of its cage. Before it could, another idea popped into my head. I stayed perfectly still, pressing my wake down further from every direction. The psionic pressure multiplied, as did my temporal acceleration.

The sharp cries of the primevals stretched out into low drones. The primevals slowed to a snail's pace, their attacks barely budging me anymore. Event Horizon burned through them, and the psionic pressure poured into their minds. Several times stronger, those effects broke down the ensnared monsters in a quick fashion.

Their dying wails droned for ages as I remained fixed in position. In the end, their innate tenacity became their greatest burden as they died. Staying in my hastened temporal flow, I inched my gaze around, even the slightest movements burdening me. Our battle left behind a few craters, but overall, the battle's destruction paled when compared to my singularity storms.

Another plus, I hadn't fought the primevals for days either. Time magic paid off, mainly when used with a bit of creativity. So did disconnecting the primevals from the sea of opal shards both above and below. Once cut off from their supply, the primeval's regeneration dwindled.

Either way, the dust cleared, and I gazed at an area large enough for a respectable city. Landing in the middle of it, I took no rest, getting to work. I rallied up the rest of my allies to inspect their conditions, and starting with the converted primevals, I set up telepathic links to them.

The ascendant mana I left behind waned to less than half its initial size, so the star beasts nearly regained control of their bodies. Before they did, I psionically charged my wake and flooded the bodies of each star beast. From within, I infused ascendant mana into their minds. It was like shoving my mind into theirs.

I happened to have a vast mind, so large, in fact, that their egos struggled to maintain themselves. The mana kept building inside each eldritch, and each dollop of energy put them another foot in the grave. Within a few minutes, their minds stretched to their limit. After an hour, those limits broke.

Their minds ruptured.

It was like filling a balloon with too much air. Within their heads, I experienced their psionic deaths because I inhabited their bodies. However, their pain left no mark on me. I died this way a thousand times before. In me, these mindless constructs would find no mercy. After blending their minds, I stared at three ascendant eldritch. Blinking at myself, I stared down at my hands.

What the hell was I doing?

I grabbed my temples, stunned at my cruelty. I hadn't wanted to psionically drown them in the first place. I called it that since it felt like filling someone's head up with an ocean of thoughts. The stream of consciousness kept piling up until the resident psyche 'drowned' in them. Not wanting to become a complete monster, I vowed not to take over more eldritch.

These three would be my limit, and I'd much rather improve my golems anyways. Doing just that, I sat down with my legs crossed. I fiddled with my grimoire before a gravitational flux rippled across Leviathan. The algae rode the wave, the layers of kelp becoming several layers of stormy seas.

The flux reached me, flinging my grimoire into the distance. My entire workstation exploded. The ball of floating molten fabric splat over me. The rainbow bones shivered

and trembled, spines erupting out and through me. Even the air itself condensed and thinned, my ears popping.

Adjusting in a split second, I reached out a hand, snapping my grimoire back into my hands. I melted my dimensional fabric again before stuffing it back into my pocket dimension. Standing up and looking around, a behemoth fell down beside me.

Its massive body was a slimy mass of tentacles and teeth. As it stood up, it roared at me with said tentacles and teeth, its maw dripping acid. I sighed while lifting my hand. A matrice of opal spikes plumed into and out of the behemoth.

Before it died, it vomited green blood onto my face and my grimoire. Wiping my face, I frowned. The behemoth gurgled before erupting pus and snot over me. It kept hacking up slime before I poked my grimoire and blew it up with a singularity. Buckshot of shining bones sliced into my body before I grimaced.

Yeah, maybe building the city first was a good idea.

Chapter 338: A Haven in Hell

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Yeah, maybe building the city first was a good idea.

I gathered my last two constructor golems in my location, and they created a perimeter while I theorized how to make a city here. Any conventional design would fail because of, well, everything. The air wasn't breathable, and the pressure crushed normal animals into a thin paste. The temperature ignited human tissue, and the fluctuations of gravity smushed the living into the dead.

But the list of hazards went on. Radiation cooked anyone alive. The gravity on Leviathan-7 was much higher than Earth's pull, meaning long-term issues might arise. There could be cancer from radioactivity, and people would struggle with isolation since cities would be tiny. I hadn't even mentioned the eldritch yet, which presented the most enormous problem of all.

In all honesty, an average person visiting Leviathan-7 amounted to a creative form of suicide. I wanted everyday people to stay here, train, and leave, but to make that happen, Leviathan-7 required an immense infrastructure. Staring down at my hands, I had the means to make that happen. I temporally accelerated while coming up with a framework for a livable city.

I spent about an hour drafting up solutions before getting my thoughts in order. With everything in place, I set out to accomplish my goal. The first step involved creating a dynamic monolith at the center of my city. These structures mimicked the ones on Earth's cities but were orders of magnitudes more robust.

They'd terraform a set perimeter while offering defensive shielding. It was simple, really. They just needed to stop incoming radiation, high temperatures, atmospheric pressure, excess gravity, and sharp gravitational fluctuations. I mean, what could possibly go wrong with that? To my surprise, not much, and it wasn't as difficult as I expected it to be.

For the most part, temperature management, the planet's overbearing gravity, and the crippling atmospheric pressure only required a consistent source of mana to fix. After setting up a basic inscription, I tested them out on a small area. Once powered up, everything stabilized, and that would work on a larger scale by simply increasing the mana costs.

On the other hand, controlling the gravitational fluxes and the eldritch outside required some ingenuity and investment. If primevals attacked the city's shielding, even a hundred blue cores wouldn't stop them. That made a defense force essential, one that could challenge and kill primevals. Considering how brittle my super golems were, I needed far more firepower than what they offered. Gazing at the converted star eldritch, the temptation to just psionically drown the primevals rushed over me.

In my primordial wake, I relished the efficiency of the idea. It acted as a beautiful irony to turn my enemies against themselves, their attacks becoming my most outstanding defense. Peering out into the lonely landscape, it didn't seem like I'd make this place any worse to live in either. It was an isolated hell where no being thought beyond their perpetual hunger. It could be made no worse.

