

Once Human 551

Chapter 551

"Yes yes, my name is Aneirin, a bard extraordinaire . "

The troubadour warmly shook hands with Claud Venice, the two happily smiling . When it was Zodiak's turn, he neither spoke nor raised his hands, turning the atmosphere awkward .

"Don't mind him, he's a bit shy . "-Aneirin

"A-ah, alright . " Claud nodded his head then guided the two upstairs, to his respectable home . He prepared two cups of hot tea for them then waited for them to calm down before talking .

Zodiak remained oddly silent and unresponsive while Aneirin was looking around, fascinated by all the foreign machines decorating the room .

"That's called a TV . It can broadcast many things like movies and news from all over the world . "

Claud was patient as he explained some of the things to the curious bard .

At some point, the silent Zodiak raised his head and stared at Claud with his usual expressionless face .

"Where are we?"

It was the first thing he said ever since coming here . In response, the scientist gave an immediate and detailed answer .

"You're on a planet called Serenity and, correct me if I'm wrong, but you also came from the same planet, right?"

"Yes, that is indeed the case . "-Aneirin

"Would you mind telling me the date? Which Era are you from?"

"5th Era, Year 1694 . "

After a short pause, the bard asked: "Did you summon us to the future?"

Claud smiled and corrected him: "Quite the opposite, in fact . You're in the past . "

Zodiak flinched but the troubadour didn't seem that surprised .

"What do you want from us?"

Zodiak didn't trust this friendly scientist and felt uncomfortable in this cozy place, fearing that it may be some kind of trap .

"Honestly, when I attempted my summon, I didn't expect it'll really work . After all, Theoretically, time-travel is possible but no one was able to succeed yet . Anyway, you're here because I want to ascertain something . "

"Ascertain of something?"-Aneirin .

"Yes . This planet is crumbling and I kind of predicted that there will be many disasters coming here . If you're from the future and also from a planet called Serenity, it means I was wrong . "

"Disasters? What kind?"

"Both natural and artificial disasters . "

While the two were conversing, Zodiak was examining the place . Though there was an abundance of these 'scientific machines', there was an alarming absence of any kind of energy .

"Why can't I feel any Mana?"

Just as Zodiak said that, Claud hurriedly motioned him to stop talking . He stealthily closed the curtains then spoke with a low, almost inaudible voice .

"Please don't speak of anything magic-related . "

"And why is that?"

The scientist seemed troubled as he replied: "Magic is banned here and anyone who as much as mutters the word will be punished . "

"Banned? Why is it banned? From where we came from, Magic is a universal thing . "

Hearing this, Claud let out a sigh and spoke again:

"The inhabitants of Serenity despise Magic and think it's dangerous and unreliable . The truth is that they can't find a scientific explanation for its existence so they deem it as a defect, an evil thing . "

"You don't seem like you share their opinion though?"

Aneirin inquired while looking at the anxious Claud .

"Yes, I don't . I do like science and believe it's much suited for our civilization but Magic can do wonders too, we just have to know when and where to use it . "

Just as he finished speaking, the door of the room and a graceful figure entered . She had long silver hair and a small mole under her eye, adding more to her beauty .

"Ah, this is my wife, Angel . "

Claud swiftly stood up and walked up to his wife, who was startled by the presence of the two strangers .

"Hello . "

She softly smiled and bowed toward Zodiak and Aneirin . Her husband, Claud, seemed excited as he introduced them to Angel .

"These two gentlemen are from the future . I successfully managed to summon them . "

The woman let out a shocked gasp as she accessed the cheerful bard and the grumpy Zodiak, who was wearing an over-sized black robe .

"They're also from Serenity so it means my visions were false . "

Claud affectionately held his wife's hands while briefly explaining the situation . The more she heard him, the happier she became, her soft smile widened and become heart-warming .

"Wait wait, we're still not sure your predictions are not wron-"

Aneirin wasn't even able to finish as Zodiac pulled him closer and whispered: "Are you really going to involve yourself with them?"

In response, the troubadour shrugged his shoulders and said: "Why not? The treasure which was supposed to be at the bottom of the well is perhaps hidden here . "

Zodiac glared at his companion but didn't say anything else . Aneirin took this silence as acceptance of his actions so he resumed his actions .

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Honestly, Claud gave them comfortable accommodation and provided them with food and a map of the city they were currently in . At night, Aneirin went out to explore the truly shiny city, as for Zodiac, he remained at the living room, staring at the starry night sky .

Claud, who helped his tired wife fall asleep, entered the room and sat opposite of the silent Zodiac, who now looked like a middle-aged man despite his real age, which was less than twenty years old .

"You know I spoke about my predictions, right?"

The scientist broke the silence by saying that, his gaze lingering on Zodiac's face . I don't what it really is but I've got an ability that not many know of . He lowered his head, removed his glasses and looked at his hands .

"I can predict things... it's not entirely accurate but most times it is . Especially with people . "

After a slight pause in which he glanced at Zodiac only to see the latter look back at him, he resumed:

"Back then, when I shook hands with your friend, I caught a glimpse of his recent past . Sometimes I see someone's past, the visions vary and are not always specific . However, what I saw was a planet almost void of humans . Somehow, it felt calm... peaceful . At that moment, I felt content because, the disasters I foresaw, even if they did happen, weren't able to eradicate everything . "

The two looked at each other for an inordinate amount of time before Claud spoke again:

"Which is why... will you do me the honor?"

He stretched his hand toward Zodiac, clearly expecting a handshake .

"There is nothing to look at . " Zodiac blatantly refused .

"There is always something . It can be either good or bad, don't you want to know which one?"

Time crept by and the hand was left hanging, not moving even an inch . When Claud was about to retract it, Zodiac did the unexpected and actually held it, causing the former's eyes to close for around ten seconds .

When he opened them again, he appeared troubled, sad, and a bit confused .

At first, he hesitated but when he saw Zodiac's expectant gaze, he asked:

"Do you perhaps know someone called Arthur Bilgart?"

The one who replied wasn't Zodiac but Aneirin, who appeared in the room like a ghost .

"Bilgart... I've heard that somewhere but I can't remember when or where . "

The poet tried to remember but it was futile, all he could do was wrack his brains for nothing . He put down his lute and sat next to Zodiac while stretching his exhausted limbs .

"I don't know him . "

Zodiac gave his answer, fully certain that he never heard this name in his entire life .

"But, your face is familiar . "

As he listened to him, Claud chuckled, stood up and starting pacing around the room .

"No scientist believes in God or Destiny but when I hear and see such things... I truly cannot help but doubt myself and everything . "

He looked at the expressionless Zodiac, his face containing apparent melancholy .

"Zodiac, right? That is your name . "

As he heard his own name, he twitched but gave no reply, nonetheless, Claud knew that he was right .

"Strange as it may be, I saw things that either happened or are going to happen . A man who had my face, a woman that resembled my wife, cruel wars and..."

He wanted to spill the last thing but he couldn't . He didn't know if Zodiac wanted to hear it or not, making him feel conflicted and apprehensive about Zodiac's future .

"I saw your death, it was the most vivid of them all . I know the date, the place, and even when . "

Aneirin noticed the serious atmosphere so he neither joked nor talked . He sat there, motionless and listened to this one-sided conversation .

"Then tell me . "-Zodiac

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"Arthur Bilgart... who are you and why are you in my dreams?"

Zodiac laid on the sofa, his eyes facing the ceiling, unable to close them or think about anything else other than what he heard a few hours ago . He sat up, retrieved his journal and was about to write but couldn't, his fingers refused to obey him as if some sort of mystical force was stopping him from writing about his death and yesterday's events .

