

Once Human 541

Chapter 541

The angry Shogun didn't wait for Arthur to recover and jumped at him with his bare hands, an absurd amount of condensed Qi revolving around his hand . His speed was a bit slower than Arthur's, nonetheless, he did reach him in a split second and unleashed a torrent of straight punches . The first few were successfully blocked by the Dark Barrier and a transparent watery surface, however, the rest directly struck Arthur, who retaliated by crossing his arms and using Godly Thunder to momentarily stun the enemy .

The power behind those punches was monstrous yet they weren't able to break Arthur's boosted defense . In fact, before Sol'dhin could even finish, the parasite suddenly vanished from his sight but since his sense was locked onto Arthur ever since the beginning, he managed to pinpoint his location .

A small black rat teleported behind the Shogun and pierced his back with its minuscule fangs, resulting in a poisonous bite mark to appear .

"Heh, do you really think such a tri-"

The man was about to scoff at Arthur's pointless attack only for his body to stagger then fall from mid-air . Arthur grasped this opportunity and threw dozens of detonators which exploded upon contact .

Even a body as strong as the Shogun's couldn't resist the hundreds of poisons injected in that bite attack, furthermore, Arthur's relentless assault seemed to have finally taken a toll on the previously unscathed Sol'dhin .

The man spat some blood and was about to jump in the air again only to feel an imminent threat heading towards him . Sadly, just like last time, he couldn't react time and ended up seeing his other arm fall on the ground .

Arthur had taken out the sword again and casually swung it yet such a simple movement not only cut Sol'dhin arm but it also struck the keep behind him, easily penetrating the walls and literally separating it in two pieces .

The Frozen Keep, having lost its balance, started falling piece by piece, beginning from its sky-piercing tip which directly fell into the bottomless abyss . Armless, the Shogun glared at Arthur, his eyes emitting unrestrained rage and shame, after all, a strong man like himself was reduced to such state by a mere parasite . It was a huge disgrace for him yet without his arms, he could do nothing but retreat .

He glanced at Elias and the rest only to find the place totally bloody, dozens of heads rolling on the shaking ground with only a few humans still alive but struggling against the ever-increasing number of undead . Arthur paid no heed to Sol'dhin and dived straight at the busy Elias, a series of thick white thunderbolts descending from above, hitting the strange coin and deactivating its barrier .

The old man was cut off-guard and was a second too late in reaction to the disappearing barrier . A strong, suffocating grip held his neck, quickly followed by agonizing pain that originated from his four limbs . His legs and his arms were gone, devoured by some creepy void mouths . After Arthur ordered them, they reluctantly stopped eating the body and vanished into nothingness, leaving a bloody Elias

who was shrieking and gasping for air . The coin fell on the ground but was totally ignored by Arthur, whose attention was focused solely on the red-faced old man .

"I'll show you true hell . "

Arthur spoke with a ghastly voice, his hand tightening around Elias . His free hand grasped the old man's hand and then, a massive amount of Dark Magic invaded the latter's head, inflicting even more pain . In fact, the victim was about to fall unconscious but Arthur did something that caused him to remain awake and experience this hellish agony for what seemed to be an eternity .

Time seemed to have stopped as Elias' boy convulsed and blood leaked out of all of his orifices .

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On the other side, the Shogun saw all of his people were killed and only Elias was remained, however, his state was even worse than his . He very much wanted to attack Arthur but his blade was lost and his arms were cut off so the best solution is to leave Riarravar and look for another chance .

Unfortunately, it was at this time that Timos was finally freed and the world turned upside down . A black hole appeared at the center of Riarravar and started ravaging everything, absorbing the whole place within seconds . This destruction was happening way faster than what Arthur experienced in Bucama's world .

While holding the half-dead Elias, Arthur looked at the distorting space and flying rubbles, his eyes containing no emotion . Chaos dominated all of Riarravar and it won't be long before he's also sucked into the small but devastating black hole .

The Shogun struggled to take out a silver ruler from his pocket, however, just as he was about to use it and leave, a rain of large dark arrows fell down on him, pushing his body closer to the black hole and forcing the ruler out of his hand .

Arthur could hear the man's loud cries as he was slowly being pulled into the black hole, helplessly trying to use his legs and flee from the creeping death but to no avail .

"So it is finally time . "

Timos spoke to Arthur, his voice seemed a bit emotional .

"It has been a fun ride, Arthur MoonStar . "

Ever since their meeting, it was the first time he uttered Arthur's name .

"What of my belongings?"

While dragging the convulsing Elias on the breaking ground, Arthur talked to the unseen entity .

"Hah, don't worry about them . Well then, see you soon... maybe . "

A few seconds briefly crept by in which, Elias, who could only let out an inaudible whimper, finally met his end . Just to make sure the bastard was dead, Arthur made his body explode, leaving literally nothing . The Frozen Keep was no more and Arthur's body, against his will, was being dragged into the black hole, which left nothing untouched of the once peaceful world .

Arthur didn't try to resist and wasn't really that afraid of dying . He was about to close his eyes and let things proceed as planned only to notice a rapidly moving silhouette relying on the flying boulders to escape from the black hole .

Upon a closer look, Arthur saw a blond young man with a handsome face, wearing a shiny armor . It was Vyncent, the only human who actually stayed and helped him get rid of Elias' people . As he was busy dealing with the Shogun, Arthur paid the youngster little attention .

Vyncent was clutching Elias' strange coin while distancing himself from the center of this world . His heart was beating like crazy and his body was bloodied as the black hole was pulling everything inside of it, including the energy inside its body and even the molecules so even if he gets far away, his body will still become unstable and explode .

It was far too late to create a Spatial Tunnel so Arthur couldn't help even if he wanted to . With one last look at the desperate young man, Arthur closed his eyes and let things be...

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Not long after the black hole appeared, the entirety of Riarravar was sucked into it, leaving nothing unscathed or alive . Arthur's body disintegrated and his soul magically vanished . However, neither his black robe nor his storage ring were destroyed and, instead, they were dragged into a small dark whirlpool which appeared only momentarily .

With the disappearance of Arthur's soul, the quad-spirit naturally clung onto its owner but the guardian couldn't do the same . Curtis tried to follow but he was suddenly grasped by an illusory hand . By the next second, the blond youth found himself inside a serene and beautiful forest, the personal space of Timos and the only area that wasn't affected by the black hole . The Black Devil took it with him and left Riarravar, at last .

"Fancy seeing you here . "

A human with long brown hair and average appearance grinned while talking to the confused Curtis .

Seeing that the knight was still feigning ignorance and innocence, Timos clicked his tongue and said:

"Come on, it's pathetic seeing you try to act like this . "

After a few seconds of pointless fearful behavior, Curtis' face became expressionless as he faced Timos, who took a humanoid form for convenience's sake .

"Every time I look at you, I feel disgusted, do you know that?"

Timos grimaced while talking to the blond and handsome youth before him . In response, Curtis fixed his armor and scanned his surroundings before saying

"What are you up to?"

Hearing such a random question, the man pointed at himself and replied: "Me? Nothing . I was just a bit surprised to see a comrade playing around here . "

"Comrade? Hmpf!" Curtis coldly snorted, unwilling to acknowledge the connection between him and Timos .

"What? Mister 'Holy Godfather'... eh, Sedos, are you so bored to the point of sticking into a parasite?"

"I can do whatever you want, mind your business, devil . "

The brown-haired man appeared hurt as he clutched his chest and staggered a few steps: "You wound me, Lightbringer . I was but a tad curious, that's it . Though I can see why you'd accompany Arthur, he is indeed an interesting person . "

Before Curtis, or also known(in the past) as Sedos, the Strategist continued:

"However, being a spectator isn't your job, I'm sure you know that . " His eyes narrowed to a dangerous agree, however, he didn't try raise his aura to threaten the blond youth, seeing no purpose in provoking someone stronger than him in strength .

"When the time comes, I will go on my way but for now, I want to see how it proceeds . " Then, without waiting for the other party, Sedos was enveloped by a blinding light and disappeared from the forest .

As he remained alone, Timos shrugged his shoulders and mumbled: "Whatever, don't blame me if you're caught . "

"What's going on?"

Emir frowned upon seeing his people circled around a bloodied figure . He walked toward the unconscious Lucy but even before he reached her, his sense noticed her lack of pulse and breaking Dantian . It was too late to interfere or do anything that could bring her back . The wound she received from the Shogun was severe but it was the coin which rendered her body unable to self-recover .

A frail black-haired human woman was holding Lucy's body while examining her abdomen . The Archmage also felt the unborn life residing inside the womb but with her death, it won't be long before this new life is extinguished too .

He let out a sigh and asked again, this time directing his speech toward the woman:

"What happened?"

After an inordinate amount of time, Lissandra snapped out of it and spoke with a toneless voice:

"I don't know, she died the moment we arrived here . "

Emir maintained a short silence before saying: "We'll provide her with a proper burial . "

He signaled for the young female parasite from before then unleashed a bright blue light which exploded in the sky like a signal of some sort .

Lissandra and the young parasite were about to lift Lucy's body only for a strange portal open up next to Emir, startling him . Before he could react, a brown-haired man exited the distorted space and scanned the area before gazing at the lifeless Lucy .

"It's such a waste for a miracle to be buried before its birth . "

He ignored the surprised parasites, who were about to attack only for Emir to stop them, and crouched next to Lucy .

"Sir Timos..."

The Archmage wanted to say something but seeing the serious expression of the Black Devil, he just swallowed back his unsaid words .

"I'll safe-keep it until our next meeting, pretty guest . "

After saying that, his hand brutally stabbed the corpse's stomach and pulled a minuscule, unrecognizable lifeform . It was the size of his fist and enveloped by an unbreakable dome covered on the right by chilling ice and the on the left by golden fire .