However, I sided against the temptation once more. The converted eldritch lacked the flexibility of my golems, and after leaving Leviathan, I'd have to smuggle the converted eldritch with me. Even then, Plazia wouldn't enjoy seeing what I'd done to these monsters. I wouldn't either.

Considering those factors, my golems were the best option long term. After revamping the monolith system, I'd remodel the super golems for more protection. The only issue left involved seizing territory quickly and efficiently for my cities. With time being limited, I considered my previous tactics.

An orbital bombardment could tear through a group of primevals, but unlike everything else I'd faced, primevals would shrug that off. An assault plan needed more oomph. If I charged my mana while diving down, I could reform in a split second while releasing a singularity storm. That was a great follow-up, but I hesitated to call that enough. I had the itching suspicion that the primevals would survive. If I controlled the opal shards below, I could cut the primevals off their regeneration. A few singularities on top of that would incite another gamma burst from the rainbow bones.

That ensured most primevals demise.

The combat strategy required explosive but straightforward tactics. By comparison, the pillar system required some serious engineering. Getting to work on that, I leaned into my primordial wake. Its insistent perfectionism took the forefront while I took a breath. I reached out my hands, thinking to rip myself apart for dimensional fabric.

I paused, a better idea forming in my mind. I pulled myself out of my body, my mind hovering in my wake. In that form, I generated mana outside my body. After all the practice, a few mana crystals clattered against the opal shards beneath me. Instead of creating pure mana, I molded my armor out of nothing.

And it worked with ease. My flesh, blood, and bones spawned from nothing, another me popping up out of the ether. I gawked at myself since I'd just created this body a second prior, but somehow, it felt completely normal. Adjusting quickly, I ushered more of my bodies from nothing, the corpses piling up.

Compared to time magic, this wasn't as difficult to get around, and once more, I uncovered a better way of harvesting my dimensional fabric. Using that method, a pile of my carcasses amassed before I melted them all at once. Some people said they did, but I made my cities with blood, sweat, and tears, though leaning into the blood part.

Anyways, I flicked a hand, the molten bodies forming into a colossal monolith. It stretched up to the lowest layer of sky kelp, a few feet shy of the wafting plant matter. Floating beside the pillar, I reached out my hands while moving my fingers towards the

barren structure. Telekinetic points popped up over my fingertips, and heated contact points etched into the pillar.

In seconds, I carved a veritable novel onto its surface, giving it the runes required. I also revised the aura buff, giving people under its influence more oomph. With plenty of room to spare on the pillar, I devised a few other ideas to fill the leftover space. The first involved fixing the gravitational variations.

Peering at the jumbled surface of the city, my idea wouldn't work on an unlevel surface. I flattened the bone shards in a large circle around the central monolith, and I embedded the city twenty feet deep into the rainbow bones. This pit added natural protection. For a second, I contemplated putting the bones over the town and calling it a day.

I scrapped the idea. It made the claustrophobia of living here even worse, and if primevals fought overhead, the residents wouldn't know until it was too late. Instead of going with an underground model, I kept the upper opening idea. The start of that involved molding telepathic points all over the leveled bones.

I connected the psionic infrastructure by installing wires that connected everything. They all secured to the central monolith, centralizing command of the city. Adding to the idea, I set up more telepathy points using spheres of my dimensional fabric. With a simple enchantment, those orbs floated into the sky overhead, forming a visible net over the city.

They created a network that my supergolems used. After installing several hundred of those floating cores, a slight psionic aura enveloped the city, one that anyone could connect with. Finishing this system, I created and implanted five constructor golem cores into the inner monolith.

Those minds regulated the temperature, pressure, and other aspects of making this place livable. They even worked together to shield the city from gravitational fluxes, but that was in theory not practice. After linking them together, I tested the system myself. Floating outside the town, I lobbed gravitational waves at it, and these forces mirrored the instability on Leviathan-7.

To my surprise, the constructor golems caught these forces with ease, the five entities keeping the city safe. Having a space that wouldn't be smashed, I erected nine more monoliths in a circle around the primary pillar. These pillars were set right at the limits

of the constructor golem's protective radius. A natural width of the city was made, and it was about two kilometers.

It gave enough space for a few thousand people if they ate space food and lived in tiny areas. I frowned, knowing living here would be temporary. Either way, I implanted another constructor golem core into each of the nine columns around the city. To top it off, I added five more to the giant monolith at the center.

This required some serious investment, but too much protection was objectively superior to too little, especially in this case. After melting down several bodies worth of dimensional fabric, I formed them into connection points for everything. A psionic pulse linked the disparate golem cores, making them function together under a set prerogative. It was a highly complex, derived formula that I created after many hours of rigorous study and deep contemplation.

Keep. City. Safe.

While perhaps a bit dystopian, these all-seeing and ever-present guardians kept citizens from evaporating to the elements. It was kind of like living on a space station. While there, a person couldn't fire a gun or blow something up. Otherwise, everyone within would die, and this protective web acted precisely the same way. Being watched all the time was a necessary sacrifice of living here.

Either way, telepathic links synced everything together into a single network. After charging it all with mana, the psionic aura condensed over the circular city. It was a massive chatroom for people's thoughts, which could be a problem down the line. However, only my golems and I used it, so it functioned for now.

Wielding the mental chatroom, I commanded my golems to check on the psionic web every couple of hours for updates. This charged aura would be my announcement board. With that handled, I inspected the physical city. It was quite literally bare-bones, so I converted the rainbow bones into the structure of buildings.

After changing the rainbow bone's dimensions, they held strut with even more rigor than my own fabric. Testing out the opal shard's limits, I found they let me build from twenty feet below to twenty feet above the surface. Any further, and the massive behemoth below got antsy. I stayed within this limit, ensuring we never trampled on the giant bone monster's boundaries.

After shaping the bone, the psionic web and golem cores applied mental pressure onto the opal shards. This kept the opal shards from reverting to their previous forms. This all directed through the psionic web I created. Experimenting further, I constructed a few buildings for organizational purposes and a few rooms in each enclosure. Though a bit snug, they acted as a meditative retreat for me from all the chaos around us.