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Claud told them about many things about this planet and how the world functions . They were sent from the 5th era to the Era of Beginning, or so it was called by everyone . Unlike in the future, the inhabitants of Serenity didn't discover any lives outside of the planets despite many desperate tries . Their technology was advanced enough to explore the space for a limited amount of time but all they could find was meteors and planets utterly void of any life .

The scientist spoke about this society, in which a government rules over the citizens and, unlike the future, it's not the strongest who rule . There's a council of officials and scientists who manage everything . Furthermore, Magic is prohibited anywhere on Serenity and anyone caught experimenting or wielding it is sentenced to death, immediately .

Apparently, some hundred years ago, there was a faction of mages who decided to resist the current system and caused a lot of damage, slaughtered thousands and experimented on innocents and this caused almost everyone to hate the word 'magic' and anything related to it .

In the end, this mage faction was obliterated and the few survivors went hiding . Up to this day, the government is still searching for their remains and finishing them one by one . This was part of the reason Claud was hiding his ability, which can be regarded as magic and this will lead to his execution . He was part of said council though he rarely attends it and is usually busy with his experiments . His wife highly praised his intelligence and talked about his innovative inventions .

In fact, Angel was an alchemist but wasn't as famous as her husband, she just had a small shop which sold miscellaneous things .

The next morning, Claud acted a bit different, hysterical even . It was his silver-haired wife who, after several bitter attempts, managed to calm him down and explained to the guests that it's a normal thing for him whenever he dreams about those called disasters .

This time, however, he repeatedly spoke about the disasters and set out to warn the council, sure that the time of doom is upon them .

As for Zodiak and Aneirin, they ventured outside, trying to locate the treasure that supposedly was at the bottom of the well . It was a talisman that belonged to an ancient being and, from what Aneirin persistently said, can help increase Zodiak's control over Dark Magic . This Talisman belongs to the first person who picks it and enters their body, feeding off the energy in the owner's surroundings and converting it to whatever the user wants .

"Where do you think it can be?"

While licking a gigantic lollipop, the troubadour asked his not-so-talkative companion .

"It could be anywhere . "-Zodiak

"Nop . Since the well guided us here, it should be near . I trust my explorer's sense . "

"We weren't guided here but summoned . "

Zodiak correct the bard but the latter retorted

"Hm I wonder about that . "

"Ahhhh you're so cute!"

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Saly pinged little Ragnar's cheeks, her tail wagging happily . She was baby-sitting this newborn baby, who was usually quiet and very rarely cried . Jakob is busy some important matters related to the sect so she volunteered to take care of his son .

Ragnar had his mother's dark red hair and his father's eyes, he adorably smiled at Saly, who held him in his arms and danced . Although she wanted to accompany her mother, she couldn't and ended up staying him, at the High Tower of the MoonStar sect .

It wasn't that bad as she didn't worry about anything, unlike in the past, where there were pursuers everywhere she went . Delia and her sister, the Holy Knight, were also brought her and well-taken care of . Lucy never believed that the Holy Goddess betrayed them, in fact, Delia even saved her daughter when she was about to be caught right after Arthur was dragged into Riarravar .

The young Saly suddenly stopped dancing and looked at the entrance of the room, through which an individual entered . Seeing the guest, Saly clumsily bowed and said:

"Hello, your Highness . "

"It's your Maj-"

Another person at the back wanted to correct her but the one at the front stopped him while laughing .

"No need, it's not like she's from my kingdom . "

Isadore smiled at Saly and sat on one of the empty seats after glancing at the large wolf napping on the corner . He knew it was the infamous lightning beast that was about to be executed by the Cloud Sea Sect only to be saved by Lucy .

While still holding Ragnar, who was clutching onto her snow-white hair, Saly curiously asked:

"What brings you here?"

"Oh nothing in particular . Just sightseeing and talking over a few matters with the Vice-sect master . "

"I see . "

Saly cheerfully nodded her head then resumed playing with Ragnar, not paying much attention to the King of Green Leaf, who tenderly smiled while looking at the two innocent kids .

As for Wrath, he walked over to Astrith and snickered, clearly provoking the wolf . However, the sleeping beast paid the man no attention and kept his eyes closed, not feeling threatened or in the mood to battle .

"Say, miss Saly, you said your teacher was the Joker, right?"

"That's right!"

"Then have you received some kind of invitation from him?"

Saly thought for a moment before taking out a red envelope and waving it around .

"I think you're talking about this . It's an invitation to the Red Tower but I'm forbidden from participating . "

"Forbidden?"

"Yes, teacher said I'm not strong enough yet so I'm just going there to watch . "

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"Are you sure about this place?"

Zodiak was skeptical as he looked at the abandoned inn, doubting his companion's words . Apparently, Aneirin was in possession of an object that could detect nearby treasures and it was pointing toward this old building, which could crumble with a simple breeze .

"Yeah, it's here for sure . "

The bard nodded his head then cleared his throat and retrieved one of his musical instruments which kind of resembled a guitar made from black wood .

"As I said before, you're the vanguard . I'm only here to watch . "

Zodiak snorted but didn't object as he knew that Aneirin was kind of a scaredy-cat despite being decently strong . He never saw him fight but the poet had many treasures that could save his life and even resist Dark Magic .

Soon after, the two entered this seemingly empty inn, one prepared to fight and the other ready to flee . This place was located right outside the advanced city and was even ignored by the beggars so there was no one to stop them .

As they set foot inside, the creaking door closed and ghastly noises echoed throughout the shabby and small interior of the inn . The bard tightly held his instrument while Dark Magic danced around Zodiak .

"Why are you so afraid?"

Zodiak frowned as he saw Aneirin shake so much, wondering how he's actually an explorer . In response, the poet pointed at one particular corner and said:

"G-ghosts!"

The moment he said that, several illusory white silhouettes jumped at the duo . The ghosts released chilling cries as they all attacked at once, focusing mainly on the vanguard, who appeared to be more dangerous .

Their hands resembled long claws as they headed at the shrouded Zodiak, who transformed into a black cloud the moment the attack struck him . As if sentient, the cloud moved on its own and formed into Zodiak again after swiftly circling around the ghosts .

In total, there were four ghosts and all had the same appearance, an invisible lower half, and the figure of a woman with long black hair, very typical but still scary . Zodiak's stretched his hand and released a burst of Dark Magic which enveloped the ghosts, trapping them in some kind of a black sphere . It didn't take long for Aneirin to hear ear-piercing wails coming from within the sphere, whatever Zodiak did, it was definitely effective .

The cries lasted for half a minute before the sphere vanished along with the ghosts inside .

"I hafta say, that Dark Magic of yours is scarier than the ghosts . "

Aneirin felt chills down his spines as he saw the Darkness revolving around Zodiak's hands, ready to devour everything in its way . It was similar to Void Magic but emitted a cold and uncomfortable aura which made him retreat further to avoid its range of effect . Though he was able to resist it back then, it didn't mean he can completely negate it . In fact, he can't win against his companion and, at most, he can defend for a while before he's forced to flee .

Once the pests were dealt with, all that was left was the eerie and lonely room which had old tables and chairs, broken counter and the inaudible sounds of the cold wind coming through the minuscule cracks all over the walls .

While ignoring the hesitant and motionless Aneirin, Zodiak searched turned the whole place upside down but found no secret basement or any signs of the Talisman .

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"What the hell did you do?!"

Angry, Zodiak shouted at his companion while raising his hand and creating a dark wall that protected them from the flying debris which were purposefully aimed at them .