Seeing the dome, the Black Devil laughed and said:

"No wonder... no wonder she died . "

Lucy could have survived the coin's effect but the unborn baby would have perished so she used most of her powers to create this dome, which ascertained her child's survival .

Uncaring about the blood soaking his sleeve and hand, the man held the shiny dome and looked unsuspecting person .

"The path of Hope... what an unusual way for a fallen God, well good luck with that . "

His words were obviously directed at the surprised Lissandra, who could do nothing but fidget around .

Second later, Timos left along with the dome, leaving a bunch of dumbfounded parasites behind .

"This is craziness . "

Delia sighed and stated, her forehead sweating and her fists unknowingly clenched . Currently, she was at the main hall of the Kang Clan, waiting for the Patriarch to come and meet them . Surprisingly, just like Saly said, when they exposed their identity to the Kang clan, they were welcomed and told to wait here .

Unlike her, Saly remained calm and patiently wait for the man to arrive . As she saw the little girl, Delia still couldn't believe what was told to her a couple of days ago .

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Along with Saly, Delia was with Juli, who was injured inside the Dragon's lair but seemed to have recovered almost all of her powers now . Juli didn't blame Delia for betraying the Holy Dominion and didn't insist on going back there and ask for forgiveness as she knew such a thing was impossible . So, Juli, the Holy Knight, decided to accept her situation and tagged along with Delia, protecting Saly while fleeing from their relentless pursuers .

Today, Saly started talking about her hellish training but focused more on the classes given by the Joker . The little girl didn't give up on Astrith so she told Delia that they have to go the Kang Clan, which will most likely aid them . When Delia questioned her, Saly forced them to make death oaths to not tell a soul about what she's going to say .

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"Hey, focus!"

The Joker violently smacked the sleepy Saly's head before sternly saying:

"You have to memorize everything I'm saying!"

While rubbing her head with teary eyes, Saly meekly nodded her head .

"Ahem, as I was saying, in the past, I became friends with a special entity and even helped him hide . Now, tell me, who was it?"

Saly thought for a few moments before hesitantly saying: "I-it's the titan, right?"

"Indeed, the only surviving Titan in this age . However, Titans were peculiar beings and not all of them chose a material form... some preferred spirituality and others were actual worlds, literal worlds . The one I befriended... hahahaha a really crafty motherfucker-ops! Don't tell your uncle I cursed or I'll smack you . "

He sneaked a couple of glances to the entrance of the room before continuing: "Anyway, that Titan was a world and that was part of the reason no one ever found him . Now then, Saly, what do you think his name was?"

Saly, confused, couldn't answer and only stared at the grinning Joker .

After some time, the teacher chuckled and said: "His name was Astria, hahahahaha"

The little girl's round eyes fully opened in disbelief . She knew that her homeworld was called Astria which is why she found that name surprising .

"Yes, it's your homeworld! Isn't it fascinating?!"

He cleared his sore throat and resumed: "Now then, let's get to the good stuff . When I hid Astria, another party helped me, however, I never told them where I exactly hid it . They were the Kang Clan and ever since that day, they kept searching the Titan . Back in the 3rd Era, Astria helped them avoid total destruction so they remained grateful which is why they're trying to find him or 'it', and protect it from death . Recently, they seemed to have found it and are definitely more inclined to help, so, if something happens in the future and your parents are not there, make sure to head to the Kangs . "

As the Joker insistently repeated this topic, Saly ended up memorizing all of his words . After she briefly talked about ti Delia and Juli, the Goddess and Holy Knight were dumbstruck, especially the former, who thought Astria was only a cast out world .

At the bottom of a lake with unknown depth, a seemingly large white box started shaking, heavily affecting its environment and freezing the whole lake . What was worse a miniature golden sun dominated the night sky, illuminating everything and anything . The mortals living in a nearby village became frightened, kowtowing on the ground and praying .

They thought that was God was punishing them, however, this disturbance lasted for one night before the sun vanished and the lake returned to its monotonous serenity . That night, the villagers definitely saw a bright streak of light flying across the sky, leaving a trail of falling snowflakes in its path .

A few days later, at the execution of the lightning wolf Astrith, the Cloud Sea Sect prepared a grand ceremony as to show an example of the beast . Many citizens were present at the enormous plaza, even the Emperor himself was seated some distance away from the execution ground .

Although the Cloud Sea is a sect, they called themselves an ancient kingdom so the Emperor is considered their leader, that is, if you exclude the secluded ancestors, however, those old fogies rarely come out . Basically, the Cloud Emperor is the public ruler of Cloud Sea and the Divine Planet .

Most of the Marshals were present, including the two who intervened in the war between the specters and the undead . On a well-decorated stage, there laid a chained wolf which had a body covered in lightning, furthermore, it also had three tails, each emitting a different kind of thunder .

The beast growled as it was stared at by thousands of people, all eager to see the 'show', or so it was called . The executioner was a robbed individual who hid his face and held a big scythe which seemed to cut air itself .

The loud cheering and surprised gasps were quietened down by the Emperor, who raised his hand .

"Today, we shall rid the world of another enemy of our prosperous empire . "

He kept it brief as his golden eyes locked onto Astrith . The marshals orderly sat next to The Emperor's right while, on his left, there were two guests and some officials .

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Amidst the clustered crowd, there was a dark-haired little girl who was getting very restless . As she saw the wolf's bloodied body and heard the excited yells of the citizens, Saly was about to jump in only for a hand to hold her body, totally immobilizing her .

"What did I say? You cannot and will not show yourself today, no matter what happens . "

The one who talked to her was a man with very long dark hair . In fact, he was Gutcha, the pigolo, in disguise . The Kang Clan agreed to help them so all they have to do is sit back and watch from the sidelines, at least that's what their Patriarch said, word for word .

The anticipated moment finally arrived as the executioner raised his scythe while many soldiers tightened the chains around Astrith . The sharp-looking scythe was easily-handled by the professional, who readied himself then swung it down, aiming for the wolf's neck .

This scythe was a very special weapon which can even kill special beasts like Astrith, who can't be killed by physical attacks . It was a weapon stolen from one of the Grim Reapers long ago and although its efficiency lessened by a great deal, it was still able to kill almost anything .

When it was time for the beast to finally die, the sunny sky suddenly changed and an ear-deafening explosion startled every soul in the plaza . The mortals could not react in time but the Marshals and the Emperor saw a fast figure descend from high-up in the sky, like a meteor .

One of the Marshal stood up from his seat and went to meet the incoming invader, however, before he could do anything, his body was slammed by a monstrous force, sending him crashing into the ground, blood coming out of his mouth .

The scythe-wielding executioner's fate was more miserable than the Marshall . Before he could retaliate, he was engulfed by a golden flame and turned into ash within a second .

A graceful figure landed next to Astrith and instantly turned all the chains along with their holders into ice, which soon crumbled into thousands of pieces, releasing the wolf from its bind, at last .

"Mom-"

Saly was about to yell for her mother, who just caused a ruckus and came out of nowhere, only for Gutcha to hold her mouth and slowly back away from the crowd .

The Emperor looked at the silver-haired woman standing next to the wolf and spoke to the Marshal closest to him

"Isn't she Katrina's daughter?"

"Yes, your Imperial Majesty . "

Before the Emperor even talked, all the marshals disappeared from their seats and surrounded Lucy, blocking all her escape routes . Seeing one of their own getting overpowered, they were forced to step up .

Moreover, they needed to show their dominance in front of the watching citizens so they could not go easy on Lucy .

Lucy remained unfazed as she glared at the marshals, nine ice lotuses floating above her head .

The marshals around her gasped in surprise as they her right arm drastically change . Scales appearing from her shoulder all the way to her fingers and what seemed to be broad shoulder guards emanating a dangerous kind of energy .

The woman raised lifted her head and released an ear-piercing cry echoing across the whole city . The unsuspecting citizens fell unconscious and the marshals blocked their ears and backed away, their faces totally pale .

"Ahhhh!"

The short girl who was the direct subordinate of the Water Empress, jumped in panic as someone suddenly appeared in the office, exactly behind her, like a ghost . With shaky hands and a pale face, she turned her stiff neck only to see a beautiful black-haired woman wearing a dress that matched her eye

and hair color . She didn't know who she was but her master, the Empress, who was busy deciphering a document on the other side of the large room, stood up from her seat, appearing visibly shocked .

"Madam Death Region ruler . "

She bowed and addressed her by her title as she didn't know the visitor's real name . The blue-haired tall woman didn't know the reason behind the guest' visit, nonetheless, she behaved courteously and talked with respect, aware that the Death Region ruler is an entity rarely seen and extremely dangerous, furthermore, she did help her last time she went to the land of death .

The black-haired woman gracefully sat next to the Empress, her face as expressionless as ever .

The two stared at each other for a while before the guest said:

"I need you to do something for me . "

In response, the Water Region Empress retorted:

"Will I be able to do something you could not?"

The dark-haired woman smiled and said:

"Even for me, there are things I'm unable to do or achieve . "

In reality, she was able to accomplish the task herself, however, she didn't want to, for various reasons, though she kept such thoughts to herself, of course .

After thinking for a bit of time, the Empress spoke: "If it is within my power, I'll try . "

It's only natural to pay back an old favor, furthermore, the Empress felt that helping her would provide her with some clues to the forgotten history .

Without wasting any more time, the Death Region ruler, stood up and snapped her fingers, spawning a coffin, a very creepy and dusty one .

With a confused expression, the Empress tilted her head, not knowing what to say or do so she just waited for an explanation .

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Exactly a week later, the Water Empress appeared on a secluded archipelago West of her territory . This part of her region was rarely visited by either experts or cultivators, moreover, there were mostly mortals living her yet she was tasked to come here and find a person .

Her sense was strong enough to cover the whole group of islands, which were four, to be exact . Following the words of the Death Region ruler, she appeared on the island to the far West, which seemed to be some kind of wasteland, and located her target after a few minutes of thorough searching .

