

The Primal Hunter

Chapter 1011: Worst Chosen in History

Tapping her fingers on the makeshift table within the cave beneath her office, surrounded by altars and catalysts filled with power, Miranda was waiting as she double-checked everything was ready. She'd spent a good deal of time and energy on ensuring things would work out well for their planet and with the help of her Patrons, prepared the greatest ritual she'd ever made down in the chamber with the Planetary Pylon.

Miranda found herself in quite a unique position as she realized she knew more of the Malefic Viper's plans than even her own Patrons. The Witches of the Verdant Lagoon had been very involved in the conflict and had questioned Miranda many times about what was going on with Jake after it was announced he now worked with Valhal. Lying to them wasn't an option, so all Miranda could do was tell them to trust her, as she was acting according to the will of the Malefic One.

Luckily that had been enough to convince them to help her prepare. They'd also agreed to inform her of the moment Yip of Yore arrived at Primordial-4 and keep her updated live about everything going on.

She heard about how Yip appeared, the oral spat between the two pinnacle gods, and finally, about the arrival of Valhal, which shocked her Patrons. The second Miranda heard they appeared; she sent out her first command to all the people she'd stationed all around the planet. It was all people she trusted to do this without asking any questions but simply follow through, with Neil playing backup as an expert in space magic.

Not long after, Miranda was informed of Gudrun making her appearance. And then...

"A magical formation made for long-distance communication, able to project an individual from... Why is the Chosen of the- what? Child, what is going on? Why would-" one of the witch sisters asked, as Miranda did something that she seriously hoped didn't come across as blasphemous down the line as she interrupted the god.

"I apologize; I cannot answer anything more as that would be breaking my oath toward not only Lord Thayne but the Order of the Malefic Viper. Trust them. Trust the Malefic One. I will have to cut the connection here for the ritual... may all go well on your end, and once more, I apologize," Miranda said, really hoping she wouldn't get in trouble for all this later once everything was resolved.

Miranda cut the connection as she said she would and flexed her magic while she sent out the message to begin Operation Lockdown. All across the planet, teleporters were disabled, the Prima Alliance teleporters were all closed down temporarily, and finally, the most important part.

Activating all the altars and catalysts around her, she unleashed her ritual and connected with the Planetary Pylon through the ritual circle down there. Straining herself, she raised her hands before putting her palms together, creating a seal.

At the same time, a faint green sheen appeared throughout the upper layers of Earth's atmosphere. Like a blanket falling over the planet, they were enveloped in her ritual. No, perhaps rather than a blanket, she should call this a Faraday Cage, as the ritual had one purpose, and one purpose only:

Isolate them entirely from all outside communication.

Miranda breathed a sigh of relief as she kept holding her palms together, not bothering to wipe it away as she felt a drop of blood come out her nose. She knew this would strain her far more than anything before, but if all went well, she wouldn't have to keep this up forever... just long enough for the Viper and Jake to be done with everything.

She could do without the pain running through her body and her hands that felt like she was pressing them against a hot stove. Miranda wasn't certain how long she could keep the ritual up, but hopefully, it would be enough time because if not, there would be a riot once everyone was informed of what Jake had been doing, no matter the spin she put on things. Damn, even if things worked out brilliantly, she would have an absolute shitshow to deal with afterward, requiring so much explanation and... *fuck*.

Forget it, just focus... think about all the levels you'll gain from this, Miranda... just think about the damn levels...

Jake had stood in the middle of the large formation, breathing calmly as he tried to keep his bearings fully while preparing himself mentally for his time to take the stage. He would be lying if he said he wasn't stressing the fuck out internally as the thoughts of how much could go wrong swam through his head. Shit, he even began to question the entire plan and if maybe they should try and pull the plug, despite fully knowing it was way too late to be thinking that way.

What Bobby had told him about everything happening in the first universe had only made Jake even more doubtful as he worried about his friends there. He trusted Miranda to have things relatively under control, though he suspected there would be a lot of work once things were finished.