A few minutes earlier, the troubadour took out a strange red box and opened, causing the whole inn to break into countless pieces and a gigantic wraith to appear . It came out from underground and obliterated the inn, using it to attack the uninvited visitors .

"Why are you blaming me? I was trying to find the talisman!"

Aneirin yelled back while striking a comical pause and activating his instrument . As he saw the loudly shrieking wraith, he unconsciously swallowed some saliva and added:

"It was the damn inn! It was the talisman!"

As he informed his companion, he started playing inaudible musical sounds which were directed at Zodiak . Visible musical notes traveled from the bard to the target, magically enhancing his powers and making his powers feel inexplicably light .

Zodiak grumbled as he stared at the disgusting wraith, its body a mix of green and gray, its skin rotten and its eyes white with a total absence of pupils .

The wall continued blocking the incoming projectiles while several copies of Zodiak made purely from Dark Magic appeared around the wraith, each one holding a different weapon .

They jumped at the enemy from all directions and swung down their weapon . Swords were slashed, spears thrust and arrows fired .

Unfortunately, all the attacks went through the wraith dealing no damage, contrary to the case with the ghosts .

"A common misconception is that Time is strictly uniform, a straight line that goes from A to B . "

The disembodied voice spoke to the young boy, who was dangling his feet in the cold pond, enjoying the chilling weather while listening to the speaker .

"But didn't you create it to be so?"

"What I created is something imperfect . In fact, Time can be bent, broken, or even bypassed and the means always and I mean always, vary . It was never a straight line but a circle, where the beginning is linked to the end and vice-versa . "

Curious, the boy asked again:

"Then why does the Twelve think Time was born when the stranger came to the past . Did you purposefully let them think that?"

"I never said anything about it so they ended up concluding that on their own . After all, how exactly can Time be created, right?"

"Yes, how did you do it?"

Hearing this, the speaker chuckled and vaguely said:

"Just like everything else was created . How did the Twelve came to be? How were they able to form stars and create Races? It's a complex thing difficult to explain in words . It just happened, intentionally or not . "

The boy stood up and raised his head, looking at the one and only tree in this garden . It was tall and strangely thin with gray-colored branches and white leaves .

"Why are you always hiding? Why are you refusing to show yourself to me? I want to see whom I'm speaking to . "

"You'll see me when the time comes, child . "

The boy stomped his feet, annoyed of hearing the same words over and over again .

"You always say that and I'm bored . You no longer teach me anything and I have ran out of books to read . "

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"Most living beings have one life that revolves one cycle . "

The voice spoke to the absent-minded boy, explaining things to him yet again .

"What's a cycle?"

"A cycle is a period of time that follows a unique path, and, in it, time usually isn't disturbed . For example, someone is born, grows and lives happily or miserably then he or she dies . That's a cycle . It differs for each individual and it can either be very long or pitifully short . However, in certain cases, a person's life is cut into different parts and each part if a cycle . "

"What about me?"

"Your life revolves around two cycles and soon, you'll enter the second one . With the beginning of the new cycle, time reverts back but the second beginning line is randomized, for the most part . Furthermore, no two cycles are identical . Even if whoever experiences them thinks they're the same, there has to be some kind of change, which can be minuscule or absurdly big . "

The boy thought for a moment before asking:

"Then what about reincarnation? If someone reincarnates, does it mean they enter another cycle?"

"No, to reincarnate is to have your soul travel from one body to another while keeping all the memories or a portion of them . A cycle is different, it is something not affected by time yet strongly reliant on it . I know, it's illogical but that's how it is . "

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"You mean you want to finish off that monstrous dude wandering around? I can feel his power from here!"

Timos seriously said as he faced the docile 'X' .

"I would need at least two more of the Twelve to take him down and they need to be battle-oriented . There's also that maniac with him, it'll be suicidal . "

The Black Devil was speaking about the Nameless Knight, who's strong enough to cause one of the Twelve to feel threatened .

"We don't need to kill him, just bind him for some time . "

'X' carefully explained, hoping Timos would aid him .

"You're saying he's not aware of it? Hm, he certainly doesn't look like he knows . "

The brown-haired man rubbed his small beard while monitoring the very faraway Leiu . After pondering for a while, Timos sighed and said:

"Nah nah, I've retired . His aura alone is creeping me out . I will hand you the orb but it's up to you if you get it out of him . "

He waved his hand, retrieving a purple orb which lacked its past-luster and the archaic aura, nonetheless, 'X' still took it, feeling slightly excited .

"The Dark Blade devoured most of the powers inside but I don't think you'll need those . You just need its primary function, the power to extract anything . "

"Yes, thank you for your help . I will not forget it . "

'X' stood up, respectfully bowed before leaving, though he didn't forget to throw one last cursory glance at the quiet blue-haired girl .

Once the stalker disappeared, Timos stared at the rising sun and the orange sky, his hands unconsciously clenching the branch in his hand, snapping it in half .

"O'Sol'khin, it seems you finally met your match . As your father, I'll personally visit you when you're sent to Hell . "

"Fuck . "

The woman couldn't help but curse as she stared at the tower before her eyes . It was blood-red and had massive card symbols on all four sides of it . To dizzying height it rises, the gleaming spire, its tip threatening to pierce the blinding canopy . This 'chef-d'oeuvre' is the Red tower created by the joined forces of the Joker and the Nameless Knight but its official owner is Wolfram . It is a masterpiece that surpasses everything in this multiverse . It contains vast worlds, bigger than one's imagination, dangerous trials that, if completed, reward you with treasures that would make even Exalted Gods swoon .

Only those who received the invitation can enter it and participate and, in fact, there weren't many people invited . This woman, a renowned blacksmith called Losha, Lucy's previous master, already arrived at her destination . She was one of the lucky few who were given the red envelope and can do nothing but wait till this much-awaited event begins .

The Joker didn't specify when but he said it'll be soon and since she has got nothing to do, she decided to come here . She was a bit interested in the Celestial Tribulation but decided not to go as it'll be quite noisy there .

The zone around the Red Tower is called, by the Joker, 'the Tutorial' and, apart from her, there was only one person waiting . He was covered in a gray robe and even his face was hidden but it's not like she was that interested in him . Despite being only a God Monarch, Losha was still a reincarnator and can easily content with Exalted Gods, however, she felt uncomfortable every time she looked at this hooded-individual, purposefully choosing to stay as far away from him as possible .

Every person invited to this competition is definitely someone powerful . It didn't matter what their status are, as long as they met the Joker's requirement, they can enter, which is why Losha didn't dare drop her guard . It won't be surprising to see people trying to eliminate potential threats before even entering, after all, it's not a prohibited thing .

Right outside of the luminous city, the sky darkened and the atmosphere became gloomy . The large wraith wanted to fly higher but the creeping darkness shackled while Zodiak's flew at it and struck it with his hands . He was holding two black whirlpools which spun and sucked everything inside, like a black hole . His face was twisted and very pale as he pushed the whirlpools toward the large wraith, slowly yet surely sucking its life-force .

It wildly shrieked and waved its illusory hands, flinging Zodiak's away and causing him to crash on the ground . He didn't seem to mind it as he flew at it again, his hand unleashing a jet black vortex which flew on its, setting itself high-up in the sky .

The long-range of effect of the vortex along with the change in weather alerted the city, resulting in armed patrols and flying machines to come within minutes . Zodiak was like a raging beast, conjuring chains which bound the wraith then bombarded it with flying dark spears and water-like waves of Dark Magic .

The place turned into an inky blackness where the earth and sky couldn't be seen, the only visible thing was the struggling Wraith, which perished after bitterly and persistently trying to free itself . When the monster finally disappeared, a talisman appeared, it looked ordinary as it laid on the corrupt ground . The Dark Magic in the surroundings had an immediate effect on it as it instantly turned black and plastered itself on Zodiak's chest, soon going inside of him .