The blue-haired tall woman appeared inside of a small tent, barely able to chilly wind of the night, and stared at a young boy sitting on a corner . He had a bronze-skin, probably due to long exposure to the sun, a frail body lacking muscles, and hair as black as ink .

The teenager was startled by the Empress' appearance and the first thing he did was shield an old woman sleeping next to him . She seemed to be very sick as she kept coughing, unaware of what's happening around her .

Without beating around the bush, the woman took two steps forward and said

"Are you Jakob?"

The boy hesitated and remained tight-lipped but ended up nodding his head when he started feeling a suffocating pressure coming from the woman .

"I will give you gold if you do something for me . "

On the mention of gold, the boy's expression changed, brightened, even . He enthusiastically and innocently nodded his head while standing up straight .

"You only have to hide a coffin somewhere on the continent East of here . "

Back then, the boy, Jakob, didn't know what exactly he did, however, his actions led to many, many things .

A woman with long silver-hair gasped for breath and supported herself with a silver spear as she made her way into a large temple which gave her the creeps .

Angelina fought endlessly against the insanely powerful shadow beasts yet even after killing thousands of them, they still kept coming . Only when she arrived in these temples, which were all the same, did they stop their assaults .

It was as if they feared the temples, not daring even to approach them . They glared at her from hundreds of meters away, circling around the temple and cornering her .

The white specter ignored them and entered the small yet luxurious building . The ground was made from white marble and remained clean even after a long time had passed . Inside the temple, there was nothing apart from several statues, each with a unique appearance .

Angelina didn't know how but she was able to read the runes engraved on the stones under each statue, and, from the looks of it, each one spoke of a certain being .

There was one of a large entity with tentacles and a creepy face, another was a handsome knight wearing a thick armor and holding a shield and a one-handed sword .

"Sedos, Timos, Dmitra . . . what were they?"

She gazed at the statues then focused her gaze at the central one, the biggest of all them and the creepiest, by far .

In total, there were thirteen statues and all were made from the same marble under her feet but the statue at the middle was created using metal as its left side was dark and the right side was white .

Unlike the description under all the statues, the central one only had two words .

"The Watcher'?"

Moreover, it had the most basic appearance yet when she looked at its eyes, Angelina felt weakened and her soul shaken .

The Wheel of Reincarnation is a mysterious thing, unaffected by anything, even time itself . When a soul died and is set to reincarnate, it's not necessarily uniquely in the future, it can also take form in the past . However, as most reincarnates come back in the future, everyone assumes the Wheel is also subjected to Time, which cannot be more wrong .

In the case of Arthur MoonStar, formerly known as Arthur Bilgart, his reincarnation was supposed to happen when he died on Earth, however, due to the machinations of his two brothers, he was sent to Astria, becoming a parasite . Now, with the destruction of Riarravar, the first-ever created world, Arthur died along with it and his soul was extinguished but pulled by the Wheel of Reincarnation and subjected to its effect, as it should have been a long time ago .

The artifact used by 'X' to reincarnate Arthur's soul was purposely made imperfect as to maintain Arthur's obliviousness . This caused Arthur's soul and memories to be reborn as imperfect, however, it was only temporary .

When he first opened his eyes, he saw a frail and pale-faced woman with long black hair . As for the figure of a father, it was missing, there was only the baby and the crying woman, his mother, gently holding him in her embrace .

"My dear boy... let not fate decide your path . "

Her eyes were wet from all the years yet she brightly smiled and held the baby high in the air .

"Your name will be..."

The baby wasn't intelligent so it only looked at its mother, dumbly and innocently . Back then, no one, not even his happy mother, knew what the boy will become . He was born in a miserable environment and a cruel, abusive father .

Not long after that, the mother died, leaving the boy alone, suffering in this hellish world . It's a saddening story of someone bitterly hanging on a thread just to live, not even wishing for a peaceful or happy life .

He didn't have or need a last name... as for his name? It was Zodiak .

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VOLUME 10 : ZODIAK THE MYTHICAL

Chapter 543

"We're on time . "

The Joker cursed as he saw the flying trees and boulders, all getting sucked by the black hole at the center of Riarravar . Behind him, there stood 'X' and the short pink haired Lolitta, who didn't seem too bothered by the destruction around her .

"So? We go back?"

'X' asked the frowning Joker, who raised his hand and crushed a card, causing the whole place to quieten, severely limiting the black hole's monstrous absorption affecting the vicinities .

"No, he'll be here in a bit . Let's wait . "

The trio stood there, each one thinking of something while looking at the unrecognizable world which was turned into nothingness . However, what was surprising was the presence of some intact places, ones that even the black hole could not suck in .

One was a medium-sized colorful forest which was flying far away and the other was an underground golden city that seemed to be still functioning . The highest tower of the city was emitting blinding light which was being madly absorbed by the black hole . While this radiance was being sucked in, the city slowly moved further from the source of danger .

After less than a minute, a figure sprung from the surface of one of the flying boulders and jumped closer to the Joker and his party . He was a young man with a blond hair and handsome face that was very pale at the moment . His body was shaking and blood unceasingly leaked from his lips due to his injured and misplaced organs .

Vyncent looked at the Joker and co, not entering the protected area, seemingly hesitating . Seeing that the target finally showed himself, the Joker grinned and said:

"No need to fear, come here . "

Sadly, this only made him hesitate more, his feet rooted on the shaky ground . Seeing that his body was reaching his limit, Vyncent clutched the strange coin and glanced between the black hole and the Joker before finally choosing to march forward .

"So you came all the way here just for him?"

Displeased, 'X' asked Wolfram as he found nothing special with Vyncent . It was then that he caught sight of the coin, which slightly surprised him but it still wasn't good enough to explain the Joker's desperate attempt to come here .

"Each person has a job in history, but, for it to be so, there needs someone to record it . As average as he may seem, apparently, he's more resilient than the Nameless Knight . He's lucky too . "

Just as Vyncent entered his sphere of protection, Lolitta and X joined hands and reopened the path, teleporting all of them out of this place .

Unlike a Spatial Tunnel, this path take more time but is much safer and tougher . As were going through what seemed to be an endless wormhole, an incoming silhouette suddenly appeared, stopping a few meters away from them .

'X', Lolitta and the semi-conscious Vyncent didn't recognize him but the Joker did . The usually nonchalant Magician was furrowing his brows and standing up straight, even unleashing his suffocating aura .

"My my, I almost thought you're Tiarius but I guess he's not someone to wear such... unique outfit . "

"What do you want?"

The Joker faced Timos, the brown-haired man, his face frowning and his hand holding three cards . The Black Devil raised his hand and retreated a few steps while explaining himself

"Wait, I did not come here to fight . I'm well aware that my power is inferior, nonetheless, I'm confident in my ability to escape unscathed . "

It was then that a shiny orb appeared from behind Timos, it had two opposite sides, one was affected by the Golden fire and the other by the condensed Yin power .

"That's..."

The Joker gaped at the orb, immediately knowing what it is . He knew about its existence but no one knew who kept it before its birth, so such a revelation was truly a shock to the usually all-knowing Trickster .

"Never mind this . I'm more interested about that coin my humble guest just acquired . "

The man pointed at the coin in Vyncent's hands . The artifact was releasing a light that pulsed like a heart, moreover, it seemed to be aiding Vyncent, whom it recognized as its new owner .

"What does an entity like you need with a mere soul-artifact . "

The Joker really could not understand Timos' strange actions . Though the coin was strong, it wasn't to the point of making one of the Twelve greedy about it, after all, there are many other artifacts way better than it .

He glanced at the injured youth then focused his eyes on the coin but even after using his personal appraisal, he couldn't find anything special .

"It's sort of a personal keepsake of a comrade of mine . "

"So, you want it back?"

The Joker walked in front of Vyncent and bent his back, ready to pounce at the Black Devil .

"No, just wanted a final look at it . After all, I believe it has fallen into the perfect hands, aren't I right, my humble guest?"

The brown-haired man stared at Vyncent, his eyes seemingly able to see through anything and everything . The blond young man didn't reply and only tightened his grip on the coin, clearly unwilling to hand it over .

On a small island somewhere in the Water Region, precisely in a peaceful forest devoid of any strong beasts, a skinny youth with a bronze skin was dragging a large coffin . He was following a map given by the blue-haired scary woman and doing exactly what she said .

It took him a while to find the cave and it was only taxing due to the heavy coffin, which was truly heavy . As he had promised, he didn't question this task and didn't even dare open whatever he was dragging .

His body, soaking with sweat, finally relaxed after he came face to face with a normal, empty cave . He warily entered it, inspected the gloomy interior before taking out a one-time use wand and drilling into the cold walls, doing as the Empress instructed .

Half a day later, he managed to drill a corridor which ended into a medium-sized room . For the next couple of days, he painted the door connecting the corridor to the room then dragged the coffin all the way inside .

The final touch was to put two extremely heavy chests at the corner of the room .

The reward was more than he could hope for, furthermore, he made a special oath to never speak of this matter to any soul, so, after completing everything, the young Jakob went back to his mother with a purse filled with gold coins .

Chapter 544: 544

"What are we? What is the true purpose of our existence? God, why won't you speak to me?"

A boy stood in the middle of a snowy field, his bare feet touching the freezing ground . His head lifted, staring at the starry sky with his jet black eyes filled with nothing, not even emotions . He only wore a single piece of ragged cloth, if it can be called so . He was dirty and visibly malnourished, his arms thin like a skeleton and fingers filled with scars, especially his knuckles, which were bloodied due to fighting over thrown food with the other homeless kids .

No, this boy wasn't homeless but he'd rather spend the night outside than in his home, a hellish place inhabited by a foolish drunkard . The boy, named Zodiak by his mother, was, at first, a believer and hoped that God will watch over him and his mother . Sadly, life was never fair and fate has chosen him to be the victim of a miserable, almost pitiful life . His father abused him and his mother and it didn't take long for the latter to die by his hands, her body was frail and she was sick yet the cruel man would do anything to get what he wants .