Minutes passed as Jake just waited, as throughout, Bobby, who stood outside the formation, sent him telepathic updates. Things were certainly heating up, and for a moment, he got worried about Snappy but quickly calmed down once Valdemar said he

wasn't there to fight. When he was told Gudrun had made her appearance, Jake knew it would soon be his time.

As predicted, the formation soon activated. Jake felt its energy envelop him as his consciousness merged with it, and he found himself floating within the air above Primordial-4 soon after. He could see and hear everything, but his Bloodline hadn't followed him at all, not allowing him to use Sphere, as it wasn't like he had truly been transported there. All the formation could do was copy the aura Jake released, which should be good enough, as it was even capable of copying his Bloodline aura.

Jake quickly oriented himself once summoned, and instantly, he lay eyes on the Viper and Yip of Yore.

Bobby had naturally relayed everything Yip and the Viper had said to one another and told him the words Gudrun said before summoning him, which was maybe why Jake opened a bit too strongly, having gotten caught up in the mood.

“Didn’t expect to see me here, now did you? Why not? Did you think I would just lie down and submit despite everything, you manipulative, insane piece of shit excuse of a god?”

Despite all his preparations, Jake spoke without thinking overly much about what he said, even fumbling the words a little. Hopefully, that would make him appear more genuine... the problem was that Jake couldn't really tell if it had worked, as people were just staring at him in shock for the most part. The only ones who looked different were the Viper, who glared in anger, and Yip of Yore, who failed to suppress a grin.

Oh, and Eversmile, who was looking creepy, but that was just Eversmile being Eversmile.

Tension was high, and just as it looked like the Malefic Viper was about to speak, Valdemar began to laugh loudly, suppressing all other sounds as he shook his head and looked at Jake. **“Damn, he must really have been a bastard, huh?”**

Jake wasn't sure how much Valdemar actually knew about this plan, but he was clearly helping Jake to move the conversation forward. Something both the Viper and Yip of Yore were happy about, though only one could outwardly show it.

“I greet the War God and the First Valkyrie,” Jake said as he cupped his hands and bowed toward the two top gods of Valhal. With this small action, one thing was instantly made clear to all those present... the Chosen of the Malefic Viper cared about and respected those two way more than the Malefic Viper himself. It also showed Jake could respect gods in the first place and wasn't just a True Heretic who despised all forms of divinity, which meant his hatred was targeted toward his current Patron alone. Something he gladly explained the reason for.

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“And I believe bastard is quite the understatement to describe my so-called Patron,” Jake continued, all eyes and interest on him as he looked down at the Viper. **“Do you want me to show and tell, or will you have the honors?”**

The Viper frowned. **“I would advise you to be silent and not say anything you may not be able to take back, my dear Chosen. Words spoken carelessly can have quite the consequences.”**

“You know what, I’ll just take that as a solid no,” Jake sneered, keeping up his snarky tone. **“So allow me to start, and where is better than the very beginning? It’s funny when I think back that I thought I was lucky to stumble on a Challenge Dungeon in my Tutorial, even if it was an incredibly dangerous one that had killed so many others who’d come before me. I thought It was one of those fortuitous encounters everyone talks about when I had my profession forced upon me and became involved with you... even more so when I was brought before you and given your True Blessing, despite not even having any understanding of what a god was back then.”**

“What are you hoping to gain by telling our history like this? I already told you once, but back down while you still-“ the Viper tried again, but Jake didn’t give him a chance as he once more interrupted... again, also showing his lack of respect.

“Who would have that that encounter would lead to all this shit,” Jake sighed. **“Let’s skip a bit forward to after the Tutorial when you used the Trial of Myriad Poisons to infect me with a drop of your blood... again, how in the fuck did I think that was a good thing for me? To be implanted with a ticking time bomb?”**

Villy was quiet, just standing there, but his facial expression was not good.