It seemed the shock from the talisman was too much for Zodiak as he fell on the ground, violently shaking, unaware that more than a hundred humans circled the area, their weapons raised and pointed at him and Aneirin .

Through a loudspeaker, a human male wearing a black suit meant for battling spoke to the duo:

"Surrender!"

Hearing no answer, he shouted again:

"Raise your hands and get on your knees . "

Seeing the swarm of people ready to fire at him and Zodiak, Aneirin panicked . He raised his hand and walked closer to Zodiak, who remained unresponsive .

"Shit shit, we're in trouble . "

The bard glanced at the small buzzing objects flowing in the air . They were releasing red lasers which covered his body, frustrating the poet and making him hesitant . This small army got closer to the duo, their advanced firearms never leaving their targets .

Clearly not wanting to be captured, Aneirin waited for the perfect moment and waved his hand, throwing a white powder around him . The second he did that, everyone fired at them but the lasers and bullets hit nothing but air .

The confused soldiers and machines searched the blackened area but found no signs of the two strangers, only countless debris and several small craters .

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A long-distance from the luminous city, Aneirin appeared next to a pond . He threw Zodiak's body to the side and angrily cursed:

"These unsophisticated humans! They fired at me, the nerve!"

He looked at his costume, which was riddled with holes . Right under it, there was a golden armor which blocked most of the bullets but it looked a bit damaged .

"I even used the Mortal Ashes! What a waste . "

The bard glanced at the comatose Zodiak then let out a sigh . After pondering for a while, he undressed and jumped in the pond, wanting to take a sunny bath and get rid of all the accumulated dust and dirt .

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"Wow, that's new . "

The bard commented as he watched Zodiak demonstrate his new abilities . There were dozens of black talisman circling around him, all emitting a devilish fog that polluted the air . He tried hitting a normal tree with a talisman and the result was shocking .

The whole tree along with the vegetation surrounding it was consumed by the seemingly sentient darkness, leaving nothing but a permanent black fog in its place . In addition to this, Zodiak gained a new, unexpected ability, it was the power to summon undead . Although he could only bring simple skeletons with blackened bones, it was still a frightening ability . Surely, there was other things Zodiak obtained but wasn't openly showing them, considering them as trump cards . Something used as a last resort .

After what the two had done next to the city, the duo were branded as criminals and the authorities are definitely searching for them which rendered them unable to go back to Claud . They didn't know much about the machines used by the scientist and trying to bypass their detection could be dangerous, perhaps even suicidal .

As Zodiak and Aneirin were on the run, things became heated back in the city . Claud caused a ruckus while trying to convince the council of the incoming disasters . Due to being ignored or ridiculed by his peers, Claud ended up blurting about his ability which caused him to be locked up in a tightly guarded prison though it's not like he can escape .

Normally, he'd have been executed but since he contributed very much to the society, they only imprisoned him, for the time being, at least . However, what he was unaware of is that his wife, Angel, got involved and was actually executed . They accused her of being an accomplice to a mage and, without even a trial, she was sentenced to death .

Claud Venice learned of the truth only from the mouth of a recent inmate and this caused him to almost go insane . His mind became twisted and his hatred grew endlessly as they didn't only kill his wife but his two-year-old girl, who was nothing but an innocent newborn .

For days, he hysterically shouted, cursed and swore to exact revenge on the council, however, it didn't look like he'll be left alive any longer . It happened on the day of his execution, exactly when he was being led by the guards... the ground shook and the walls were pulled by a monstrous force . When everyone realized what's happening, it was far too late as the whole city was obliterated . The cause of this? A tornado that was three to four times bigger than the city, it demolished everything in its way and didn't discriminate between a scientist or a beggar .

Even the chained Claud wasn't spared, his body was sent in the air, like a feather guided by the unstoppable winds that whistled and destroyed all in its path . It didn't take long for the human scientist to fall unconscious, waking up only days later, a couple of miles away from the city, which didn't look one after the tornado struck .

With a dizzy mind, the man sat up and touched his aching head . The foul stench of blood assaulted his nose and its dry sensation could be sensed on his hair, indicating that the injury he got wasn't light . Miraculously, he had no broken bones, nevertheless, he didn't feel the least bit relieved . He already lost everything and the only joy he felt was from seeing the demolished city, which lacked its majestic aura .

The sky-high building, tall and well-built towers along with the thick walls all vanished, leaving nothing but large debris and countless lifeless bodies . Claud didn't know what exactly happened to his ability but it apparently mutated after his breakdown, causing him to predict almost everything he touches . He would see how even the grass around him will end, which caused him to become mentally unstable .

Angel never ceased telling him that every life is precious and not all people are evil so he embarked on a journey to warn the rest of the world about the rest of the disasters, which are no less dangerous than the terrifying tornado . In his slow and treacherous journey, he would get visions about the man named Arthur and they were vivid, too realistic to even consider them dreams .

He saw an army of undead marching toward the unknown, a battle against four massive beasts, and how things proceeded in Riarravar .

"No, this cannot be the end . Angel, I will find you . "

It was only a year later that Claud decided to take his own life after properly burying his wife and daughter . No matter how much he tried to persuade the stubborn fools, they didn't believe him and tried to apprehend him . They deemed the tornado as an unpredictable natural disaster and didn't think something like that would happen twice in such a short time .

Unfortunately, they were wrong . Intense earthquake struck half of the planet, splitting the earth and devouring cities . The population was decreasing at an alarming rate and the disasters were getting more frequent and violent . No one knew why they happened and they didn't care, they only wanted to flee and survive .

It was then that the remaining leader started searching for the missing Claud, calling him the Prophecy Holder and seeking his urgent and needed help . Sadly, Claud was long dead, and their efforts were pointless .

Meanwhile, Zodiak and Aneirin were stuck in some sort of illusion, or so they thought . In reality, when traveling to the past, especially through means like the Well of the Lost, there's a boundary and you can't really go anywhere you want .

The two couldn't even go back to the city, they kept walking in a circle, always returning to the same place, a deserted green hill with a lonesome tree at the top .

"I'm tired of this shitty place!"

The troubadour threw his instruments on the ground and sat, his chest going up and down due to hyperventilation caused by his rising tension . He wouldn't react like this if they were stuck for days or

weeks but it's been a whole year and they're still going around . The animals they kill will spawn again and the anything destroyed will recover the next day, it was a situation worse than hell .

"If the past is guided us here then there should be something we're supposed to witness . "

Zodiak remained calm as he sat next to his friend and played with a black talisman, clearly as bored as the bard .

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"W-wait! I hear something!"

Aneirin quickly dragged Zodiak behind a thick bush and looked at the origin of the noise . Zodiak grumbled but remained hidden, also shifting his attention to a silhouette climbing the hill . To their surprise, it was the man who summoned them here, Claud Venice . He looked haggard with a pale face and a messy long hair .

He walked to the top of the hill, looked at the sky for a while before he started digging a hole which seemed to be a tomb . It did take his weak physique to finish the hole in which he threw a few sunflowers before filling it up again .

Claud then took out a bottle of alcohol and chugged it down before writing on a small piece of paper . The two silently watched him as he got drunk and quietly wept, uncaring about anything around him .

The next day, at dawn, the scientist took out a dagger and actually took his own life . Zodiak was about to step up and stop him only for Aneirin to forcefully hold him while indicating for him to remain silent .

The troubadour pointed at a certain direction, in which there appeared two shadows which became clearer the closer they got to the hill . They descended from the sky and landed right next to the dying Claud .