With a functional city in place, I let the constructor golems tidy it all up. They coated the shining structures with marble, granite, and quartz, making the city easier on the eyes. Once again, the constructor golems exceeded expectations, using the opal bones as a trim for buildings, walkways, and streetlights. It jazzed the place up, the many stone textures contrasting the futuristic glow of the opal shards.

This place was shaping up nicely.

Interrupting my satisfaction, a primeval shouted in the distance. It bellowing with fury, its cry leaking in from a vast range. Wincing at that, I added a sound barrier before taking the next step in my city's development. It maintained itself well, but it was time to ensure its protection from the primevals.

Short term that is. Before building some shields into the central monolith, I whipped out my grimoire and improved my cipheric marking for them.

I usually used something unrefined and straightforward for this purpose, but my previous designs would pop like a bubble here. Leviathan-7 demanded an intense, powerful shield that helped regulate the environment. Standing beside this city's central monolith, I gave the city just that.

After setting up the temperature rune, I paired it with an antigravity sigil. They gave a baseline to those systems, helping the constructor cores. They paired with an atmospheric generator, which was a fancy way of saying an air-making rune. Once set up, I attached them to a batch of ten blue dungeon hearts. It turned out that blue cores set up practical barriers naturally.

I sort of expected that, but these wilder cores did more than Schema's did. Unlike a blue dungeon heart in Schema's system, these produced power instead of siphoning it away, meaning they didn't need charging. I wondered where that power went, but Schema probably used it however he wanted. Regardless, the blue cores saved me lots of time here.

In that way, a hefty investment in dungeon hearts guaranteed an immutable shield without any fuss. With the physical aspect guaranteed, I synched those systems up with the terraforming systems. My eyes lit up with possibility as energy flowed into the cipheric markings. Having the essentials set up, I helped charge the cores one at a time.

Not long after, everything came online. Above us, hundreds of behemoths tore each other apart in the kelp. Forming between us, an energized strata whirled around the city's limits. Unlike the hexagonal patterns I was used to, this shield mirrored the way a blue core looked – like the surface of a tiny gas giant. The energy clashed overhead like giant cerulean spirals, the blue forcefield being semitransparent.

Each spinning coil sparked alive with electricity when smashing into another storm. Those sparks erupted outside the city, forming a humdrum of violence on the barrier's surface. It acted as a threat to anyone coming near it, one even I feared. That fear gave way to awe as the shield's surface rippled like a living force. It was as if a colossal planet wrapped around the city, and it constituted a perpetual guardian on this hostile planet.

It arrived with a sense of lightness, a sweet breeze, and my ears popping from the depressurization. In that homey shell, I rested under the primevals, the behemoths, and the algae. This was a spot of calm amidst a whirlwind of death, an oasis in the desert, so to speak. Since coming here, I roughed it every second of every day, but I carved out a spot to relax.

After giving myself a mental pat on the back, I stood up. From my dimensional storage, I pulled out my elemental furnaces. Embedding them in my armor, I gave them flesh, and they gave energy in turn. At the same time, more of my psyches crept into my dimensional wake. They compressed, and I fed some mana into my primordial rune.

It jerked mana into itself, threatening to wobble my control of time. I shut down the furnaces, putting all of my attention into the rune while temporally accelerated. For several hours, I honed those abilities in tandem. With practice, I added one burning furnace at a time. I attained comfort with subtle time hastening via the rise and collapse of those abilities. In a way, I represented an enormous mind split into many actions, and they all fed into my latent potential.

More hours passed, and my primordial rune reached its zenith for mana absorption. Standing there, I enjoyed a few days of building up my temporal acceleration while feeding my runes. I didn't double my time's pace while feeding my runes, but I sped up the sigil's feeding and furnaces' production by a sizable margin.

Either way, it was time to move on from the exercise. I decompressed my wake before turning towards a pile of blue cores remaining from the city's construction. I had to mimic the pillar's advancement but to my golems instead. Pulling up a thrumming dungeon heart, I stared at its spiraling depths. It evolved my monoliths into unbreakable, majestic beacons on this dark world.

And I hoped it would do the same for my golems.

Chapter 339: The Core of the Matter

Either way, it was time to move on from the exercise. I decompressed my wake before turning towards a pile of blue cores remaining from the city's construction. I had to mimic the pillar's advancement but to my golems instead. Pulling up a thrumming dungeon heart, I stared at its spiraling depths. It evolved my monoliths into unbreakable, majestic beacons on this dark world.

And I hoped it would do the same for my golems.

I tossed the dungeon heart into the distance before reaching an arm out. With a gravity well pulling on it, the blue sphere fell onto my palm, and it crackled on contact, sparks flaring out before I crushed it in my palm. Well, I tried too. For a ball of enigmatic mana, the structure held up against a solid squeeze without budging. It would hold up to damage from enemies.

Listening to it, my ears hummed from its constant shifting. I experimented with the surface, attempting to scratch it. The core shifted between my fingers, an ever-changing ball of chaos and serenity in my palm. It seemed to handle piercing and crushing forces differently, giving it odd properties, but I didn't mind it. It presented an interesting point to investigate.

Scratching it again, no marks lingered on the tiny ball of perpetual storms. Any runes I carved dissolved, so several minds of mine debated until we came up with the solution. Like pizza dough, we took a bit of dimensional fabric and flattened out a layer of it. I'd put this over the dungeon heart, and it would embed runes onto the core's surface.

After getting the slab ready, I wrapped and unwrapped the core, testing the dimensions of my covering. After getting the proportions right, I generated several copies of the slabs for the future. After that, I engraved runes onto the core wrappers. It was like putting ancient sigils on the inside of a candy wrapper.

Taking the crackling candy, I encapsulated the core and charged it with mana. I also tossed one in my mouth to see if it actually felt like candy. The idiotic idea paid out with dividends, the core shredding my mouth into a bloody mess. I swallowed my metal blood before wincing at the blue heart. It fought against being eaten quite a bit.

I hoped it wouldn't fight the same way against my sigils. As those esoteric markings took effect, the core changed according to the cipher's instructions, as all things did. Viewing it with my mana sense, I grinned as a smiley face formed on the core's shifting surface. With a stable surface to work on, I could reconstruct the reality within these tiny orbs.