Zodiak tried to retaliate but, what can a boy do against an adult? Nothing . Every time he revolted, he'd get beaten black and blue then thrown to the snowy road to pass the night in the chilling coldness .

Not a day passes without seeing cruelty that no child has to ever witness . Young girls abducted in broad daylight then sold to the greedy nobles, who only want to satisfy their greedy fetishes .

A year ago, Zodiak had a group of friends but, without exception, all of them were captured and killed . Three girls forcefully dragged to a noble's house East of the city while the two innocent boys were slashed to death by the slave trader, in fact, Zodiak escaped only through a fluke .

With a shivering body and reddened feet, the boy dragged his body while covering his bald head . He was thirteen years old this year but never once did he eat what people call normal food, it's always a

small piece of dried black bread or rotten cheese found on the trash bin behind some back-alley restaurant .

Seeing the minority(which claim they're nobles) lavishly enjoy their life while all the rest struggle to get past today, the boy grew a bloody grudge against the higher-echelon . His hatred grew every time he got beaten up by a bodyguard due to a random reason or get mocked by a noble kid younger than him .

His mother, his only pillar of support, died a long time ago and ever since then, things only got much, much worse . Today, on this wintery day where the usually luminous city was eerily quiet, Zodiak went back home... a small hut that could barely be called a shelter .

It stunk of alcohol and there was a severe lack of furniture, furthermore, the door leading inside was riddled with holes, letting the chilly wind pass through and turn this place into a freezer . The boy's face had a gaunt of expressionless as he stared back at a tall figure a couple of meters away from him . The man facing Zodiak was bald, ugly and had a black eye(apparently, recent) .

The father swayed left and right, clearly in a drunken state, he slowly walked up to the short figure at the entrance of house then, without any warning, delivered a vicious punch for no goddamned reason .

The boy didn't resist as he was pushed to the back then fell on the ground, blood leaking out of his lips . He was only thirteen years old and very unhealthy so getting struck like that caused him agonizing pain yet he didn't even let out a squeak .

The punch was but the beginning as the man stood before Zodiak and kicked his stomach . The child curled his body and protected his head, not bothering to dodge or do anything else . A cold streak flashed across the hidden boy's eyes, unseen by the unreasonably violent parent .

After venting his accumulated anger, the man gasped for breath and finally stopped beating Zodiak . He reached for a nearby cup, wanting to drink more alcohol but found it empty, infuriating him again . He glared back at the boy, who was dragging his injured body to a small hole which seemed to lead to a minuscule room .

"Hey! Ungrateful filth! Go get me alcohol!"

He spoke with a loud and domineering voice, his tone indicating that it was an order with no room for objection . Zodiak ignored the shouting man and slipped through the hole, soon disappearing from his father's view?

Nevertheless, the man continued blabbering for while then left the hut himself after spitting at Zodiak's room .

Inside that small hole which was filled with ripped papers and unrecognizable broken objects, the boy leaned against the rough wall and stared to the front with a blank expression . After a while, he grabbed one of the paper and started clumsily reading

"Happiness: a state of well-being and contentment: Joy . Regret: To be very sorry for..."

He continued going over various words defining emotions . He tried, very hard, to experience such things but it didn't work out, not even once . He was unable to feel emotions, good or bad . He cared only about his survival and socialized just for the sake of it... to seem normal, like anybody else .

The winds whistled outside and the room became dark to the point that the boy could not see anything anymore . The candle burning in the other room seemed to have been extinguished, robbing the last bit of illumination .

"No family, no life, no future... curse everything . Where is this hope they desperately cling onto? My sight is filled with darkness... darkness that consumes everything . "

Sometimes, he would have nightmares, too vivid and totally bone-chilling . He'd see a world filled with black fire, the sky, and the ground were consumed by the domination gloom, leaving nothing untouched . Even his body was consumed, merging him with that scary yet comfortable world . However, that was not everything, he would also another world, different and fascinating but it was blurry and only lasted for a brief moment, leaving the young Zodiak confused and sweat-soaked the next morning .

"In the end, who created Dark Magic?"

The Joker, who was sitting next to the Nameless Knight, asked his brother while staring at the ever-expanding crack in the space-time Continuum .

"Who do you think it was?" Leiu smiled and glanced at his curious brother . The matter was much more complex than it seems because to know the truth, one must know what happened in the first cycle .

"Come on, you know I've joined a bit late... you're the only one who managed to keep the memories of all the cycles . "

"If we trace it back to the beginning, we'll see that Arthur passed Dark Magic to the young Zodiak but that very same Arthur got it from Zodiak's body . It's like the chicken and the egg . To understand properly, do you know why Zodiak was called a Mythical being and not a human?"

"Because he reached a self-created Realm? I think he diverged from the orthodox route and was able to construct a whole new type of strengthening, solely relying on Dark Magic . "

"No, you're wrong . It's true that he had many believers but none could inherit his powers, moreover, he wasn't called 'The Mythical' for such a feat . He wasn't regarded as human because he really wasn't so . "

Hearing this, the Joker frowned and retorted:

"But he's definitely human... he didn't mutate or anything . "

"Yes, he did not but he was incapable of feeling emotions . It wasn't due to the tragedies he went through but something he was born with . Maybe it was a defect of that ridiculous reincarnation, which is, essentially, something that shouldn't have happened . He is something that should not have existed, so, despite being human, feeling emotions were beyond him . "

"How is that possible? I thought Dark Magic relies on emotions, mainly anger . "

"It certainly does but that's in Arthur's case, as for Zodiac, I really don't know how he did it . In any case, he was what many call a Psychopath, incapable of empathy and remorse . "

"Alright, so what does this have to do with Dark Magic?" The Joker got even more curious as he listened to the calm Leiu .

"Unlike its successors, the first cycle was a bit different . The reason Dark Magic is feared is because it made Zodiac sacrifice a whole world just create it . It wasn't intentional but when it had burst, it consumed everything and finally came into existence . That is how it came to be, by his hands . "

"What about Arthur? What did he do in the first Cycle?"

Hearing this, Leiu chuckled and answered with a question that had no relation with the previous topic:

"Tell me, Wolfram, have you found out who Arthur's parents were?"

In response, The Joker shrugged his shoulders and maintained his silence .

Chapter 545

"At the beginning... the price to pay seems so very meager . "

Zodiac let out a sigh, got up from that dark corner and searched for a few objects . One of them was a tiny metal objects, seemingly harmless but very dangerous to the frail mortals . He scratched on the wall riddled with holes then looked to the exit of this room, hearing the yelling of his drunk father .

With emotionless eyes, he peeked through the hole and patiently waited till the man fell asleep after rambling for quite a while . With soundless steps, he walked toward his father and slashed down with his dagger, showing not even a tiny bit of hesitation . First, he cut the man's throat, causing him to wake up and clutch his injury, try to stop the gushing blood which resembled a beautiful red fountain dying the whole ground scarlet .

Zodiac's face was splashed by blood yet he didn't care, he struck again with the self-created weapon, this time focusing on the wrists and abdomen .

It was long after that the father died miserably like a dog, his body convulsed for a few brief moments before it ceased breathing, the last bit of life finally extinguished .

The kid, Zodiac, stared at the man's lifeless corpse for a very long time, doing nothing but stand there, blood-soaked and motionless, his inky black pupils never leaving the body laying before them .

"Living such a life... you quickly come to understand that it's not only the nobles who are corrupt and twisted . Red blood flows through all of their veins... they're all humans, same nature and same behavior . If that is what it means to be human then I don't want to be one . "

He threw the sharp metal object next to his father's lifeless body before taking out a small match pack and lighting a few of them . He emptied the alcohol bottle in a tiny haystack, causing it to immediately catch fire . Less than five minutes later, the hut was engulfed by ever-so rising flames, turning the body into ash . As for Zodiac, he left empty-handed, not even taking what he considered precious belongings with him .

This was his way of declaring his permanent decision, letting go of the past and his humanity . He willingly chose to become a monster so that he can survive and live a proper life .

He just murdered his father in cold-blood and even though his body was turned into ash, the mage brigade will easily be able to trace him .

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Like a ghost, the short silhouette of the boy left the gates, noticed by no one . His steps were slow as he marched on the cold snow with bare, reddened feet, moreover, his clothes were thin and barely covered a third of his body, nonetheless, he didn't even let out a groan as he clenched his fists and disappeared .

"Faster!"

A group of young boys was currently looting corpses of the empire soldiers, from the looks of it, there were at least fifty or so dead men . Zodiac was amongst these looters, he was 'recruited' not long after leaving the city and his job here was to help bandits loot corpses after a long battle . He was given the bare minimum of food, as for shelter, he'd sleep in a cage along the other kids .

The others were either orphans or slaves who had escaped from one hell to another, only Zodiac was an exception .

In fact, one night, one of the boys, the oldest of the group, saw a sharp object hidden in Zodiac's sleeves . He relentlessly threatened to tell the bandits, eager to get a reward but his end was truly gruesome sight .

The rest of the boys watched from the corner of the cage, unwilling and afraid to either help or stop this dispute . They never thought that the mute Zodiac would hide such a dangerous weapon which can cause their end, which is part of the reason they didn't step up to defend him, after all, in this place, to survive you have to be obedient .

There have been cases of revolt but anyone who tried escaping or retaliating was tortured then killed . When the boy, who was one head taller than Zodiac, walked up to him and was about to forcefully take the weapon, all he received was a clean slash on his neck .

The bronze-skinned boy fell on the ground, writhing and desperately holding his neck . Zodiac walked up next to him, crouched down and plunged the weapon into the victim's skull, killing him on the spot .