One was a young boy and the other was a thin old man with a wrinkled face and bony fingers .

"To properly become death, you should reap that which should not have existed . "

The elder talked to the confused boy, explaining to him the process . Zodiak and Aneirin listened but it didn't seem like the newcomers sensed their presence .

"That's Death! That old man!"

Aneirin whispered to Zodiak before focusing back on what's happening near the almost-dead Claud . The old man, also known as Death, took out a long black scythe and was about to swing it at Claud, who finally passed away only for a lightning-fast figure to shatter the space and dive at the elderly .

Like a meteor, the assailant struck Death and flung him a couple of meters away . Though he was attacked, the old man didn't seem to mind as he slowly got up and faced the attacker .

"You cannot kill Death . Stop it . "

There was a youngster facing him, a young man who wore a jet black armor and wielded a thick two-handed sword that had the same color as his inky black hair . Leiu seemed to be enraged as he leapt at Death, his sword, Anduril, penetrating the latter's chest and coming from his back . He bashed the old

man's body on the ground continuously while releasing countless black needles which hit the old man, causing his body to become riddled with holes, no longer resembling a human .

Even in such state, Death didn't seem to be fazed as he calmly spoke:

"I told you to stop it, bo-"

Before he could finish, Leiu released a loud shout and poured all of his power in his long sword which emitted a primordial darkness that enveloped the two of them . Seconds after that, you could hear the panicked cries of the old man, death .

"Are you trying to break the balance? Fo-"

Yet again, he was interrupted as the sky above the hill split in two and an illusory black dragon descended, heading straight at Death, which materialized a distance away from the darkness surrounding Leiu .

Sadly, Death wasn't able to resist the dragon and was engulfed whole, however, before he perished, he threw his Scythe at the young boy accompanying him . As if he understood what his teacher wanted him to do, the boy swung down the scythe at the dead Claud, causing its tip to hit his chest and extracting a shiny blob of golden light .

"Fuck! What's happening?"

Everything seemed to happen too fast for the dumbstruck Aneirin . As for Zodiak, he was equally surprised when he caught sight of the Nameless Knight . His eyes were glued onto that armored young man who seemingly took care of death so effortlessly . That domineering power and the dangerous weapon he's wielding were what will end Zodiak's life and he was well aware of it .

Although Claud told him when and how he'll die, Zodiak still didn't dare to show himself and confront the Nameless Knight because, for the first time in his life, he felt fear . If he were to show himself right now, he'll definitely be killed, at least that's what he was currently thinking .

Leiu didn't seem to mind the boy's actions and only focused on the old man, who no longer was able to recover .

"What are you?!"-Death

The knight didn't reply, he held the old man by his head and dragged him next to the tree then, viciously and continuously bashed his head into the tree trunk . It was a gory and brutal sight which only stopped when the head disappeared and there was only a mass of brain matter and blood in its place . In fact, Leiu was only satisfied after pulverizing the head then using his sword to cut the body into countless, minuscule pieces .

When he was done, he flew into the sky and vanished . As for the young boy who accompanied death, he fled the moment he reaped Claud's soul, afraid that Leiu will attack him .

"Where am I? Who are you?"

Angelica looked around but saw nothing but an endless white space . She remained cautious and walked for a while before she met a familiar person . It was none other than Arthur . Of course, it was absurd for Arthur to be actually here which is why she thought of this man as an illusion to trick her .

She knew this must be one of the vivid dreams she's having as remembers still being in that world dominated by the shadow beasts . She still hasn't arrived at the last temple and currently, she must be asleep .

"Angel... it's very good to see you again . "

The man spoke with a gentle tone, his lips arching upwards and his expression affectionate .

"For now, I will not introduce myself but I believe you'll know my name soon enough . "

He waved his hand, materializing a table and two chairs then nonchalantly sat on one of them, his eyes never leaving the confused Angelica .

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"Where are we?"

"We're inside something called the ARK: Artificial Reincarnating Kapsul . It's a device I built to meet you again . "

Hearing this, Angelica frowned and said: "Meet me again? I don't know you . "

"Oh but you do, and very much, at that . Anyways, I only exist in the ARK and cannot appear in reality and my primary goal for creating this is to warn Arthur, your sister's husband . "

"Warn? Warn him of what? And how can I trust you?"

Claud shrugged his shoulders and explained: "Unlike him, your body cannot handle the ARK properly, it needs time to stabilize which is why I can't stay here for long . You have to hurry and tell Arthur that he's looking at the wrong enemy, tell him not to hesitate!"

Angelica, still not convinced, snorted and retorted: "And why don't you tell him this yourself?"

"I could not for it was not time yet . Only with his full memories will he understand the meaning of my words . "

After saying that, Claud vanished, leaving a skeptical Angelica alone inside the ARK .

Chapter 557

"Why does everyone want to obtain more power?"

The boy yawned and asked a random question, not fully grasping the mentality of other races, like the greedy humans .

"To conquer . Rule over other species, dominate everything . There's also revenge, punishment, or even to protect one's family but such cases are rare because those people would know when to stop . "

The disembodied voice calmly answered the curious boy .

"How come I'm not like them? I can obtain more power but I don't want to, it's boring . "

"It's because you've only lived in this courtyard ever since your birth so you didn't meet other people and were not influenced by anything or anyone . Perhaps, if you go outside, which you will, you'll change your mind . "

"No! It's tiresome to train and get more power, I see no point in becoming the strongest . "

Seeing such strong objection, the speaker let out a sigh but chose to not comment .

"Isn't it power something finite? When they reach the end, what will they do?"

"Their greed for power will continue and they'll not care about the consequences . . . which is why their end is their death . "

"What if they cannot die?"

"Not dying is a curse in itself . An eternal life is never a blessing, no matter how enticing it may seem to mortals . It is being imprisoned in the deja-vu of solitude . "

After witnessing the brief appearance of Leiu and the death of the old man and Claud, Zodiak and Aneirin found themselves standing next to the Well of the Lost . Everything around them was foggy, limiting their vision and forcing them to take the only path laid ahead, which was inside the Well .

"So that's the end?"

The Troubadour sighed and look at his silent companion, wondering what he was thinking .

"Let us get on with it . "

Zodiak jumped inside the well, followed right after by the energetic bard . Just like the first time, the trip inside was dizzying and blurry, this time causing them to fall unconscious .

When they appeared on the other side, they were both peacefully sleeping and, from the looks of it, they returned to the Serenity of the present .

Aneirin was the one to wake up first, he lazily scanned the surroundings only to suddenly jump up .

"I didn't expect such a warm welcome . "

The poet's expression wasn't good as he stared at the squadron of angels surrounding the well . Leading the winged beings was an angel stronger than the rest, he had four pairs of wings and emitted a majestic aura condensed from something very similar to Holy Magic .

"This is not a place for you . Leave, bard . "

The leader of the angel spoke with a cold tone, not sparing even a glance at the fuming Aneirin . The angels standing behind quickly marched forward and bound the troubadour .

"You actually dare? Do you think I'll let this slide?"

While being dragged far away, the bard kept cursing and warning the leader .

"You'll regret this! I'll bring hell down on you guys!"

Aneirin knew that the angels won't dare to harm him but it wasn't the case for Zodiak, which was their target from the very beginning . He just didn't expect them to be so bold and actually make a move when he's next to Zodiak, which left him thinking that they had enough time to lose the clingy pursuers .

Very soon, Aneirin was forcefully thrown out of Serenity with the use of a special transportable gate in the angels' possession . As for Zodiak, he was heavily chained and dragged somewhere else .