“Oh, and the time you forced a slave upon me because you thought it would be interesting... or one of the many times you fed me toxins just because you thought it was fun. Man, I have so many fucking things to talk about, but let’s just go to the final thing. The one that well and truly pushed me over the edge,” Jake said – the toxins in Jake’s example being pretty good beer, so not technically a lie - as he turned to Yip of Yore. **“Yip... you know I don’t particularly like you. I especially don’t like your Chosen either.”**

“Fair enough,” Yip shrugged with a sly smile.

“But compared to my dislike for you two, that scaled bastard is on a whole other level. I fucking despise him. I also realized something recently. A realization that landed me in quite the trouble once he found out. After much reflection on

current matters, I realized I don't need him. I realized that of the two of us, he's the one benefitting from my existence, and I get nothing but manipulation and threats in return. I've already received everything he had to offer, and now we're at a stage where he's only taking from me and trying to control me," Jake explained. **"Me realizing this is what led to today. What led to me being forced into being here today. It was that, or accept being his slave forever... and I would rather die than become a slave."**

"Quiet down now, or I shall-" the Malefic Viper sneered but was once more cut off.

"You're fucking done doing anything to me," Jake yelled back, as he focused on the mental image he'd created for himself where he imagined Villy was actually Ell'Hakan, an actual target of his hatred. **"You're why I'm forced into being here today. You're the one who was so damn insecure that you had to collar me to you. You're the one who used a fucking Transcendence to fuck around in my soul, leaving me crippled for months!"**

Jake's words echoed throughout the skies as his rage came through the projection, amplified as he didn't hold back his Bloodline at all. Jake channeled the emotions of how annoyed and angry he was at all this scheming. At having to deal with Ell'Hakan at all. At Yip of Yore's bullshit. Jake was well and truly done with all of it, and despite the words he uttered not matching the actual reasons for his anger, the venting of emotions was very much real and came through strongly.

His words about the Viper messing with his soul also confirmed the rumors Yip had been spreading about the Viper being weakened from using it. The act of even using his Transcendence on his Chosen was also something extremely messed up in the first place. Everything was taut, as only Yip of Yore was genuinely elated due to everything happening, though outwardly, he had a sympathetic look as if he truly understood Jake's blight.

After a few seconds of silence, Jake sighed and spoke in a calmer tone. **"I'm just done, okay? I'm done with you manipulating me. I'm done being used to compensate for your own inadequacies. Everything is done... we're done. But I can't even do that, can I? Because I've even had that choice taken away."**

Jake's words were melancholic as his aura began to slowly shift. **"I know I was never faithful, not truly. But I at least respected you. Respected the Legacy you had created. Now, there's nothing left of you worthy of even an iota of my respect. Nothing left to believe in at all."**

The aura that before had not possessed any particular trait besides being Jake's was rapidly transforming as it took on a whole other feeling. A whole other meaning. Gone was the aura of the one recognized as the Prophet of a god. Gone was the Chosen of the Malefic Viper... as all that existed was the unmistakable aura of a heretic – despite Jake still identifying with a True Blessing.

“I denounce you. I renounce your Blessing, and I would already have been fucking rid of it if I was able to. But that choice was taken away, and now I have only one way to be free of you once and for all,” Jake said before everyone even had the time to truly comprehend the overwhelming heretical aura filling the skies. He let others assume it was due to the Transcendence he couldn't get rid of the Blessing. Yip had already shared that rumor, after all...

“Just remember, you're the one who caused all this, not me. You forced me into a corner and should have known something like this would happen,” Jake said in a harsh tone as he stared down at the Primordial. **“Once, I genuinely believed I would walk the Path to godhood as your Chosen... now I see my only true Path forward requires your death.”**

“Shut up... once I'm done here, I will come for you and make you realize just how foolish you've been,” the Viper said, his own aura pushing back and suppressing Jake's. **“I've been nothing if not benevolent despite your antics. If I were you, I would know when to stop acting the fool and when to pray.”**

“The only thing I'll pray for is your death,” Jake answered coldly. **“You're a manipulative piece of shit. A fucking stain on the history of the multiverse. You know, before the system, snakes were mainly known as pests on my planet... turns out not much changed even after the integration.”**

“I told you to shut up...” the Malefic Viper sneered as Jake just continued.