After one last glance at the dead kid, he left the supposedly locked cage and started a killing spree before disappearing from that camp . That night, one boy and seven men were brutally murdered, and the assailant? A kid who's not even fourteen years old .

What Zodiac didn't expect was the stubbornness of the bandits, who gave up on attacking the merchants and started chasing him, over and over again . It turned out that the bandit chief was a vengeful person, he couldn't tolerate losing face, more so by a young boy who was working under him .

This cat and mouse chase lasted for three full months, in which Zodiak had to survive alone, not daring to enter civilized settlements or show his face . However, no matter how witty he was, he could not outrun a big group of pursuers who had a magic-user amongst them .

Aware that his chances of survival are very low, Zodiak led them to a beast's lair, a mutated fire crocodile, to be more precise . The monster was over ten meters in length and bathed in a lava pool in a secluded part of a place called the Lav Forest .

The bandits' arrival awakened the slumbering crocodile and angered, causing a fight to break out . The young Zodiak watched from far away, fully determined to bring down every single bandit present in this forest . He simply couldn't live while knowing that people are searching for him so his best chance was to take care of them all in one sweep .

He saw the crocodile breath a tsunami of fire which burned down trees and evaporated the rivers . Both the bandits and the boys acting as looters were struck by the fire, they fell on the ground and rolled around, crying in agony . Zodiak didn't even bat an eye when he saw the innocent kids die... from his perspective, it's either them or him . He didn't feel guilt or pity, actually, he felt nothing, not even the satisfaction of getting rid of his enemies .

Sadly, the end wasn't so fortunate as the bandit chief was more powerful than expected . A fierce fight occurred between him and the monster, devastating the forest and exposing Zodiak's small figure . The chief attempted to rid of him but the crocodile was ferocious, lashing out with its tail and spitting one fireball after the other hence forcing the bandit to retreat .

Everything happened in thirty minutes or so and by the end, both the monster and the bandit died, one was beheaded and the other engulfed in flames . As for Zodiak, he was trapped inside the flames with no way to escape route .

Somewhere on Earth, inside a popular shop that sold detailed and expensive figurines, a handsome man wearing a black-suit checked the displayed merchandise . He was accompanied by what seemed to be his personal secretary, she was holding some documents while quietly following him . She was already used to his strange behavior but didn't let her curiosity get the best of her and maintained silence whenever she's with him . In fact, she only spoke when spoken to .

The man checked one figurine after the other until he found one that pleased him a lot . As he leaned his face closer and stared at the figurine, he started laughing, probably from joy...

"Get me this one . "

He pointed at the figurine, to which the clerk started preparing it almost immediately . Upon a closer look, the figurine was that of a red alligator enveloped in flames . It wasn't that special compared to the other ones, which are much more famous, nonetheless, the worker did as asked and soon transferred to a more luxurious glass interior .

Cynthia finished the payment and was about take the figurine with her only to hear her boss' voice behind her .

"Isn't it beautiful?"

The young girl grimaced and forcefully nodded her head, not knowing what exactly to say . The figurine looked creepy and probably had been abandoned for a long time, she really didn't know what's beautiful about it .

At that time, if she knew what his thoughts were, she would have been dumbfounded .

Chapter 546

The boy, Zodiak, was injured due to the massive collateral damage done by both the dead bandit chief and the beheaded crocodile . This left him trapped in a sea of fire, unable to locate any safe route he could slip through . The trees were burning and falling all over the place and the magma river overflowed and started reaching everywhere . His young skin started showing a few sideburns while his body was soaking with sweat .

While covering his mouth with a small ripped piece of cloth, Zodiak breathed the air with great difficulty, barely able to remain conscious due to his dizzy mind . He didn't feel the pain from his fractured ribs or burnt skin, nonetheless, he could not force himself to remain conscious .

After a bitter and pretty pointless struggle, he fell on the ground, his hand reaching to the front, trying to drag the whole body farther from the creeping flames .

As the end was close and his death was nothing but imminent, Zodiak kept crawling on the ground, barely able to move his exhausted body . He wasn't a magic user and his body was weak and fragile so a small blow of the bandit chief would've killed him, moreso for an ultimate technique .

At some point, Zodiak raised his body and stared to the front, seeing nothing but high-reaching flames which dominated his sight . His emotionless eyes scanned the vicinities but there didn't seem to be any place he could crawl to . Just as he was about to lay on his back, he caught the sight of a black silhouette coming from within the flames .

The figure slowly approached him and extinguished a small part of the flames in its way, replacing the fire with ominous black flames . In a matter of seconds, the mysterious individual stood inches from the collapsed young Zodiak, staring down at him with a face drained with a gaunt of expressionlessness .

"As someone hated by both the Heavens and Fate, you should at least get the chance to fight back . "

Though Zodiak clearly heard him, he had no strength to speak or turn his head to get a proper look at this man . And, magically... as if he heard the boy's thoughts, the man used his power to turn Zodiak's body upside down, making the kid's face directly face him .

Then, he crouched down and leaned his face very close to the panting Zodiak, his sky-blue eyes seemingly able to see through everything . Not even the permanent gloom filling Zodiak's eyes was able to block that man's gaze, which penetrated all the way to the boy's soul, scanning every 'inch' of it .

"Zodiak, do you want power?"

The man cut through the chase and asked the silent boy, his face demanding an immediate and clear answer . In fact, for a second, the abyssal eyes of Zodiak wavered when he heard the man's question . As he was really not able to talk, the boy slowly raised his shaky hand, trying to grasp the man .

"Your desire is apparent but, as a certain friend of mine always says, everything comes at a price . In your case, the price is by no means a small one . "

Time passed and the fire stretched farther away but wasn't able to reach either the man or the injured boy laying next to him . Zodiac mustered all his strength and slowly opened his dried lips:

"I'- I w-will give my s . . soul . "

Hearing this, the man chuckled and retorted:

"Soul? Why would I need your soul? I'm not a devil, you know . Actually, the price you'll be paying isn't for me . "

As he said that, the man stabbed his hand into Zodiac's chest and released a malevolent black energy which consumed the boy's whole body in a few brief seconds . Zodiac's body convulsed but he couldn't feel any pain, he just knew that his body wasn't faring too well .

The man, named Arthur MoonStar, stood up, stared at the struggling kid for some time before throwing an empty diary right next to his head .

"From now on, every night, record any important thing that you do . When the time comes, I'll come and demand you to pay the price so do not forget . "

After saying that, Arthur vanished into a dissipating black mist, leaving Zodiac alone . The fire continued its course, approaching the convulsing Zodiac .

Apart from that young kid, no one knew what happened that day but, that forest had a drastic transformation and soon changed names, becoming a forbidden zones inhabited by mutated monsters . The scorched trees and corrupted ground returned to normal but became jet black in color, even the dead crocodile returned to life .

There existed humans who are bad at magic, there also many who can't use it, however, a case like Zodiac's was truly unique . As someone born in a world filled with Mana, he should've been able to use spells, especially after acquiring Dark Magic, however, it was the total opposite . His body lacked any kind of energy, excluding Dark Mana, which Zodiac created for himself . Since he could not use normal Mana, he converted it with his powers into an energy he could use as a catalyst to enhance his Dark Magic spells .

Since the meeting between him and Arthur, Zodiac spent the next two years alone, roaming a zone devoid of any humans . He resolved himself to become stronger then go back to his city and eradicate all the filth . He didn't have any proper goal but he wanted to pay back all the nobles who mocked him and treated him like an animal . One of the reasons his mother died was because of their arrogance and twisted nature .

In these two years, Zodiac became a real killing machine, something that lacked emotions and only sought death . His manipulation of Dark Magic reached a very high-stage and he even invented new, formidable uses for it . He was able to control beasts, change the structure of his bones and fully protect his heart, which changed location .

Though he recorded his daily activities, he didn't mention his training and even when he acquired the system later on, he made sure not to register them .

When Zodiak left seclusion and headed back to his 'home', the city ruled by the nobles who oppressed the beggars and poor, he never thought that he'll meet another person whom he'll rely on in the future . It all began when he purposely let himself be captured by a famous slave trader right at the entrance of the city .

Seeing his fighting potential, the trader was joyous and promised him that some noble will certainly buy him and provide him with more than he could wish for, he just needs to fight and win in the Colosseum .

It didn't take long for the fifteen years old Zodiak to be bought by a pig-like noble lady . In addition to him, another boy, younger than him, was also bought . The boy had jet black hair and brown eyes, he had a horrifying scar on his neck all the way to his stomach and seemed physically fit for his age . His name? It was Forne .

"Greetings, Madam . "

A man that emanated a truly dangerous aura stood before Lucy, bowing respectfully . His hair was jet black and his eyes were lowered, lacking any arrogance, a surprising thing for someone of his position .

The only reason Lucy didn't attack was because of the youth standing next to this man . He wore a grey robe and seemed innocent but, in reality, he was a skillfull assassin, the Green seat of Justice of Black Rose .

As for this man? He was the leader, the Black Seat of Death and also the man who almost killed her in the war . He was the one who attacked her and used a destructive energy which was barely stopped by the ARK and herself .

"You are?"

Though she nodded to Artid, who she was previously acquainted with but she didn't show the same level of respect to the tall man standing in front of her .

"My name is Forne . A half-vampire and the Black Seat of Death, pleased to make properly meet you, Madam MoonStar . "

Lucy, arms crossed didn't reply, she only stared at him, her blue eye pulsating with light . Thanks to the eye gifted by Arthur, she was able to use Appraisal and get satisfactory information about this man, who was really strong, the strongest person she had ever met, excluding Timos and Arthur's brothers, of course .

He was also over 50,000 years old and had an insane amount of titles .

"Arthur isn't here yet, I wonder to what do we owe this visit of yours?"

Knowing that this Forne is the leader of Black Rose, or at least the strongest out of all the seats so his word held a significant amount of power, Lucy talked directly to him despite her unwillingness .