There was a lot of work involved with controlling the dungeon hearts this way, but the crackling blue spheres carried enviable advantages that justified the extra effort. Even from just poking and prodding the cores here or there, some of those benefits surfaced. In particular, each orb contained a continuous flow of stable mana in enormous proportion.

If I drew energy from it, the core fought to return its mana to a predetermined state, making it immensely reliable. For imprinting a mind, this cohesion offered the perfect foundation for building a psyche because it offered sanity. After all, making something stable usually meant making it simple. The fewer the parts involved, the fewer ways the object could fail.

A mind emphasized that point even further. This was why even experienced primordial mages kept their living magic limited to basic constructs. Eat more. Destroy enemies. Burn buildings. Commands and urges like that came about with ease even when designed in combat. Adding even one more directive threw that balance out of whack.

The moment multiple motivations came about, the complexity often led to emergent problems. 'Emergent problems' really just meant general insanity and chaotic impulses. My golems required absolute sanity because they could kill someone so easily. This was also why I hadn't varied them much; they could destroy thousands in the blink of an eye.

The blue core acted as a base of serene calm, and that meant complex minds could be made with far less risk involved. Still, relying on these outer wrappings added extra steps to using the golem cores. Since this would be my first and last time doing this, I took some time before taking another action in golem-making.

I wanted to get this right.

Shifting the inner workings of the cores, I tried changing the dungeon hearts from the inside out. As suspected, the cipheric markings failed to stick. Even the depths changed moment to moment, like trying to tie down a long-lost memory. To get the runic markings on the actual core, I needed to give myself a stable surface to work with. However, I couldn't think of any way to make that happen.

Another Daniel did, however.

They used the outer wrapping of cipher runes to create permanent storms on the blue core's surface. These storms took the shape of cipheric runes on the dungeon heart. Another mind thought up the markings to separate these storms and prevent them from ruining each other. I offered some variations on the cipher markings that better fit these new methods.

After all, the cipher worked in a three-dimensional sense, and that's why dual layering worked as a technique in the first place. Applying that concept further, I figured the 3-dimensional storms could also offer greater depth to the cipher markings. The congregation of Daniels went to work, seeing to my theory's fruition.

In the end, it worked. Hell yeah.

So, we used the cipher to write the cipher. Overcoming that first hurdle, we arrived at the second blockade – the golem's runes needed rewrites and badly. The outdated sigils didn't take into account the blue cores, the stormy surfaces, or Leviathan-7's issues. I didn't mean this as a cutting criticism for our previous efforts either. We did well, considering.

I mean, I acted as a translator, converting Schema's runes to the cipher. While I did my best, my understanding of the engineer's work was limited at the time. After having made thousands of the golems, I gained a far better grasp of how they created the psyches in the first place. Studying time magic didn't hurt me in that regard either, considering how cerebral a task that ended up being.

Even with all that practice making the golems, I only gained partial competence in the field of mind making. I couldn't write new mind 'code' from scratch, but I could write it in my own words. Since the cipher required a heavy dose of perspective to do its thing, adding my two cents only helped the situation.

Taking that into account, I rewrote the imprints to fit the cipher's nature. My primordial wake strengthened my cipher work as well. Under that wake's influence, I stopped missing details or accepting choppy etchings. That understanding peaked with the storm-based cipher carving; I made drastic improvements.

Whittling away at the project, I rested in the middle of my city. My golems and star beasts fought outside while revising the golem models. Even with my silencing runes, deafening booms scattered into the town like muffled gunshots. I ended up molding the rainbow bone over me to offer some peace. This left me covered in quiet, one that rang out in my ears.

Without noticing, I adjusted to the ambient sounds a while back. This calm contrasted the relentless thudding, one that my time magic only accentuated.

In an odd twist, the quietest place on Leviathan-7 was underneath its ossuary.

In that death zone, I wrote out several rewrites for the golems' code. After getting a general understanding of the process, I used those improved versions as references. I separated our mental efforts, ensuring we used different ideas as we came up with our own opinions.

Like gladiators, we assaulted each other's claims and findings. Scrutinized, critiqued, chewed up, and spit out, our rough drafts received beating after beating. We laughed, mocked, and learned from our mistakes. After a dozen rounds of editing, debate, and criticism, we came up with a far improved version of the golem's manuscript.

I winced at it. It was still so flawed, but it would have to do.

Having a team working together, we preprepared twenty of the remaining blue cores. We planned out the runes to embody into them before writing them down on a flat sheet. We then wrapped that sheet over a dungeon heart, charging the runes into place via mana. Once the sheet loaded to its fullest extent, the storms synced into place.

Firing off a chain reaction, one wave of force led to more quakes and shifts. The storms hungered for energy, and I siphoned energy from myself and the elemental furnaces. A bit of temporal acceleration sped the process up, and as the runes burst, the storms clicked into place like a gear slotting into a machine.

The storms stabilized, each pocket spiraling in isolation. They flashed in a fury, a microcosm of turmoil and turbulence. I observed for a while, hoping it didn't blow up in a tectonic explosion. I'd lose my city, it being the only place quiet enough to test this theory yet also the only place I minded destroying on this planet.

It stayed stable, so I tried squeezing it. Once more, it maintained without any issues. Going further, I swiped the core. The storms spiralled without any issue, returning to the runic configurations with ease. Like I hoped, the spirals channeled the familiar changes of the cipher clicking into place. The ripples in reality, the dimensional disturbances, and the tumultuous shifts locked in, becoming irrevocable. This could've been the first time someone used weather patterns for the cipher, yet it worked. As the cores finalized their reformations, they warped into something different.

A psyche spawned in the sphere, the stable consciousness like a reliable old friend. I analyzed the core's mind to inspect its mental magic abilities and complexity. It retaliated with a firm and calm voice,

"Creator, it is good to meet you. I am ready for the war here whenever I am given a body. I would also like to thank you for the kindness of my creation."

I blinked, "No problem. It's been a while since I've spoken to anyone, so if I sound weird, that's why."