“But don't worry, even snakes can have their uses. I swear before everyone that in the event of your death, I shall not let your Legacy go to waste. You've taken so much from me already. Used me so much. It's only fair I take a little back... no, I think it's more accurate to say I'll usurp a little back,” Jake spoke loudly and clearly, leaving little room for interpretation about what he was trying to do.

“Shut. Up. Now.”

“So please, Yip of Yore... continue. Make history. I shall watch expectedly at Valhal's side, hoping your quest will succeed,” Jake said in a mocking tone, still looking at the Viper. **“I do find it a shame I cannot witness it in person, but hopefully, you'll have a good story to tell after the fact. One I'll be sure to enjoy and-“**

“SILENCE!” the Malefic Viper roared, finally having been pushed beyond his limit as a shockwave of energy was released, and before Gudrun could react, the entire formation that projected Jake was torn apart, Jake himself getting sent back to his own universe, unable to see what happened next. Follow current NOVELS on *novel•fire•net*

“What pathetic farce is this!?” the Viper yelled, looking all around him before his eyes settled on Yip of Yore, and he spoke some proper villain dialogue. **“You bring an army**

to my home. Try to use my own Chosen against me. But fine. You want to die by my hands? Then come! Lay down your pathetic life!”

Yip of Yore smiled, the conceptual energy gathering around him like never before, as his power reached a level not even he had expected, the Chosen of the Malefic Viper having gone above and beyond expectations.

Holding out his hand, an object appeared that would be crucial for what came next. A hard-earned item from a Void God, capable of ensuring this would be a proper duel. A top-grade Void Sphere, capable of sealing only the two of them in their own little world, with only one of them leaving. Yip of Yore held this as he looked at the Viper, with the full knowledge that he had the majority of the multiverse at his back, believing in – wishing for – his victory. They wanted to see history be made and a new legend formed, as the hero would slay the villain...

It was only right to give it to them, as Yip answered:

“For the sake of the multiverse... for your former Chosen... let’s end this once and for all.”

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Chapter 1012: Three Theories

Jake couldn’t help but stumble back as the projection was broken, and he was forcibly returned to his own body fully. After taking a few steps back, he stabilized himself, breathing heavily. In part because of the shock from getting his consciousness flung back into his real body and in part because he was still mentally processing everything that had just gone down while he was projected.

He had no idea how well things had gone, and he wasn’t good enough at reading people to understand if he had properly tricked Yip of Yore. Nor was he entirely sure if Villy was satisfied with his performance.

Things hadn’t gone entirely to plan, and Jake had veered from the script more than he probably should have. Sure, he had covered the most important parts, but he felt like he’d definitely said a bit too much at times, and he also had the nagging feeling that he’d forgotten some important things he had to say.

After breathing heavily for a bit, Jake took a final deep breath and sighed. None of it mattered anymore. He’d done what he’d done, and things couldn’t be changed

anymore. All he could do now was trust in the Malefic Viper to handle everything on his end.

Having calmed himself down, Jake finally addressed the flood of notifications he'd gained. He'd expected to get levels, but not that many, considering he'd already gotten a steady influx of experience over the last many weeks while the rumors of Jake's betrayal of the Viper had been spreading. That made him assume the reward would be lesser... and maybe it was, but Jake was still pretty darn satisfied seeing six whole levels gained.

'DING!' Profession: [Heretic-Chosen Alchemist of the Malefic Viper] has reached level 290 - Stat points allocated, +35 Free Points

...

'DING!' Profession: [Heretic-Chosen Alchemist of the Malefic Viper] has reached level 295 - Stat points allocated, +35 Free Points

'DING!' Race: [Human (C)] has reached level 293 - Stat points allocated, +45 Free Points

'DING!' Race: [Human (C)] has reached level 295 - Stat points allocated, +45 Free Points

This leveling pace felt like he was back in D-grade again, but he knew it was only because so much was happening. He also suspected El'Hakan was experiencing a similar level of growth in the meantime, but that would only make him more worth it to kill once all this was over. And hopefully, a little something that could help make that kill even easier had also arrived...