"Your husband has obtained the Red seat of Blood and as promised by Artid, the White seat is yours if you want . "

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The White seat had already betrayed them and joined forces with Xyktia so it was left vacant, and Lucy was the perfect fit for this position .

"I refuse, I've got more important matters to attend to than assassinating . "

Forne bowed again and replied:

"We're aware that your circumstances are a bit... unique . "

He glanced at the slightly large figure at the corner of the room . It was a blue wolf soundlessly sleeping, the tip of its three tails each let out differently-colored sparks of thunder, disturbing the air around them .

"Which is why we won't fault your husband for not coming to the HQ or performing the promised jobs . We believe that joining forces can be beneficial for all sides, especially in these times of turmoil . "

Chapter 547

"I paid a heavy sum for you so don't embarrass me out there!"

The pig-like lady who bought purchased a small group of slaves, which included Zodiak and Forne, was currently warning them repeatedly, her hands moving randomly in the air, showing off her expensive and loud jewelry . The over-sized bracelets, pendants as big as her hand, and the clothes made from the finest silk showed how wealthy she was . There was a decently-sized Colosseum in the city and almost daily, the nobles would buy slaves then pit them against each other . However, the cruel thing is that there will never be a winner since the last surviving individual will have to fight a monstrous beast .

Zodiak purposely let himself be captured so that he can show the happy spectators what it means to fight for your survival . Not long after the 'encouragement' talk of the rich madam, Zodiak, the quiet Forne and a few other slaves were thrown in the wide battling area .

Along with them, there were at least forty other 'contestants', all wearing shabby clothes and holding rusty armors . There were a few exceptions such as a tall and muscular man wielding a large ax, still, Zodiak didn't feel threatened . Actually, he didn't even plan on attacking them .

Though he quickly backed away to a corner, the rest started a gory fight for survival, even Forne was no exception . The young boy was as agile as a cheetah, leaping from one target to another, slashing their necks with a blade that was merely four to five inches tall .

The desperate and angry shouts of slaves echoed inside the Colosseum while the safe nobles watched from above, drinking their wine and enjoying their grapes . There was a magical barrier erected around the battlefield, rendering it impossible for any of the slaves to reach their masters .

Unfortunately, Dark Magic wasn't affected by the barrier so, after merely five minutes, Zodiak started acting . In total, there were twenty or so nobles, some sitting alone and others enjoying the show while chatting . Unbeknownst to them, an ominous energy crept toward them from underground and before

they, or their bodyguards could react, they were all, simultaneously thrown into the pit . Their unpleasant cries reached the fighting slaves, momentarily halting their savage battles .

"Only like this would it be equal . "

Zodiak grinned and stared at the dumbfounded nobles, very much enjoying their expressions . Of course, their loyal bodyguards attempted to jump and save them, however, the whole place seemed to have disappeared as a jet black dome enveloped the area, blocking anyone from entering .

As he saw the pale-faced nobles and the confused slaves, Zodiak knew that there was no going back to the quiet life now . He had to purge the nobles . Seeing that they were trapped in this dark dome with no one to interfere, they found the perfect opportunity to rid of the filth claiming to be their masters .

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Some slaves noticed Zodiak's strange action and knew he was behind all of this yet they didn't say anything . In fact, only he remained standing in the same position, all the rest charged at their masters and started a truly frightening massacre .

Anything awful thing that can happen occurred that day, inside the dome . Some were directly beheaded, others tortured and a few were even raped by slaves who already became twisted . One truly needed a strong will to witness what happened and still remain sane .

Zodiak leaned against the wall and watched everything, uncaring about what happens to either parties . Approximately thirty minutes later, all the nobles died and all that remained were the slaves .

"We've finished everything, can you let us out?"

The muscular slave from before walked closer to Zodiak and flashed a friendly smile . He didn't dare to act overbearingly as the boy before him was clearly a mage, and a powerful one, at that .

"Why should I do that? I'm not some humanitarian . Finish what you already started . "

Hearing this, the axe-wielding slave frowned and glanced at the remaining slaves . Even though they were not all strong, some were exceptionally dangerous . Seeing the cold look Zodiak was giving him, the man's smile broadened as he raised his arms and continued approaching him .

Sadly, when he was but ten steps away, a formless darkness sprung from the ground and enveloped the man . It soon disappeared but it took with it the whole body, leaving nothing but absolute nothingness in his place . Even his armor and weapon vanished, making the slaves shake from dread .

The only way out is to kill so the slaves continued their previous battles, stepping on the dismembered bodies of the nobles and their puddles of blood .

...

"P-please do-"

The slave knelt before the boy, begging him while bowing his head but Forne showed no mercy . He slashed the man's neck, causing a fountain of blood to gush out .

At last, everyone but him were killed, so, the quiet boy faced the motionless Zodiac, his blade raised, clearly ready to fight .

"Strong but... it isn't enough to destroy everything . "

Zodiac chuckled and walked toward Forne, who wasted no time and jumped at the former, his weapon aimed at the heart .

Just when the weapon connected with the target, Zodiac transformed into a black cloud which vanished soon after, taking with it the black dome . The little kid, Forne, raised his head, staring at a tiny black dot far away in the sky .

...

That day, it wasn't catastrophic for only the Colosseum but the whole city . Zodiac headed for the castle of the lord, planning to eradicate all the abominations, nonetheless, he was going to spare the presumably young daughter, who's said to be kind and caring . Unfortunately, the rumors about her were baseless and false .

He came through the main door, slaughtering everyone who dared to raise a weapon . The guards were engulfed in the ominous darkness and the protective magic was either destroyed or easily bypassed . It wasn't as hard as he had imagined, however, he was stopped when he stumbled upon a small, remote shack .

He didn't willingly stop but because he faced a rather particular 'being' . It looked completely disgusting, multiple arms, an eagle's wings and the head of a lion-like creature . The one who created this monstrosity? A young girl who hasn't even reached 15 years old, younger than Zodiac!

Her face looked exceptionally ugly as she snickered at the young intruder, mocking his idiocy and promising him that she'll take 'good' care of him . She wasn't too knowledgeable about the monster the creature she created so when she released it, it immediately attacked her . It ripped her arms then ate her head, leaving nothing but her bloody chest and bent legs .

"I do want to sympathize but I can't . "

The creature was sentient but it suffered too much damage, in fact, even breathing seemed hard and agonizing .

Zodiac faced the monster, who glared back at him, his aura rising to its maximum, quickly corrupting the earth and enveloping him in a semi-transparent black sphere which floated inches above the ground .

Not even Zodiac imagined that his battle with the desperate monster would obliterate half of the city, killing countless of people . No matter how much he attacked it, the creature refused to attack and persistently retaliated .

When it reached it stalemate, Zodiac, who held his chest and coughed blood, started laughing loudly . He was oblivious to the dead bodies all around him or the half-conscious monster meters away, crouching down, ready to leap at him .

"I get it... I finally get it . "

He raised his head and glared at the entity with his inky pupils

"So you want to live? Looking like that? In such a world? I wanted to relieve you of the pain and suffering . You were artificially made, something that should not have existed . Even if I do not finish you, there will be a time when someone will . "

Ironically, that time, Zodiak didn't know that his situation was exactly the same, if not more pitiful . Just like that chimera, he was an existence that should never have existed, a human being devoid of any emotions, a killing-machine .

As for that monster? Despite what the young Zodiak said back then, it managed to outlive him and become an infamous being, a ruler . Sure, it suffered many tribulations and fought more times that it had lived yet it managed to persist .

Its encounters with Zodiak were brief and always ended up in dispute but it cannot be denied that it felt grateful for that boy, who saved it that day, although unwillingly . That is exactly why, at the present, that 'chimera' had awakened again and started acting, however, unlike back then, its appearance changed and it was given a name: The Void Behemoth .

Chapter 548: 548

"Excellent . "

A tall brown-haired man sat on a small rock while nodding his head and staring at a little girl, or to be more precise, a kid who's no older than years old, in appearance, that is . However, her real age was less than a year, a shocking fact, if she were a human .

"Why is it blue though?"

Unexpectedly, she spoke fluently despite her age . Her skin was snow-white and her hair matched the sky's color . She was small, as a baby should be yet she was able to speak, write, and walk on her own . What's more fascinating are her inborn abilities .

"A good question indeed, little one . "

Hearing him, she angrily stomped her foot on the ground and protested:

"I'm not little . "

"Oh but you are but I digress . To answer your question, the Mana is actually blue because it originates from water . Just like Qi is green due to its relation with nature . Nether Energy, the most frequently used comes from Space Magic hence it's colorless appearance . Though, average people cannot see the color of any kind of energy, only those with a strong affinity to one of them can perceive the real color and harness it to perfection . If I remember correctly, your mother was proficient at Yin power and her Mana was unusually pure . "

"What about my father?"

"I already told you he's a parasite and no matter how talented you were destined to be, you were not able to inherit his Dark Magic . Even if you try, I doubt you can acquire it as it isn't fit for you . Nonetheless, you did get the monstrous Strength of Titan and a few more interesting bloodlines . "

A young boy with short dark hair sat in a small yet peaceful garden, his figure, standing there, lonely and pitiful .

"When can we leave?"

He raised his head and asked, however, there was no one but him in this place . The answer came briefly after, the speaker was seemingly disembodied .

"When the times comes, my dear . "

The voice came from everywhere and nowhere, it sounded like neither a woman or a man, strangely .

"What am I supposed to do, then?"

"Read . Knowledge is the only infinite thing in this world . "

The boy sat near a clear pond and took out a thick golden book then, with difficulty, started slowly reading it .

Time crept by and the boy became engrossed in this incomprehensible book . From time to time, he would stop and ask the unseen speaker .

"Why was there only twelve?"

"Only twelve were needed . Any more would've been a hindrance and any less would have caused a 'malfunction' . "

"And why did they fight?"