...

When he came to his senses, which, in comparison to Aneirin, was a long time after their brief return through the well, Zodiak found his four limbs wrapped in thick chains . Obviously, he was momentarily confused only to remember the angels who followed him before he traveled to the past . He tried activating Dark Magic but his attempts were futile, the chains were restricting the flow of energy inside his body which rendered him unable to transform normal Mana into Dark Mana .

Still, with the use of the recently acquired Talisman, he was still able to release an almost unnoticeable darkness that loosened the chains and granted him a tad of freedom, at least enough to stretch his arms and legs, and even turn his head .

To his surprise, there was a familiar prisoner chained right opposite of Zodiak . He was a young man with dark hair, black pupils and an unusually pale skin . The last time he saw him was a long time ago, when he participated in the Colosseum back in his hometown .

The young boy, Forne, had grown bigger and stronger, from the looks of it . Nevertheless, he ended up being captured by the angels, for some reason .

"Guess destiny really wants us to meet . "

Zodiak chuckled as he spoke to Forne, who was, at first, absent-minded, only to snap out of it when he heard a voice interrupt the long silence he was used to .

The youngster didn't recognize the middle-aged Zodiak so he frowned and stared back at this new and quite creepy prisoner .

"What? Already forgot about me? Let me refresh your memory, then . "

The moment Zodiak said that, the Dark Magic coming from the Talisman started accumulating and circling around the user, surprising Forne . The moment he laid eyes on that Dark Magic, he knew it was the person who he tried to kill back in the Colosseum .

"It seems you listened to my advice . "

Zodiak's eyes turned into black flames as he looked at the young Forne, able to see the circulation of energy inside the latter's body . Aneirin explained to him many things but the energy seen inside the boy's body was all but familiar . It was a mix of red and orange and the moment it made contact with his Dark Magic, it started disintegrating it though the process was very slow .

"It's unfortunate to get captured before you complete whatever is inside your body . "

Though the situation seemed dire, Zodiak remained calm as he praised whatever Forne .

After a long silence, Forne finally opened his mouth and asked:

"Why are you here?"

"I don't know and I'm not going to wait and find out . "

After he finished answering, the thick chains immobilizing him were consumed by the Darkness, finally granting him his freedom . Though he wasn't able to convert Mana into Dark Mana, the Talisman can act as a power supply so it was able to bypass the effects of the chains .

Forne looked at Zodiak, who seemingly freed himself with total ease and seemed about to leave this prison .

"Wait!"

He saw black fog enveloping the middle-aged man and knew it was his teleportation ability so he quickly stopped him . Zodiak glanced at the bound young man and creased his brows .

"Set me free, please . "

In response, Zodiak grinned and retorted:

"And why would I?"

"I know where we are and how to get out . I can be useful . "

"You can be useful but not trusted, which is enough of a reason to not let you out . "

Zodiak seemed uninterested in Forne's request and simply vanished, not bothering to hear the young man's next words of plea . Seeing that his last hope of survival just left, Forne became even more desperate, violently shaking his body and continuously activating his power, trying to free himself .

Chapter 558

"Activate the alarm! A prisoner is breaking out!"

The leader of the squadron angels, the same one who captured Zodiak, ordered his subordinate before vanishing . Along with dozens of armed angels, he flew towards the 4th underground level of the prison .

This place was a prison, the biggest and most fortified of its kind, in fact . It was situated right outside of Heaven, on a solitary and inhabitable planet called 'Lost Cause' . This prison had countless dangerous beings that tainted the history and caused irreparable damage to the world .

The deeper the level, the more powerful the criminals are . As they could not properly gauge Zodiak's power and only felt it from a distance, they threw him to the 4th level . The deepest level is, apparently, the 13th level, where, in the past, two of the Twelve were imprisoned .

"Circle around him! Don't let him breathe!"

The angel leader signaled for his subordinates to hurry up whilst grabbing the lance hanging on his back and readying himself . In just a few seconds, the motionless Zodiak was surrounded from all corners, his

ominous Dark Magic suppressed by the ever-so-increasing aura of the angels . Whatever it was, it was able to resist the Dark Magic though they need a great quantity of it .

The first one to make a move was the angel with four pairs of wings, he rushed at the prisoner like a bullet and stabbed with his lance, releasing a blinding white light which pushed back all the Dark Magic . The moment the sharp tip of the lance struck Zodiak, he became dark cloud which easily circled behind the angel leader .

The eight-winged angel was about to reflexively dodge but he couldn't as he mistakenly stepped on invisible talismans which exploded, destabilizing his body and actually turning his leg bloody . Zodiak appeared from behind and stretched his hand, unleashing a black vortex which instantly pulled the angel .

Unfortunately, before it managed to completely corrupt him, several angels jumped in and helped their leader though, in the process, two were sucked inside the vortex, never to appear again .

Sadly, Zodiak couldn't keep it for long, nevertheless, this was but the beginning of his assaults . The dozens of angels became frightened as they saw countless black arrows fly at them with lightning speed, they swung down their weapon and raised their shields, successfully blocking the arrows but alas, they were but a distraction which bought Zodiak enough time to finish casting the next skill .

The whole abruptly turned jet black and, from out of nowhere, dark spikes sprung from the ground, stabbing all the angels, either turned them into bloody mist or consuming their whole .

Only a few resilient ones survived, along with the leader, of course .

"Tsk! We made a mistake . He's too dangerous to be in the 4th level . "

They were currently at the 3rd Level and they definitely lacked the man-power to stop Zodiak . Nonetheless, the squadron angel leader didn't give up or retreat and instead, he made use of his eight wings, which started flapping and released golden particles . Everything the particles touched, it instantly reverted back to its healthy state, whether it's the environment or the half-dead angels . The user was no exception, his leg fully recovered and his body was rejuvenated as if he was never hit by the black vortex .

"Don't let him get to the second floor . Reinforcements are coming . "

The eight-winged angel retreated to the back while ordering the remaining angels . He raised his lance and pointed it upwards before closing his eyes and mumbling incomprehensible gibberish .

Zodiak didn't remain idle and continued his bombardment . The angels became suicidal as they executed their ultimate attacks, uncaring about their bodies . However, they could not resist the Dark Magic lurking around Zodiak, consuming everything and stopped their attacks . Even if one managed to somehow bypass the Dark Barrier, it will be blocked by a thick wall made from black bones .

One angel was lucky enough to get close to Zodiak and attempted to cut him in pieces but he ended up being impaled by a bone spear . Zodiak grumbled and walked up to him, curious about the wings' function .

"It's funny... they seem artificial . "

He crouched down and ripped the wings from the angel's body, causing a lot of blood to gush out, nevertheless, the feel of the wings was metallic and unlike his expectations . From what Aneirin said, Angels were creatures that belonged to the Heaven and Hell Universe and are considered God's children . They carry out his will and absolutely loathe anything related to the demons so it isn't surprising to see them lock Zodiak here, after all, his Dark Magic looks and feels evil .

"It seems like the perfect time to try it . "

Zodiak discarded the bloody wings and looked at the last angel, who changed in appearance . The angel became like a giant, his eight wings now surrounded by some sort of golden metal armor . The lance was cut in two and became blade-like weapons .

Honestly, Zodiak didn't feel threatened, he dumbly looked at the spectacle before stabbing his chest and slowly pulling out a small black sphere . He threw it on the ground, which caused it to shatter then be replaced by something ominous and malevolent .

The angel, now done with its transformation, took large strides and slashed down with both the blades . Just as the enormous weapons were about to hit Zodiak, an equally large hand sprung from the ground and punched the angel's gut, pushing him back a few steps .