Because he'd also gotten another message after reaching level 290 in his profession:

Heretic-Chosen Alchemist of the Malefic Viper profession skills available

He already knew what skill he would pick as-

"Lord Thayne, we need to move!" Bobby yelled from outside of the now-broken magic circle after whatever Villy had done proved powerful enough to actually destroy the formation on their end through his will alone.

Jake was thrown out of his thoughts as he heard what the man said, and for a moment, he looked confused at the World Leader. Then, he realized what Bobby was getting at.

Right... the Usurper ritual...

Admittedly, Jake had kind of forgotten about that thing. Or maybe he'd just not wanted to remember its existence due to what using it would imply, but nevertheless, he knew he had to go there even if he never planned on using it.

"Coming," Jake said as he ran out of the broken magic circle and followed Bobby as they flew to the other circle. He noticed Carmen was nowhere to be seen, and he couldn't help but ask while flying:

"Where's Carmen at?"

"I apologize for not telling you before, but I didn't wish to distract you in any way. However, shortly before you were summoned, a man from your planet arrived, and Carmen went to greet him," Bobby answered apologetically.

"A man? Who?" Jake asked, unsure who it could be.

"The Void Machinist... I believe his name is Arnold?" Bobby answered, Jake pleasantly surprised. Both at Arnold having a cool title assigned to him by Valhal and partly because he knew what his arrival had to mean.

Jake didn't say much more while flying over to the ritual site he could use to usurp the Legacy of the Malefic Viper should the Primordial fall. When he got closer, he saw there were already hundreds of shamans gathered around, ready to do their part in the massive ritual should the need arrive.

Valhal had massively invested in making it, of that there was no doubt. Jake already knew that when he inspected it the first time around, but now it looked even more impressive. It was odd seeing the circle and all the people there who seemed quite certain they would have to use it. Even Bobby looked like he was looking forward to seeing it activate.

Meanwhile, Jake hoped that all of this investment would turn out to be a total waste of time and resources for Valhal.

Ultimately, all of that would be down to the Malefic Viper, and as Jake went to the middle of the circle and sat down with his legs crossed, he passed whatever small prayer a Heretic-Chosen was able to give unto his Patron.

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Back in the first universe at Primordial-4, all looked on as Yip of Yore activated the pinnacle-grade Void Sphere as he flew toward the Malefic Viper. A pulse of pure void energy echoed out, and in an instant, the two gods disappeared to their own private dimension.

There was no doubt in anyone's mind that only one of them would exit it... the only question was who. Would it be the Malefic Viper proving that he was still worthy of being called a Primordial? Or would it be Yip of Yore making history by being the first one to slay a Primordial, upending the multiverse's entire power structure?

Either way, in the meantime, with the two main characters of this event gone, things didn't calm down at all. Left behind was still the army of gods who followed Yip of Yore alongside the many gods of the Order, including the Lord Protector.

Then, there were the top warriors of Valhal alongside their leader, Valdemar. With the Malefic Viper and Yip of Yore gone, the only being capable of standing up to him was Eversmile, who already made it clear he wouldn't get involved, and maybe the Lord Protector, though all the Lord Protector would possibly be able to do was stall the War God.

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Many expected something to happen as Valdemar's words echoed at the first sign of someone considering if they should make a move: **"Sit down and wait. None are to draw arms."**

The god from Yip's faction, who looked like he was about to propose something, instantly shut up as no one spoke or did anything. The world was silent as Valdemar stood there with his arms crossed, one of the other warriors holding his axe for him, the message of his actions being clear: if someone were stupid enough to pull out a weapon, he would respond in kind by taking his axe back.

His sheer presence ensured that while Yip of Yore and the Malefic Viper fought, no one else would do anything but wait to see who the ultimate victor would be. At the same time, Eversmile gladly waited around, his eternal smile filled with expectation for the conclusion of this entire arc.