It spoke back, "Considering I've never spoken to anyone, we're on equal grounds in regards to conversation."

I leaned back, stunned by any depth in conversation. Hungry for it, I reached out, "Any plans once you get a body?"

"Destroy the eldritch, clear the algae, and promote safety for humanity."

I frowned. That response fell in line with the kind of golems I remembered. Satisfied with the directives, I leaned towards it, "Hm, you don't seem insane, which is good."

It gave me a bow, “My sanity is the mark of my master, for I am of your design. That design was made with the intention of war and the purpose of destruction. Here, I shall unleash that will and turn it into what you wish, creator...At my discretion, of course.”

The last bit of its speech left a grin on my face, “Hah...Perfect. Do you know what to do with the blue cores you find?”

“Collect them as a harvest, and the yield is yours alone.”

“Precisely.”

I poked and prodded it with a few mental tests. It retaliated with an almost infuriating calm, all of my attempts at riling it up only angering me in turn. Finished with the psionic attacks, I swung my fist in satisfaction. It was perfect. Reusing the runic designs, I drew more mana from the blue cores to finish the other core psyches.

Without needing to write them out, I poured my overflowing mana into my grimoire, generating the necessary runic markings. It required an intense amount of mental visualization for the runes to come out right, but the grimoire carried the potential for the storm runes. It was in my hands to wield that potential as my weapon.

And I did. The multifaceted sigils floated down onto one sheet at a time. With twenty wrappers prepared, I sealed them over the blue cores with a quick snap before siphoning more energy into one of them. Hours later, I finished them all, and they waited for a means to enact their desires; they happened to revolve around war.

To fulfill their purposes, I created a new larger body as a prototype for them. Lacing it with connection points, I didn't integrate the cores into the main body. Instead, I put a place for the golem core's installation. This central position tied into the rest of its body, letting me put the dungeon heart in and out with ease.

This fitting-based approach carried many advantages over the long term. For instance, updating the bodies of the golems from here on would be a breeze. Considering how my golems continuously became outdated, that was a huge issue. With this new design, I could just take a blue core out and socket them back into another golem.

This relieved a lot of the pressure for a perfect design as well. Before this approach, I had to nail each golem design. With detachable minds, I could reuse the blue cores all

while making bolder adjustments to them. It gave me room to experiment with different styles and kinds of golems, something the core's stability further emphasized.

It even let the golems learn and improve since the minds wouldn't be trapped in an inferior cage. They'd live on for centuries, still up to date and thriving. It would make every one of their deaths weigh far more than before, however, and I winced while remembering Alpha. I wished I'd given him the same long-lived life, but my lack of competence resulted in his demise.

I wouldn't let that happen again. I crafted and carved the prototype bodies for each kind of core golem. In the case of the assault golems, I gave them more emphasis on mind magic. They'd use the rainbow bones to battle here, and I kept the ascendant core design as well. They could improve and heal their bodies by consuming the eldritch.

I mean, if the primevals could do it, then so could we.

Slotting in other improvements wasn't difficult either. I gave each golem greater control of their bodies, but not in movement alone. Unlike old models, these core golems would be able to adjust their forms like I did. They'd be able to shift their forms at will as long as the telepathic points held.

I ensured that with cipher runes in the blue core. Those storm formations helped the bodies of the golems regenerate in a specified way. It operated similar to my own recuperation; every time I was blown apart, I restored with all my runes back in place. At least the cipheric ones. Schema's sigils blew apart and didn't return, but the cipher held firm even after death.

That was a necessity. Even for me, I couldn't avoid the occasional evaporation against the primevals, so I gave my golems a similar ability. If utterly destroyed, the core would remain. If even a tiny slither of my dimensional fabric lingered, the dungeon heart would remake the body from ash, good as new.

It even let my golems adapt and adjust on the fly. They needed sword arms? Easily done. What about a hammer for a head? Goofy but doable. The storm sigils instilled that kind of adaptability into each golem, and the blue cores resided at the center of that ability. They offered a foundation to return to after molding, something the golems otherwise lacked.

I didn't limit these functions to just assault golems, either. I crafted four constructor golems as well, making a few changes for them. I added the same psionic edge, ensuring they used the plentiful opals all around us. I designed them around being paired to a city, two in each protected zone. This provided enough ambient, mental pressure to keep the rainbow bones shaped correctly.

As valuable as the bones were, having glistening bones as every surface kind of overwhelmed the eye. I made the constructor golems craft cities as before, just with rainbow bone as the base of structures rather than steel. That automated the process, leaving me plenty of time for other tasks.

The constructor's quintessence-based cores allowed them to power a utility grid here, too, maintaining the central monolith. This further emphasized the mana barrier's strengths, giving it even greater longevity. With this strong foothold established, civilization was on its way to Leviathan-7, and we wouldn't be stopped.

With everything fine-tuned for the cores and prototype bodies, I mass-produced them. However, I used a changed method. I molded myself into an exact replica of whatever golem I was building. Once everything was perfect, I compressed my dimensional wake to the utmost extent possible.

For assault golems, that wake was Event Horizon. For constructors, I condensed The Rise of Eden. I slowed down my construction to two golems per hour, making sure every line, angle, and rune came out exactly as I wanted them to. This resulted in a new breed of golems coming out of the process, one I gave the title of core golems.

Within my city, I constructed these engines of destruction. As I finished the armada, I stared down at twenty titans. Each of them stood my height at twenty-five feet tall. The war golems glimmered with ascendant mana, the crimson sigils over their surfaces charged with energy. They cackled out with flares of red lightning, and they gazed forward with destroy and harvesting on their minds.

The four constructors in the back gripped and loosened their smaller fists, quintessence misting off the sigils in their palms. The dense fog radiating off them instilled inspiration in those around, each a beacon of effort and diligence. Clouds of quintessence formed around, and liquid mana poured down before swirling around them. They wished to go forth and create a habitable world around us.

It was a tall order considering the state of Leviathan-7, but I gave them the necessary tools. It was up to them to make use of them. As for me, I stayed zoned in on my own goals. I left many coreless golems outside of this reinforced city. Several already perished while I constructed their new brothers, but most of my golems kept the algae from returning overhead.