Zodiak grinned and jumped in the air but he didn't fall back and, instead, landed on the back of a humanoid black creature which rose from the ground . Whatever he summoned, it didn't have a face and was made from Dark Magic though it had some necromancy in it as there were bones spikes protruding out of its chest .

The now large angel and the massive monster summoned by Zodiak faced each other and exchanged several blows, each time they clashed, the whole 3rd level violently shook and the roof showed signs of breaking .

Zodiak assisted the monster by throwing talismans and turning the ground into dark spikes, limiting the angel's movement and finishing the battle rather quickly .

In less than five minutes, the fight was over and the angel, now back to his normal appearance, laid on the blackened ground, coughing blood while struggling to get up . The escapee coldly looked at the dying angel before ordering the monster to squash him .

A few minutes later, Zodiak appeared on the 2nd level and even more angels appeared, this time fully prepared to take him down . There were two four-winged angels and sixteen three-winged angels . However, before anything broke out, the whole prison fiercely shook and the deafening sounds of thunder could be heard coming from above .

Zodiak didn't know what's happening but the angels panicked . The weaker ones withdrew while the tough ones took defensive stances, afraid to be hit by the incoming tribulation .

"Halt! It's a Celestial Tribulation . "

A female angel with eight wings, all shining with golden light, shouted loudly while conjuring a shield of light above all the remaining angels . She paid no more heed to Zodiak and considered him as a dead man . Angels had full faith in the Heavens, which is the source of all tribulation, so, when they heard the wild thunderclaps, they sheathed their weapon and retreated to a safe location .

As for Zodiak, he remained in the dark and, to make matters worse, he seemed to be in the tribulation's way . He wasn't the cause of it but that doesn't mean he won't be hit by it . He dismounted from the motionless monster and raised his head, looking at the breaking roof .

His body involuntarily shivered, which indicated the start of a disaster . He raised both of his hands and created a thick dark barrier, moreover, the dark monster used its body to block thick red thunderbolts that descended from above .

The loud and ear-piercing sounds of thunderclaps resounded across the whole prison, causing all the guards and prisoners to hide in a corner . In the meantime, Zodiak's barrier along with the dark monster were able to successfully block the incoming projectiles .

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For several minutes, Zodiak blocked all the thunderbolts, making it impossible for the tribulation to reach its target and frightening the watching angels . The summoned black monster was barely able to move properly, nonetheless, it used its body to stop any thunder coming its way .

Although Zodiak wanted to leave, there was an army of angels circling around him so the safest place seemed to be the most dangerous one . As long as he's within the thunder's reach, they won't dare to get close, which made him feel a bit at ease as he doesn't have to worry about interference from their part .

At some point, there was a loud thunderclap which numbed Zodiak's ears and momentarily blinded him . When he came to his senses, he saw a thunderbolt as thick as the black monster . It destroyed everything in its way and quickly reached him . Unlike its predecessors, this special one seemed specifically for him because it didn't head to the monster but directly towards him .

Zodiak's hands moved in the air, releasing several small black whirlpools which rotated around him . There were illusory black threads linked the whirlpools to him, furthermore, the black monster roared and jumped in the air, trying to intercept the aerial assault .

Unfortunately, it was only able to stop it for a short time before it was extinguished by heaven's thunder . When the attack finally reached him, Zodiak was fully prepared as the threads acted like some sort of a net, freezing the thick bolt while the whirlpools slowly sucked some of the thunder . The process was fast but seemed incredibly slow, allowing all the spectators to see what exactly happened .

When everything ended, Zodiak stood alone, unscathed and in perfect form . He retracted the black whirlpools and let out a sigh as he glanced at the terrorized angels .

"He's the new 4th level prisoner?"

The female angel with eight wings asked one of her close subordinates, to which the latter replied:

"Yes, his name is unknown... so are his powers . The report only mentions a harmful darkness very different from the one that can be unleashed using Darkness Magic . Apparently, it can consume anything and just being near it can affect one's mental, slowly corrupting them . "

The leader angel, who was, in fact, the warden of this prison, stared at the hooded-Zodiak, her eyes seemingly able to see through everything .

"The tribulation will most likely tire him but he's not its target so there is a high chance he'll be able to escape . I want the 1st level filled with people!"

"Yes!"

...

On the 4th level, Forne was clutching his chest and rolling on the ground, the chains that were previously binding could no longer be seen . There was a strange dark red energy coming out from his body and disintegrating everything around him, whether it's the walls, prison bars or even the air . This destructive energy was the cause of the sudden tribulation, it is reaching its final stage of completion and seemed to have incurred the wrath of the Heavens .

The young man's body convulsed as several wounds appeared all over his body, turning it scarlet from all the gushing blood . The ground was destroyed but Forne remained at the same spot, floating mid-air while wailing from the pain .

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

That is what Zodiak told him when he managed to kill everyone in the Colosseum . The look he got was that of pity, it was as if Zodiak never considered him as a threat . That was what drove the young Forne to strive for more power, something unique and unbeatable under the heavens . He spent the last ten years traveling around the Universe, defeating countless enemies and building up this new, strange destructive energy .

His desire to live and the fear of the imminent death were the last requirements to complete this power and anger the heavens .

"I m-must..."

While coughing blood, Forne started mumbling, his hands clenching into fists, causing more of that energy to appear and destroy even more of this 4th level . Merely seconds later, numerous thunderbolts descended from above and struck him, however, they didn't manage to hit his body and only clashed with the dark red energy acting like a defensive layer .

The moment the thunder made contact with it, it instantly disintegrated . As the distance between the 2nd level and the 4th one isn't big, Zodiak and the rest of the angels were able to see what happened .

"Yes! Show me your true self!"

Zodiak grinned and stared at the bloodied Forne, his Dark Magic going out of control after feeling the pressure from the latter's power . The area around him became covered in Darkness, negating everything, including light .

Zodiak's figure vanished and all that could be seen was a mass of wriggling darkness which increasing its range, ready to engulf the nearby angels .

The rain of thunder kept pouring on Forne, who, despite being able to resist for some time, wasn't capable of completely protecting himself . Seeing this, Zodiak chuckled and loudly said:

"The power of destruction! Let me see its might!"

Then, before anyone could react, he dove straight at the struggling young man . The darkness changed forms and became a gigantic black fist, ready to punch the relatively small target . Forne was busy dealing with the incoming thunderbolts and his uncontrollable power so he could not protect himself .

As for Zodiak, he held nothing back and used all of his power with the intent to kill Forne because only like that would 'it' manifest itself, granting the boy what he desired .

Like a meteor, the black fist covered in dark flames ruthlessly hit Forne, sending himself flying to the 5th level . The weakened body of the youngster was fatally injured, almost all the bones were broken and a large portion of the destructive energy was sucked by the Dark Magic .

Nevertheless, he still hasn't died, though his current state was pitiful, to say the least . The tribulation also wanted to finish this, sending three successive thunderbolts that were purple in color and thicker than the whole level . All the angels retreated but Zodiak will definitely be hit if he does not back away .

The Dark Magic user ignored the tribulation and charged at Forne again, this time holding a dark spear and spiraling in the air, quickly forming an inky black tornado . Right behind him, the first thunderbolt followed, faster than Zodiak or his attack .

Its target was Forne so it didn't interfere with Zodiak and actually seemed to welcome his help . The moment it touched his body, it released a screeching sound then exploded, destroying everything around it . Zodiak was very close but the tornado negated everything and continued its way .

By now, Forne's lower body vanished and his organs could be seen, his eyes lost any signs of life but the dark red energy was still present .