Void Spheres were truly ingenious creations that the system had gladly helped in the creation of to limit the destruction of the true universe. Whenever one was used, it effectively created a separate dimension mirroring the real world, but only with a limited number of creatures within... in this case, with only two beings entering.

From the perspectives of the Malefic Viper and Yip of Yore, the world was merely colored black and white for a brief moment before all returned to normal, except every other person was gone. Now, only two Truesouls existed with the entire Great Planet and much further laid bare to be their battleground.

Even the large Order of the Malefic Viper compound beneath them was now entirely empty, though much of it appeared murky, as if censored somehow. A feature of the many enchantments placed on the city to make it so using a Void Sphere didn't mean one could go in and explore the empty city. Not that many would even dare consider

wasting a Void Sphere of this caliber on something like that, and if a weaker one was used, it was possible that those outside could detect disturbances in overlapping dimensions. With this level of Void Sphere used, though, there was no risk of that happening. The only ones breaking in and out of this dimension were the Viper and Yip were entirely isolated. Only their Truesouls had been attuned to it, after all. The link to the origin of this information rests in novel●fire●net

Within this world, they were free to fight without worrying about their allies. Free to fight without worrying about destroying anything in their vicinity... and free to act with the knowledge that none were able to observe or hear them.

The Malefic Viper stared across empty space as Yip stood there, looking far more relaxed than before. He glanced at the Viper before smiling.

"Reminds me of our first meeting within the void. Just the two of us with no curious gazes," the god spoke in a nostalgic tone. "Though much has changed since then."

"Are you sure it changed for the better, though? Because last time I checked, you ran away after a single exchange, and now you cut off that possibility for yourself," the Viper responded in a snarky tone.

"True, true, but let's be honest, we both know my intent back then wasn't actually to fight you," Yip smiled while shaking his head. "Also, you can stop with the acting already; it's just the two of us now. The setting has been established, and the build-up is complete. What happens from here on out will be naught but a tale told by the victor."

"Me? Acting? Aren't you the one acting weird, not being in a rush despite working so hard to build up momentum?" Vilastromoz responded, tilting his head.

"You know, it's weird; you don't seem as angry now as you did less than a minute ago," Yip shot back, still smiling. "I must admit, you are a better performer than I first expected. Then again, you are a notorious schemer. Everyone's been telling me that anyway. The thing is, I can't figure out what the goal of your scheme is this time around."

"What's so hard to understand?" the Viper asked in a relaxed tone.

"You. What you want," Yip said with genuine puzzlement. "I dare call myself an expert in the art of spinning tales and telling stories, and what I witnessed today was quite the drama. Brilliantly performed by everyone involved, your Chosen and yourself included. I have a lot of questions about how you pulled it all off, especially the heretic aura... though perhaps that part was genuine. The best lies need a foundation of truth, after all, and I know it is true that Valdemar has an interest in your Chosen and that his faith isn't exactly strong. Alas, I don't believe any of the words he uttered today."

The Malefic Viper wasn't surprised at what Yip of Yore said. Honestly, he'd never expected to fool the god with all his schemes. He walked a Path that revolved around false legends and lies, and could read the flow of such things at a deep conceptual level. It was pretty obvious he would realize something was up at some point... not that it mattered. Why would it?

Everything that happened was to Yip of Yore's benefit. Even if he realized that the Viper and Jake were actively helping him get stronger, why would he say no to that? Why would he point out that the Chosen and Patreon were actually super tight buddies and that there was no conflict between them? What good would that have possibly done him? It wasn't even as if he could prove the two of them were lying to make himself look smart, and his objections to them having a falling out would just seem odd and out of place.

No, he pretty much only had the choice of leaning into their lies, even if he realized they were lies. From the beginning, the objective had never been to fool Yip of Yore, just the average uncritical observer.