Without a constant supply of behemoth bone shards, no primevals would spawn nearby. Without needing to clear those areas, we were free to expand outward. Walking out of my workshop, I peered out into the frontier, the echoes of distant rumbling reverberating into our stronghold. The cries of far off eldritch quaked the ground, even their wails mighty.

As I stared behind, a shiver ran up my spine. The core golems showed no fear, no mercy, and no doubt. They existed like the golems before them, their purpose singular, their duty resolved. The cackling of ascendant lightning boomed out thunder, the buildings around collapsing. Before the buildings could fall, quintessent mana soaked into the stone, rebuilding the broken.

The legion struck fear into all, and I stood at their head, the Harbinger of Cataclysm. Aiming to prove my title, I hastened the flow of time around me. Gravitational augments saturated my being, and I pocketed my furnaces for later. My own ascendant lightning crackled out over my core golems.

I grimaced at far-off primevals, ready to rip them apart. Event Horizon spread over my allies, and I roared,

“We are legion, we are strong, and we are harbingers to this planet. Tell me, who here is ready for Leviathan’s calamity?”

The golems roared. I shouted,

“Let’s give this planet its first taste of omen, and let’s make the message undeniable.”

Chapter 340: The Advance

I grimaced at far-off primevals, ready to rip them apart. Event Horizon spread over my allies, and I roared,

“We are legion, we are strong, and we are harbingers to this planet. Tell me, who here is ready for Leviathan’s calamity?”

The golems roared. I shouted,

“Let’s give this planet its first taste of omen, and let’s make the message undeniable.”

Before we surged into the distance, I gazed in front of me. I’d have to leave ten golems behind, two constructors and eight assault golems. They would protect this city when I left. Aside from them, ten evolved golems gazed forward with unwavering resolve, ready to jump into the fire with me. They formed an elite unit, the best of the best but also showed the limit of my current abilities.

If this plan failed, I’d have to rethink my strategy to settle Leviathan-7. That meant establishing in a less monstrous area. I’d be fighting these primevals the entire time for dungeon hearts while stowing away elsewhere. In the ossuary, it rained bone shards and blue cores, however, and I wanted those resources at my disposal. I also didn’t want other rulers getting in my way.

While the ossuary guaranteed hostility, it also ensured secrecy. No ruler would stumble through here and dismantle these cities. They’d never get that far. For my guild to gain this ground, we needed this surge to succeed. That pressure mounted before I spread my arms and covered the golems in Event Horizon. It was now or never.

My armor grinned. Runes charged over my skin. Mana crystallized then disintegrated into plasma. It flowed through my wake as I compressed time over myself. My surroundings dulled and dimmed as if I felt the world through cotton. Arcs of lightning shot across my hands as I shouted,

“Let the legion rise, and the monsters fall.”

We dashed through the dense barrier of our first city here. It swirled by us, the constructors running this place letting us by. My three converted star beasts flew in, bolstering our numbers to fourteen total. Composing a more massive number but less fighting strength, the coreless golems fell in line behind us all, and they became a tertiary force.

We shattered the skyline as we left, and I carved the ground with singularities. This path of devastation gave us a way back to the city as we lacked a map. It attracted nearby primevals, my force keeping them behind us. After crossing many miles, the primevals grew in number. For the most part, avoided them.

We couldn't clear out the entire planet of the beasts, so we aimed to create safe pockets instead. Collecting blue cores would come after establishing a few cities. To facilitate that harvest, we moved until the primeval's density reached its apex. With plenty around, we began our offensive.

I landed onto the glistening ground, peering around for primevals. Several fought nearby, so I lifted my hand and throttled their battles with singularities. Each concussive blast shell shocked their bouts before I shouted at them. Once aware of me, the dueling primevals raced towards me in fits of rage.

They dashed and darted around me, each one an elemental storm in their own right. They tore off my limbs and evaporated my skin, but I remained living. Continuing this cycle, I herded a dozen different primevals. I died several times a second, becoming a vaporous being without a body. As the number of primevals grew, they followed me like they were the end of the world.

Where they gathered devolved into a pure, apocalyptic wave of destruction. Elemental forces lashed out in rage and anger. Thunder boomed, and lightning crawled. Heated blasts set the world on fire, and the rays of light melted that fire into goopy plasma. They remade the entire battlefield into a flowing pit of raw energy, their might uncontainable, their wrath uncaged.

Except to me.

As their overwhelming powers left my body in ruin, I charged mana into my dimensional wake. The orbital bombardment wouldn't work since the primevals would simply follow me into the sky. I needed to pin them down first. Doing just that, liquid power solidified into crystals before hissing into plasma.

The primevals gazed at the pooling aura of ascendance, the crimson energy far less tasty than quintessence. Distracted by the luminous ether, I returned to the corporeal, my mind and body whole. Raising my palms, I shot forth a cacophony of dark dollops in all directions. A portion of the landscape converted to energy, becoming fuel for a gravitational fire.

Singularities rained, the dark orbs swallowing bodies and bones whole. Those voided spheres fed on the primevals and imploded after. Hiding in the distance, my core golems resided in the folds of algae, hidden from our enemies. They darted, ducked, and dove around the aftershocks of the gravitational implosions.

Firing upward, I propelled myself over the kelp clouds and into the vast void above as the primeval's recuperated below. My core golems lobbed several attacks before I fired myself down. I thinned into a needle, gravity wells pulling me towards the ground. Right before landing, I flattened myself into a solid cylinder.

The world whitened, the force of the explosion mind-numbing. Nothing of me remained, the opal shards tore into fractured crags, and the power cracked and cleaved into the shining opals below. No primeval died from the onslaught, but deep down, the glowing ossuary roared out with a psionic wave. With the energy melting my arms, I siphoned everything to the center of my impact's blast radius.

My cored golems escaped the radius of the gravity well, and they found behemoths to hide in. They ripped and gouged the monsters apart, concealing within their shells, hides, and scales. Those behemoths crawled to escape, the golems like monstrous parasites. Below the meatshields, I turned to mush as the primevals destroyed my body several times a second.