"Hahahahaha"

As he saw the lively destructive energy, Zodiak laughed out loud and stabbed the spear right in Forne's chest . The tip of the spear was blocked for a second or two before it pierced the target's chest, going for his still surprisingly still-beating heart .

Zodiak's actions may seem antagonistic but it was quite the contrary . Even the tribulation was unaware of Forne's ability which is why it attacked relentlessly, not knowing that the boy's ability feeds off anything that can cause destruction, meaning that all the damage he's receiving is actually empowering it .

The final stage was completed when Zodiak's black spear reached Forne's heart, which started to beat so loudly that all the prisoners of this place could hear it . It was then that it was exploded, releasing all the accumulated destruction...

That day, the first 6 underground levels of the prison ceased to exist and half of the angels stationed there died, including two eight-winged and three six-winged . Two prisoners managed to escape and the angels didn't have enough manpower to chase after them as they were busy dealing with what was left of the prison .

Floating in the space far away from the prison, Zodiak stared at the black sky filled with distant stars and sighed . He seemed to be slightly injured but even those wounds were quickly healing . Under his arm, there was an unconscious body, that of Forne's . The young man's appearance remained unchanged but the destructive energy grew thicker and could barely be contained by the Dark Magic .

Chapter 560: 560

"No, I'm not going to do that . "

Lucy glared back at the Black Seat of Death while folding her arms . He gave off a dangerous and ominous but she didn't back away and, instead, directly faced him and objected to his proposal without a second thought .

Forne stood before her, his black pupils staring holes at her, displeased by her uncooperative behavior .

"In refusing to do this, you'll be condemning him . "

Hearing this, she coldly snorted and retorted:

"So you want me to trick him? Not going to happen!"

Artid stood by the side, trying to calm both of them but hesitated after being suffocated by their rising aura . A second longer and a fight would surely break out, which is definitely something he hoped for when they invited her here . She officially claimed the White Seat and proved her worth, nevertheless, whatever Forne asked of her wasn't unreasonable, even from Artid's perspective .

"I'm not asking you to trick him but merely avoid him for a while . If you help us, it will all end well . "

Sick of hearing vague things, Lucy snapped at him

"What will end well? You're purposely sounding mysterious and refusing to tell me anything . I and Arthur know each other very well, there is no way I can or will trick him!"

"This isn't about him but if he knows of this matter, he'll definitely not stay still and will also not cooperate . In fact, knowing his relationship with our target, he'll try to stop us . "

"Instead of blabbering endlessly, why don't you tell me the truth?"

"..."

Forne gazed at the silver-haired woman, his lips tightly shut . He didn't know whether it's wise to let her in or not, however, if she were to help them, it'll make things much easier . They already got their hands full so, someone who can hold down Arthur is necessary, and who is a better candidate other than his wife, who knows his powers and is strong enough to content against him .

...

With eyes filled with disbelief, Jian Si stared at Lucy while sucking a deep, cold breath . The mask she was wearing melted into her face and drastically changed her appearance, including her silver hair, which was now pink . Her arm became slightly bigger and covered in scales, steam coming out from minuscule holes in the shoulder area .

Lucy held Lonely Moon, which was modified by the Yellow Seat of Black Rose and was able to transform into another form . The revolver was now a long silver sniper rifle, madly sucking the Nether Energy around it like a vacuum .

Lucy laid on the ground and readied herself while leaning her face closer to the scope and fixating her arms, the left one on the trigger while the Devil arm tightly holding down the unstable weapon . The tribulation was about to strike so it was the best time to distract everyone .

"Like I said before, I never came here, okay?"

Lucy warned Cold Sword, who obediently nodded her head . She was tasked with Arthur's safety as, for some reason, Lucy wasn't going to be present . The Celestial Tribulation, which was releasing random thunderbolts everywhere, started moving, though its main core remained above the towering mountain . The direction it headed to was where Lucy and Jian Si were .

It felt threatened by something and separated itself from the core to get rid of Lucy, who was preparing herself to shoot one bullet . Were it not for her Devil Arm, which will take almost all the backlash of the shot, she would not have been able to use this new form of Lonely Moon .

"Now, get away from me . "

Jian Si and the elder accompanying her flew further away from Lucy, leaving her alone, laying on a high hill, totally in the open .

"Hey, why do you hate nobles so much? Not all of them are bad . "

Forne asked his newest companion, Zodiak, while chewing on some freshly roasted meat .

In response, the middle-aged man, who never ate or slept, looked at the young man who has been following him ever since the tribulation, and answered:

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"I don't hate nobles but their system . Elf, Dwarf, or Human, when born, are all equal . Who gives anyone the right to dictate privileges to those they deem as 'noble blood'? They think of themselves as a higher-species while, in reality, they are more fragile than most humans . In my eyes, a beggar is no different than a king, it's just that fate favored one over the other . "

"Yes, it's fate's fault so why do you always blame them?"

"So, just because fate is on their side, they can do whatever they want? Slaughter the innocent, enslave the weak and treat other races like toys? I agree that there are some nobles who do more good than bad but those are in the minority . The stories about how a noble married a peasant are rare if not non-existent, life doesn't work that way, it never has . "

Forne understandably nodded his head while savoring the delicious meat . At first, he felt hesitant about his choice of following the ominous Zodiak but after a while, he grew used to his grumpy attitude and strange way of thinking . From what he had seen so far, Zodiak harbored great hate for nobles and anyone who abuses their powers but he didn't go out of their way to punish them .

Apparently, he was looking for someone, a girl to be more specific .

"Do you really think we will find her here? Although Castra Obis is called a world, it still encompasses all of the Omega Universe . It'll take us years to go from East to West . Also, what makes you think she's here?"

"I know she's here! I've dreamed of it!"

Zodiak sounded very certain so Forne didn't add anything else and quietly finished his meal .

It has only been a few months since the tribulation yet Forne grew unreasonably strong, nonetheless, he was still unable to beat Zodiak . His power, self-named, is Destruction Magic, a new and unique kind that only he can use . In their recent battles against either bandits or lurking old monsters, they discovered that Destruction magic can counter every element, disintegrating it into nothing .

Furthermore, once it enters someone's body, it's a matter of time before they die . Forne can also use it to explode things, like some sort of unlimited bombs with insane destructive powers .

Dark Magic is also vulnerable against this ability yet Zodiak was victorious every time they fought, which deeply confused Forne .

"Well, ain't this a surprise!"

'X' nonchalantly walked around while looking at the patiently waiting contestants . In his hand, there was a glowing red envelope, proof that he, too, was invited to the Red Tower . Amongst the people present here, he saw many extinguished individuals that came from other Universes . Thanks to Timos' help, he was able to get back the orb and all that was left was enter the tower and finally be done with this .

"Greetings . "

Like a ghost, a young man wearing a tattered grey robe appeared behind 'X', freaking him out . 'X' banged his cane on the ground and retreated a few steps before turning around and glaring at the young man .

"Hmpf!"

'X' snorted at Artid but didn't dare act arrogantly . This young-looking individual may have very low cultivation but his abilities should never be underestimated . Amongst the Nine Seats, 'X' was only wary of him and the Black Seat .

"It seems you came in early, mister 'X' . "

"So it would seem . "

Artid smiled at the man whom he could not see the face before signaling him to follow . The two walked further away from the small crowd and arrived at a secluded location South-West of the enormous glowing red tower .

'X' politely bowed his head to the motionless Forne .

"Artid insisted that we cooperate with you so don't let me regret this . Don't get lost in your revenge and forget who the real target is . "

'X' listened to Forne talk before chuckling and replying:

"Yes yes, everything shall proceed smoothly . "