"As you said, this is our own little world, cut off from the speculation of outsiders... so you tell me. Why do you think I did as I did, assuming you are correct?" the Viper asked with raised eyebrows.

"Now that's the big question," Yip spoke, wagging his finger in the air. "I've been trying to figure that one out for a while and come up with a few theories. Three, to be exact. Theory number one, you believe you can beat me no matter how much stronger I get and that killing me at my apex will reap you the most benefits. Needless to say, I find myself forced to write this option off as if this was the case, I was doomed from the start, so there's no need to even consider it."

"Fair," the Viper smirked.

"Number two, you're just a moron. You're truly arrogant and overconfident to the point of being an idiot, believing yourself infallible. This one is quite similar to the first one, except with the built-in assumption you are far more idiotic than I have come to believe. Still, not entirely one to write off, as you are indeed quite the arrogant god, and I do believe you fail to fully grasp my abilities," Yip of Yore continued. "Though, of course, this theory being proved true is partly my own fault for keeping certain things hidden."

"Got any more fun theories?" the Viper asked in a mocking tone.

"There is the third one, but before that, I want to talk a bit more about a certain someone... your dear Chosen and fellow schemer in this entire matter. I will not lie; I've found myself a bit jealous at times when hearing about your Chosen. Jealousy many other gods, including Valdemar seem to share. You got incredibly lucky with that one, catching him in a Tutorial like that. I can only suspect you saw the latent powers of his Bloodline, including his abilities to affect Primeval Origins, and jumped to quickly bring

him under your banner,” Yip of Yore spoke as he began to pace back and forth in mid-air.

“Truly something that happens only once in a lifetime. Don’t get me wrong, my own Chosen isn’t bad at all either and quite a lucky find, but as I said, I find myself filled with envy at times. I’m also not blind to the odd relationship you seem to share with your Chosen. One far more equal than one would expect any god would allow their faithful to have with him. Yet you are clearly fine with it and even invite it. You set your Chosen up to be independent right from the day you revealed him as your Chosen, not trying to take even partial credit for his powers... which made me wonder... why would the selfish Malefic Viper do something like that?”

Vilastromoz frowned as he wasn’t entirely certain where Yip of Yore was going with all this.

“However, then it struck me one day. See, I also wondered what made you leave your divine realm in the first place. What was the impetus for your return? Many speculated it was because of your Chosen, while others said he was merely one element... but I do believe it was due to him appearing before you,” Yip said with a high level of confidence, not incorrect with his assessment so far.

“I think you were waiting all that time. Waiting for someone like him to come along... someone you deemed worthy,” Yip spoke as he sighed. “So this is my third theory: you willingly helped set all this up, not because you were fattening me up for the slaughter, but because you were setting the scene for something even grander: the birth of the first Primordial Usurper. A grand exit for a god who’s not felt alive for so many eras and an opportunity to once more reunite with those you’ve lost.”

The Viper’s demeanor changed as he looked at Yip with cold eyes.

“Valhal already made the circle for him, I heard. Everything is ready on their end. In fact, I’m sure everyone is ready all across the multiverse to see the conclusion of this tale,” Yip of Yore said, his words calm as he spoke. “So tell me, oh Malefic One... which theory do you subscribe to?”

The Viper’s aura flared as his cold eyes didn’t leave Yip of Yore for a single moment. “I guess you’ll have to find out.”

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Chapter 1013: The Malefic Viper vs Yip of Yore (1)

One likely had many expectations of how a battle between gods looked. Perhaps it would be a fight where the very cosmos shook with every clash or one where solar systems easily collapsed, and while that certainly could happen, it was never the objective of the two fighters.

The Viper had spoken a lot to Jake about the importance of intensity in energy over scale. Quality over quantity. For the Malefic Viper and Yip of Yore, destroying things was easy. Blowing up a few galaxies was effortless... but also supremely wasteful.

Why launch an attack causing an explosion the size of a planet when you could instead condense that very same explosion down to the size of a large house, increasing the intensity several times over while reducing the cost? If your goal was only to strike one small target in the first place, a huge explosion would ultimately just waste a lot of energy hitting thin air.