It wasn't enough. A few seconds passed before the bones below burst forth with splintered trees of opal. The branches impaled me before I flowed around the tiny needles. The primevals stood below as a gamma burst erupted once more. Devastating disintegration. Silencing sound. The colossal consciousness erased the material world over it, starting anew.

It made the destruction of my orbital bombardment look mute and powerless. All near the epicenter of the bright explosion evaporated to bits, then mist, then nothing. I caught as much of the wave as I could with my dimensional shield, and my golems kept their blue cores covered.

In the wake of this monstrous detonation, shiny, blue spheres fell in bunched piles. Ready and waiting, I snatched them up with another gravity well, and I lobbed more singularities at the two remaining star beasts. Like before, I scooped up several dozen blue cores before the star beasts recovered. They glared down at me, their forms radiating out flares and waves of radiation.

And from above, my legion swarmed.

Bursting from the charred remnants of behemoths, my assault golems ripped out of the cooked shells they hid in. They launched themselves into the fray, sonic booms erupting from their speed. Several collided with a primeval, the star beast rippling around a core golem. My creation shot out spiky tendrils in all directions, lapping up the monster's energy.

The remaining parts of the primeval darted in a spiral above the golem. It charged energy before I blew it up once more with a singularity. Six more assault golems fought over the remains, each of them hounding for the scraps left behind. It put a smile on my face as the primeval scrambled for survival.

Portions of the star monster's body shattered against my golems' enhanced plates. The other star beast tried charging a blast in my direction, but the remaining core golems joined the fray. Each soldier lobbed out a different attack, the skyline near them erupting with color.

A wave of splintering needles shot out of one golem. Another elite condensed the plasma monster with a gravity well. The last core golem spread its arms wide, a wave of frigid energy unleashing at the eldritch's center. Others caught the light from wafting onto the opals below. The combined casts condensed the eldritch's body into a ball, the primeval frozen in place.

I devastated the monster with a singularity before my elites fought over the remaining scraps, eating it alive with teeth of steel and a hunger unending. Despite their ravenous nature and my sharp eyes, a piece of glowing dust landed on the opals. In the distance, the star beast regenerated its shining body instantly.

I took a deep breath, somewhat disappointed. Even if my core golems turned this into a contest for killing, the primevals refused to go down nice and easy. Peering close, I noticed the star beast lost an inkling of size when it reformed, and my opinion changed. This waste of time turned into a notch of progress.

However small, it showed a shift in the otherwise stagnant battlefield. These weren't eternal battles with no victor. These were the slow, inevitable demises of these demigods. While I smiled, the golems fought. They coursed around the piled-up shards,

wielding the bones of the behemoths above. My elites landed beside the rejuvenated star eldritch.

They took over a portion of the shining opals below, blocking charged beams with barriers of bone. Whirling light crossed my entire horizon, the single rays splitting against the opal shards. My elites waved their arms behind their blockades, sending steel needles up from below. They melted into molten iron that condensed over the fire monster.

Though a reasonable effort, the steel didn't hold the eldritch, and the primeval returned to a complete form. However, the golem's attacks slowed the star beast down. One of my ascendant primevals charged energy into its arms. Another core golem joined in, and they assaulted the starry mass from all angles. Coordinating with my star monster, my golems leaped away when my converted eldritch leaned in.

The ascendant primeval washed the enemy monster in crimson light, slicing it apart. As the light faded, my golems raced in to devour the remnants. Needing fewer fighters, two core golems flew towards the kelp above, destroying the eldritch-producing material. The two constructor golems below already molded the opal surface where the gamma burst exploded.

They created a twenty-foot-deep, circular indentation for the city, and I marveled at their efficiency. The constructor elites erected bone columns for reinforcement, filled in the hollow structures, and protected the material as fast as my eye could follow. The war golems improved by orders of magnitude as well, six or seven of those golems rivaling my physical might.

They lacked my skill or ingenuity, but they still acted as the raw muscle needed to dismantle this area's dangers. It put a smile on my face, the eight elites I left behind at our old city being more than enough to protect it. Appreciating the progress, I stared at a palm, taking a breath. This would work.

We were winning.

Supporting my soldiers, I lobbed out well-timed singularities at the primevals. The disruption mounted further as I moved close, firing out with psionic bullets at the enemies. These were psionically charged balls that flowed into the minds of the eldritch. From within, they poisoned the monsters, and that weakened the enemy.

We continued blitzing, whittling the two primevals down over the next few hours. I let the battle drag on because these golems learned more about fighting. By the end of the bout, I left the cored golems and helped the constructor golems build our second city. At the moment, the perimeter wasn't set, so this place required constant maintenance.

The aftermath of the fighting left scars scattered over the city's surface. However, the constructors repaired the damage as it was done. I spent the next hour building up the central monolith, charging runes over it with my grimoire, and setting up a barrier. As mountain cleaving strikes and river writhing shockwaves unleashed in the distance, I finished the city's pillar.

Slotting ten blue cores into the monolith, I siphoned mana into them. They indulged, filling the cipheric markings with ease. In minutes, the field flashed online, and an ethereal web spiraled above, the barrier a feast for the eyes. It guaranteed the city's perimeter. I installed the telepathic points across the city's boundary, and the constructors used it to wield the forcefield over us.

Protecting the haven of humanity, the constructors directed the writhing barrier against the primevals. Anytime one of the star monsters came close, my elites plumed the border out to them. Upon contact, defensive energy burst, and the enemies exploded into a fine mist. In fact, the two constructors did the job of all nineteen constructor cores I made for the city prior.

We didn't need many of the cored constructors to run this place. Keeping that in mind, I generated the storm runes for two blue cores. They fit into extra slots in the monolith, and the psionic network encompassed the city. The golems synced together, and I helped command them. The assault soldiers killed the two remaining primevals, and after getting a good-sized zone set up, I terraformed the place.

Sigils slotted onto the monolith, and from their powering, the toxic air changed into oxygen and nitrogen. The sweltering heat reduced to a pleasant, roomy temperature. The booming impacts muffled into slight echoes, and the radiation caught on the barrier above. Lastly, gravity lessened and stabilized, the body pulping fluxes in gravitation ceasing.