"For power, my dear . If they remained unmoving, the world we live in right now would not have existed . To pave a way for the future generation, the creators must disappear, leaving only a trace of them to reminisce about . "

"Disappear? Do you mean die?"

"No . They needed to get out of the way, leave things be . Just like the ground below you, a world of insects where one step from a giant can end them all, even unintentionally . Every life is precious, no matter how insignificant it is . Even the things that came to existence through a mistake or an accident deserve a chance . "

"Where are they now? The Twelve, I mean . "

This time, the voice didn't reply immediately but maintained a brief silence .

"Some are dead, others trapped and the rest wandering around . "

"The book mentions a long war, did no one understand the meaning behind everything?"

"One of them did . He reached his destination and ended 'it' peacefully . "

"Who was it?"

"Moriah . "

Six months after Lucy came back from Riaravar, many things changed in the Cloud Sea Universe . However, everything was overshadowed by a shocking occurrence which turned the attention of the inhabitants towards it .

Lucy officially became a member of Black Rose, taking the White Seat for herself . The soul bind vanished completely but she knew Arthur would come back, definitely .

As she expected, the signs appeared after half a year, the peacefulness broke and it was finally time to act .

The heavens were moving, the dark clouds started clustering and moving toward a specific direction, alarming everyone . It was a Celestial Tribulation but this one seemed oddly different, much stronger than the rest and very frightening . Each world it passed by, it hid the light of the sun and caused horrible after-effects .

"Let me go with you, Madam . "

Astrith, who fully recovered his strength and was in perfect condition, pleaded to Lucy .

In response, the silver-haired woman caressed the now white hair of the sleeping Saly while saying:

"There is no need . Take care of Saly and protect the sect . "

They were currently in Astria, in the MoonStar city . After her recent raid, Lucy located her daughter and brought her back home along with Delia and the knight .

"The Cloud Sea Sect and several other powers will follow the tribulation . I believe my assistance is requir-"

"I told you there is no need . "

Lucy cut him off and spoke with an authoritative tone, shutting up Astrith once and for all .

"Are you sure?"

Isadore tapped his finger on the table, unconsciously, as usual, while listening to Dan's report .

The beggar-looking Overgod looked exceptionally pale as he stood before his king, not very sane after encountering many powerful individuals, including the Nameless Knight .

"Yes, with the exception of a few place, it's definitely identical . The only missing thing is the piece of land North-East . "

The king massaged his temples and wracked his brains trying to find a meaning to all of this . Ever since he got sucked in Arthur's world, everything became chaotic . The more he tried to dig, the more surprised he became .

"Which one do you think is the real Astria?"

The overgod shrugged his shoulders and replied: "Both, I think . "

"Even a Titan cannot be in two places at once . "

Isadore let out sigh, stood up and left the office, closely followed by the grumpy Wrath .

Chapter 549

A teenager dressed in a ragged black robe dragged his injured body while supporting himself with the nearby trees . His body was littered with injuries and his face was unusually pale .

Zodiak's fight against the chimera was gruesome and almost resulted in his death . Their battle destroyed half the city and killed countless people yet the boy didn't feel any guilt whatsoever . As he gasped for breath and slowly marched, a lightning-fast figure sprung from a nearby bush and attempted to ambush him .

Alas, before the assailant could reach him, it was quickly enveloped in a fog of darkness, binding the body and causing it to freeze mid-air .

Through the large hood, Zodiak raised his head and stared at the young face glaring back at him .

"I'll kill you!"

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This was none other than Forne, the young slave who was also bought by the now-dead noble lady . He managed to escape unscathed and, all in all, suffered only a few minor, non-fatal, injuries . His chilling eyes were locked onto Zodiak, ready to devour him whole .

In response, the robbed teenager, with an expressionless face, looked back at the angry Forne and said:

"Kill me? I don't think we had a past grudge . "

"You've killed thousands of innocents! People like you should die!" Yelled back Forne, his face flushed .

Hearing this, Zodiak snickered while retorting:

"Innocents? No one is innocent in this world, and even if there were some, I don't really care . I did what I had to do in order to maintain my life and no one, including you, is allowed to judge me, much less blame me . Thousands die, you say? Well, even more die by the hands of those arrogant nobles . Plus, I did it out of necessity while they did it out of pleasure!"

Though many people died, most of them belonged to the high-echelon . The collateral damage caused by the fight between Zodiak and the chimera demolished the nobles' district and killed almost all of them . The slums remained untouched and only a small portion of the citizens were unintentionally killed . So, in a way, those who died deserved that fate, or so Zodiak thought .

Zodiak didn't want to argue with Forne anymore so, after one last glance at the latter, he disappeared from that quiet forest, leaving a frustrated boy .

Not long after that, Zodiak managed to fully awaken the Dark Magic, causing an unprecedented catastrophe to befall on that world, killing every life on it . In fact, it was sixteen months after the fight that Zodiak's Dark Magic burst, insanely boosting his strength by sacrificing billions of lives .

Literally, nothing remained of that world, an absolute emptiness which was both eerie and chilling . Zodiak, who, at that time, was seventeen years old, found himself floating in the empty space, surrounded by a starry sky, unable to control his body, which was being sucked by the gravity of the closest planet .

Fortunately, he managed to protect himself as to not suffocate but this led him to enter some sort of hibernation, not waking up for the next ten years . However, that long slumber wasn't simple . Zodiak dreamed of strange and inexplicable things, and these dreams were vivid and seemed to have a relation with the nightmare he frequently had when he was much younger .

He would see different worlds, monsters, and truly horrifying things . In particular, there were people who kept resurfacing, making him feel oddly uncomfortable as if he had forgotten something important .

After a long time of loneliness, Zodiak met the first living being and perhaps the one and only person he truly considered a friend throughout his bitter life . It all began when he fell from the sky like a meteor and crashed in an empty valley filled with colorful flowers . Just next to the place he crashed into, there stood a man with a mustache and a small beard, he held an unfamiliar musical instrument and looked at the unscathed Zodiak, his mouth was wide-open .

This man, who was surprised by Zodiak's lack of fashion rather than what actually happened, was a troubadour by the name of Aneirin . He was a very talkative and comical person who shouldn't have gotten along with Zodiak but, surprisingly, the two became friends shortly after that incident .

The minstrel brought the unconscious Zodiak to a broken shack and patiently waited for him to wake up, which didn't take long, by the way .

"Good morning, O'alien . "

The singer spoke with a mocking tone as he gazed at the expressionless Zodiak . The seventeen years old boy sat up and looked around him before focusing his gaze on the mustached man next to him .

"Where am I?"

One could see a creeping darkness revolving around Zodiak's hands but Aneirin showed no fear whatsoever . With his chin resting on his hand, looking pretty bored, he rolled his eyes and answered:

"Somewhere quiet in a planet called 'Serenity' . "

The bard knew that Zodiak came from outer space so he gave just the perfect answer for the listener .

"And who are you?"

"Aneirin, a bard extraordinary, at your humble service . "

The man did a comical bow before studying Zodiak's young face, which was drastically changed with every passing second .

In half a minute, the face of a teenager became that of a middle-aged man, strangely . Actually, Zodiak noticed this change only when he saw the weird look he was getting from Aneirin . He curiously touched his face only to feel a beard and almost unnoticeable wrinkles .

Zodiak thought he understood the intention behind Aneirin's actions so he raised his hand and magically transformed the creepy darkness into dozens of gold coins which fell on the rough bed . This 'trick' fascinated the already curious Aneirin, who leaned closer and excitedly clapped his hands .

"What was that? Alchemy? Do it again!"

Zodiak frowned, thinking that the bard was greedy for money so he just did it again in order to rid of this 'savior' . Although he felt no emotion, he was still a bit grateful for this troubadour and thought that by giving gold, he'd just go away . Unfortunately, he couldn't be more wrong .

"You have the philosopher's stone? Cool!"

The bard became hyped as he examined the cold coins then looked at the darkness revolving around Zodiak's hands .

"Emm... it's not alchemy . Really nice, I've learned something new today . Stranger, what's your name?"

Zodiak looked back at the noisy Aneirin for a long time before unconsciously saying : "Arthu-" Only to stop midway and hold his head, which was aching like crazy .

After it somehow calmed down, he properly said: "Zodiak . "

"Very nice to meet you, Zodiak . "

The singer held out his hand, ready to shake Zodiak's but the latter ignored him completely . Nonetheless, Aneirin grabbed Zodiak's hand and made it shake with his own, acting as if it was a normal thing to do .

"What are you doing?"

Several days later, after Zodiak regained the ability to move properly and all the numbness caused by the long slumber disappeared, he hit the road . What he didn't expect is that clingy Aneirin, who persistently followed him .

Aneirin rolled on the ground a few times, slowly got up while rubbing his butt and saying:

"Ouch! You don't have to be so aggressive!"

He was attacked by Zodiak's Dark Magic but he seemed unscathed . Although Zodiak did go easy on him, that didn't change the fact that this wandering bard was actually resistant to his attacks .

Aneirin looked normal and was definitely not a mage yet he was mysterious . At first, he behaved normally but Zodiak grew cautious of him ever since he resisted his Dark Magic .

"Come on! Traveling alone is boring . Let us ease each other's loneliness!"

He hugged himself and walked behind the grumbling Zodiak, showing no signs of giving up his 'pursuit' .

In the end, Zodiak didn't due anything extreme like trying to kill Aneirin as he deemed it as unnecessary . Moreover, after wandering this land for some time, he even grew a bit fond of this companion, who was knowledgeable about many things .

In their short night talks, Aneirin would talk about the vast universe, and the existence of three others, each one bigger than the other . Currently, they were in the Heaven and Hell Universe, far North, in a zone called the White commandment .

Serenity was a planet utterly void of conflicts and apart from the breath-taking scenes, it was very unsettling . The inhabitants seemed dazed as if they were controlled by something . They didn't speak much and never fought, maintaining the current 'quiet' state of the planet .

Sadly, things became complicated with Zodiak's appearance . His Dark Magic unintentionally canceled the effects of the magic cast on the inhabitants, causing them to become insane, literally .

It happened two months after Zodiak started this journey... blood started dying the earth of Serenity, breaking this artificial balance, at last .

...

"My friend, look at what I caught!"

Aneirin held a large orange rabbit in his hand while flashing a satisfied smile at Zodiak, who busy writing his daily activities in his diary .

"It's a sky rabbit! It's the most delicious rabbit in existence!"

The troubadour patted a golden net which hung on his back while putting the corpse on an even wooden block . He skillfully skinned it then started preparing dinner, not forgetting to add the necessary seasoning .

Although he didn't look like it, Aneirin often boasted about his culinary skills, telling Zodiak that he's an unmatched cook . Though, his words weren't without proof as Zodiak could really feel the effects of his cooking .

He couldn't cultivate like normal people, nevertheless, his physical body was strengthened beyond his imagination . His control of Dark Magic was also slightly increased, which truly fascinated Zodiak .

"Now then, eat!"

He presented him with a big dish filled with well-cut vegetables, meat with an addictive odor and a side dish that was as plentiful as the main one .

While they were quietly enjoying their lavish dinner, Aneirin stared at the night sky, his eyes locking onto two-winged silhouettes which were monitoring them .

"So, what are your thoughts about our new friends?"

When he heard that, Zodiak glanced at the far away angels and grinned .

"I don't care about them... as long as they don't attack . "

"Oh but they will! Angels need permission to interfere with planets such as 'Serenity' which is why they're merely monitoring us . I reckon that they'll properly 'welcome' us in a week, at most . "

"Then we'll retaliate . I do not think that the bard extraordinaire is afraid of a couple of angels . "

Aneirin shook his head repeatedly while retorting: "I'm not cut for battles . Unless it's absolutely necessary, I'd rather not dirty my hands . Also, it won't be long before we reach the Well of the Lost . If we enter it, they won't dare to chase us inside . "

Hearing the name of their destination for the nth time, Zodiak became absent-minded .

"The Well of the Lost, huh..."

As someone who lived for a long time, Aneirin doesn't just wander around without any destination in mind . He's an explorer who seeks thrilling experiences in order to come up with good and real poems . He needs to be in the heart of the action, which is why he usually seeks dangerous places that are rumored to have heavenly treasures . The Well of the Lost is one of them, however, its origins are mysterious .

Back then, Zodiak didn't know that this well will start an unstoppable chain of events which will drag him from one place to another . The first one being a world unlike any other, a place that only existed in the past before it was ravaged by continuous disasters .

At that world, there was his destined meeting with a certain person, a very special mortal, cast out from society . No one, including Arthur, Wolfram, or Leiu, knew that Zodiak and Claud Venice actually met . In fact, Zodiak never recorded that journey in his diary .

Chapter 550

"I figured that I'll find you here . "

An old man wearing a very old black robe riddled with holes appeared next to a black-haired woman . He didn't stare at her but looked at the person she was watching with an absent-minded look .

"I'm not stopping you so why don't you go talk to him?"

Death looked at his student, Anastassia, and spoke, his tone gentler than usual .

For some time, the woman didn't talk and only looked at the frail and thin young man who was doing harsh manual labor to support himself and his sick mother . Seeing that he got no response, the elder spoke again:

"That is right, the current him hasn't met you yet . "

"..."

Anastassia jet black pupils shook as her eyes became a bit watery but she turned her head away, afraid that the old man might see .

"You had only one path and you chose it . It is too late for regret now, child . "

After he said that, both he and his student vanished, appearing in a desolate place far away . The two crossed the river of time and went back to one fateful day .

"It is almost time to pass my duty to you . You've learned almost everything and it is time to harvest the first soul . "

He raised his bony hands and pointed a figure shrouded in black not far away from them . They were floating in space with only darkness surrounding them, the only source of light was of the faraway stars .

The woman looked at the two silhouettes a distance away, her hands slightly shaking .

"In fact, the one and only way to become Death itself is by erasing that which should not have existed . "

The old man sighed as he stared at the shrouded silhouette . Facing the target was a youngster wearing a jet black armor which made him merge with his surroundings . He was holding a two-handed sword which was soaking with fresh blood .

"I, I can't . "

Anastassia staggered a few steps and hid her shaky hands under her sleeves . She didn't even dare look at Zodiak, who had a gaping hole in his chest and was soon about to die .

"He's my-"

The old man cut her off and retorted:

"Arthur is, no, was your friend . Zodiak is not him and if you wish for your friend to return, you must do this!"

Without even realizing it, both she and Death were getting closer to the old man, Zodiak . As for Leiu, he glanced at them before turning around leaving .

It was a sky-piercing mountain, its size was truly absurd . It towered over everything on this planet and remained unscathed despite the Celestial Tribulation hovering around it . Red and purple lightning danced in the air, sometimes striking the mountain but damaging only a minuscule part of it .

Currently, this place, which was the boundary between the Cloud Sea Universe and the System Universe, was filled with people . It's a dangerous place where only the strong can enter but in the recent period, many cultivators and players have come, expectantly waiting for the tribulation to erupt .

In the sky, you could see a massive spaceship which was a third of this ginormous mountain . It was moved relying solely on very advanced technology, it even had thousands of cannons ready to fire .

Both on the peak and foot of the mountain, there stood numerous people, most notable of them were Marshals belonging to the Cloud Sea Empire and high-leveled players belonging to the System .

However, many other factions were quite curious about the tribulation so they sent their best experts, eager to witness what's going to happen . There were even second-grade clans and sects but they stood a distance away from the mountain, afraid to anger the big heads .

"Is this distance enough?"

Jian Si, now officially the sect master of the Mountain Ba Sword Sect, spoke to a woman standing next to her . The woman had black hair and was wearing a mask which covered the entirety of her face .

"Yes . "

Cold Sword didn't know what exactly happened to Arthur but she did hear about Lucy's raid and how the Cloud Sea Sect put a hefty bounty on her head . It wasn't surprising to see her cover her appearance but she didn't know why she'd come here, moreover, she even personally came and requested her help .

As it was quite a dangerous place, Jian Si only brought the grand elder of the sect with her, excluding Lucy, of course .

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The elder was curious about the sect master's friend but he remained silent, fully trusting Cold Sword .

Lucy's reply was short as she was busy cleaning the silver revolver, which seemed a bit different . She didn't know how exactly but when she came to her senses, she found her saber and gun next to her body . Her first guess was Timos, who highly praised this masterpiece crafted by her husband .

"What exactly are you going to do?"

Though she was usually brave and didn't fear anything, Jian Si felt intimidated by the suffocating tribulation and the several powerhouses present today .

"Pay back my debt . "

Before he was pulled in Riarravar by the chains, Arthur said it clearly . He will never forgive or forget what they did and it was time he and Lucy stay true to their words . When the times comes, those who need to die will die, no matter what .

"Ah... you're really good at tracking, the best one after Xyktia, actually . "

A brown-haired man and gulped down one big bottle of alcohol before saying that . He wiped his lips and stared at the man holding a cane and hiding his face, which was very blurry .

"Your compliments are an honor, Sir . "

'X' politely bowed to Timos before walking closer, his eyes curiously glancing at a nearby girl with blue hair . He could feel dangerous fluctuation emanating from her but he refrained from asking anything .

Timos didn't need to hear anything from 'X' to know what he wanted .

"I assume you want the Dark Blade? But, let me ask you... I even took it from Arthur so what makes you think I'll give it to you?"

After a brief silence, 'X' replied:

"Sir, with all due respect, I only need something inside the blade . The extraction will only take a short time . "

"Maybe if I like your reason, I'll allow you . Here, sit and empty your heart . "

Timos smiled and motioned for 'X' to sit opposite of him . Although reluctant, 'X' still sat and gazed at the bonfire, which was the only separating him from the Black Devil .

"Sir, actually, it's about your son, Sol'khin . "

The moment he mentioned that name, Timos' smile vanished and an ugly frown appeared .

"Why are you mentioning him? Speak . "

"He... escaped . "

'X' immediately regretted saying that as a suffocating pressure spread from Timos, shattering the earth and splitting the sky . Only the little kid remained unaffected, she was so long in her mysterious trance that didn't notice anything .

"Escaped, you say?"

Though he appeared very angry, he managed to calm himself surprisingly fast . He took a deep breath and regained his calm expression before speaking again:

"Explain . "

"Ah! It hurts! Ouch!"

Aneirin jumped around while holding his aching butt . They had inspected the Well of the Lost before jumping in but they ended up in this strangely normal place . The fall did hurt a bit but it didn't really cause any serious injuries .

Zodiak slowly get up and studied his surroundings, curious about mysterious and small moving things . They appeared to be in some kind of laboratory but their vision was blurry due to a lot of steam caused by some kind of explosion .

Their attention was soon grabbed a machine which was emitting a loud noise while sucking all the steam inside of it . Soon, there appeared a middle-aged man in a lab-coat, a disheveled hair and a pair of round glasses .

Aneirin found him unfamiliar but Zodiak was shocked . He dumbly stood there, staring at this man, who was very similar to the one he dreamed about... their faces looked exactly the same, more or less .

"I succeeded, hahahaha"

The man joyfully celebrated while circling around the two oblivious guests .

"I must say, stranger, your sense of fashion is lacking but your room is fascination so it's a plus for me . "

Aneirin studied the place while nodding his face, clearly not bothered by this sudden and very strange chain of events . As an explorer, he had been in situations much weirder and illogical than this .

"Ah-please pardon my late introduction . "

The man wearing a white lab coat stretched his hand to the troubadour while saying:

"I am Claud Venice . A human scientist . "