I rested against the pillar, taking a breath of relief as attacks from behemoths bounced off our city's outer shell. Each time a colossal eldritch landed on the shield, they zapped into bone shards, their rainbow bones tumbling down the side of the sphere. The clinking chips created a pile on the city's outskirts, erecting a natural wall over time.

While connected with the colossal consciousness below, those shining bones pleased it. It counteracted the intrusion of our city, letting the giant rest on its laurels. I couldn't even imagine how much longer that would last, but I had no means of fighting such an overwhelming foe at the moment.

It rested here millennia, perhaps even millions of years. Its life cycle gave us time to work with here, but I had no idea how long that might last. It also made me wonder what happened to the primeval's blue cores here. They died in their fights, but no corpse lingered here. Learning what happened to those bodies might be an excellent opportunity for me.

And I didn't want that taken from me by the other rulers here. I wouldn't allow it.

Snapping me out of my contemplation, an assault golem flew in from outside, and it landed beside me. It fell into a lunged position, its head lowered. With a hand raised, it offered dozens of blue cores to me. I thanked him and let him join his brethren in the battle around us. Over my raised fingertip, a few cackling blue dungeon cores orbited my hand.

The glistening surfaces put a smile on my weary face. As other rulers established themselves on the safer side of the planet, we established dominance on Leviathan's darkest reaches. The others probably fought amongst themselves to establish control over each other. By comparison, I surrounded myself with a blue core factory and opal bone farm.

By the time I left here, handing over a hundred blue cores to Schema would be nothing, which ensured a high ranking in the lottery. Letting that sink in, I enjoyed the progress. Ah, it was excellent. Standing up, I shook off my contentment and went about establishing myself here. This hellscape would be mine before long.

Three primevals destroyed a patch of kelp in the distance, interrupting my thoughts. I winced at them, hoping they didn't plow into the city. If something like that smashed into the barrier while I wasn't here, the settlement might not survive. Standing back up, I got to work. We waged war for hours, establishing a larger control zone around the immediate city.

In this valley of cleaved bone, we touched the land with civilization. It was this dead zone's first taste of society, and I aimed to make it a long-lasting meal. Having learned

from my expansion on Earth, I brainstormed some issues that might crop up here. The first and most obvious culprit was city-to-city travel.

Caravaneers wouldn't function here as travel risked everything, and working roads were a must. Peering at the vast expanse of bones, algae, and monsters, that seemed like a pipe dream. While I stared out, a core golem fought a behemoth just above the ossuary. My core golem dismantled the giant monster, turning it into a pulpy mass of blood and flesh.

Despite the onslaught, the behemoth struggled back with a classic, eldritchian tenacity. It shot out a few swinging slices and beaming blasts. As it did, my assault golem molded the opal bones to protect itself. My eyes widened as I snapped my fingers. That would work.

Instead of making roads on the surface, I'd connect them through tunnels in the bones below. The giant consciousness wouldn't allow a vast sphere, but it would accept a small tunnel without any problems. Moving forward with that idea, I charged all the blue cores to their maximums and installed a few generators. They were simple piles of dimensional fabric.

With a constructor golem's help, we spiffed up the place, so it didn't look horrific to look at. Once spiffed up, I spent the many hours necessary for this city's defense. I made twenty more assault golems, but I adjusted their aptitude. Instead of waging war, these golems preferred acting as guardsmen and maintenance workers.

I left eight of them behind to keep this city defended. They'd work with the constructors and the whirling shield to keep this place safe. With the assault golems, guardsmen, and the converted star beasts, I walked to our city's perimeter. Up against the wall surrounding the city, I bent the bones while walking forward.

While walking, I tore off my arms over and over. The falling stream of limbs melted on the ground before smoothing out into a circular tunnel with a flat floor. At the same time, I etched runes onto the tunnel's surface, these runes mirroring the pillars of the city. We continued this process, following the line of singularity craters I left above.

At one third the distance to our other town, I set down a blue core and guard golem. They linked telepathically to the city behind us, extending the network further. I added two more guardposts for the entire tunnel, ensuring they put the appropriate mental pressure on the surrounding rainbow bones to keep it in place.

If they put too little psionic tension, then the tunnels would collapse. If they applied too much, then the bones would gamma burst this place into oblivion. Finding that happy medium, we reached the other city I crafted. The constructor golems kept the up and running, as did the assault golems who fought outside. I called the eight assault golems to join me, leaving eight guardsmen to replace them.

As the golems funneled in, I took a moment to inspect the place. The constructor golems expanded the buildings up when we left. Content with the progress, I paced out with my group of golems before telepathically connecting the two cities. The constructors spoke with one another, which revolutionized the utility of these settlements.

Before connecting them, these colonies were tiny bubbles crisscrossing the surface of Leviathan-7. Once connected, the towns acted as a united front where core golems could rush over to help any city struggling nearby. In minutes, extra guardsmen from surrounding cities would pour in to stop an attack, making each city many times more potent.

This security disarmed the chaotic nature of Leviathan-7 in many ways. Even if a group of primevals attacked a city, these connection points ensured our survival. The more we expanded, the more remarkable that defense became. Before feeling too satisfied with myself, I shifted to a primordial aura. Always the cynic, the wave of cold calculation rushed over me, and with it came many issues regarding the road system.

How would the golems communicate? Hundreds of golems talking would create all kinds of chaos, and that wouldn't do. Would supply lines be safe? A group of primevals could crush a road system, killing people and destroying resources. I also wanted to get a grip on what the rulers did elsewhere in this world. They might give me a chance for further gain.

Those questions and a dozen others piled on in tandem, and as always, I rushed to fix them. As primordial mana oozed over me, droplets of the mana funneled upward. They rained into a surging, semitranslucent ooze of navy blue. It piled up at the end of navy blue fire that burned on my skin. I clapped my hands together, the mana coursing into my body until I almost burst.

Clarity infused into my mind, and I smiled at all that was to be done. It was time to get to work.