The only instances where launching attacks of a larger scale made sense was when fighting a massive opponent or to ensure the attack would hit a speedy and very evasive enemy, or when one launched an attack above one's ability to fully control. Oftentimes, it made sense to abandon some level of control for sheer power, with the end result often being better.

It was all about finding a balance between scale and intensity, and finding that perfect balance was something even gods could perpetually work on. Either way, the goal tended to be to make one's attacks have just enough scale to still hit while optimizing the power put into it, and a good switch-up between larger and smaller attacks could often allow one to hit a good strike.

This all resulted in the battles of gods not looking that much different from even C-grades fighting, as long as one didn't consider the sheer speed of their battles. At least it looked like C-grades for a few moments from the outside... until one took into account the shockwaves and inadvertent uncontrolled explosions resulting from the battle.

When blocking a strike, there was no need to lessen the resulting shockwave. In fact, quite the opposite, as the shockwave was often a result of dispersed energy, and many skills even focused on redirecting damage onto the world. This is why a regular punch from a god could easily result in a shockwave, turning countless nearby planets into dust once blocked.

Uncontrolled explosions also tended to happen when either party didn't particularly focus on reducing the scale or when energy-based attacks clashed, mixed, and exploded. Two simple mana bolts, both condensed to only house-sized explosions by their respective casters, could often result in explosions innumerable times larger than either party intended if they clashed.

All of this is to say that it wasn't out of the ordinary that the battle between the Malefic Viper, a Primordial god from the very first era, and Yip of Yore, an individual recognized

as the most talented person to ever rise to godhood, started out with a simple probing exchange of fists versus claws, as both still restrained their power heavily.

The Viper had instantly drawn on his heritage as a being that evolved to godhood from a dragon as his hands transformed into claws, while Yip of Yore struck with his fists, his longer-than-average arms giving him more reach.

Yip dodged the first strike as he countered, only for the Primordial to also dodge as the two exchanged dozens of blows immediately, none landing as both were just testing the other party.

“Seems like you remain intent on fighting... I certainly welcome it,” Yip smiled as he increased the tempo. His fists were no longer mere punches but instead left after-images that lingered, with some strikes appearing before he even made them. The Viper dodged most, but soon, a blow landed on his shoulder. Only a fraction of a second later did the fist actually strike where he’d been hit, the concept of reality bent around it, courtesy of Yip’s reality-warping powers.

Yet right as the Viper stumbled back, a small cut also appeared on top of Yip’s fist, the wound instantly turning dark green and festering. The god looked down at the wound for a second as the poison soon lost its effect, and less than a second later, the wound had healed.

“Did that also remind you of the first time we met?” the Viper asked in a cold tone, knowing he had the upper hand in that minor exchange.

“It sure did,” Yip smiled, unconcerned with everything thus far. “But no running away for either of us this time around...”

The other god charged again, launching another assault before the Viper struck back with an even higher level of power. In the beginning, they had fought with power that even a Fourth Circle God could keep up with, slowly progressing toward the peak of the Circles of Divinity.

It was an unspoken agreement of sorts... a gradual increase in power from both sides as they were still testing one another.

Every attack was more powerful than the next, and every shockwave that rocked the Great Planet below grew ever the more destructive. The Void Sphere hadn’t copied the defensive formation protecting the Order of the Malefic Viper beneath them, resulting in their clashes reducing the entire city to dust nearly instantly.

Soon, they reached the level of high-tier godhood, as the two of them began to pull out more and more skills. The Viper unleashed his wings to block several attacks as poison mist was dispersed, corrupting the sky and land. His claws began to glow with more power than before, and his very presence became a beacon of corruption that infected

everything. Even the blows Yip did land failed to do much due to the empowered scales covering his entire body, offering better defenses than nearly any armor, with his presence and scales poisoning Yip every time he landed a punch.

Meanwhile, Yip began to increase the conceptual level of his attacks while also unleashing the occasional skill. Yip was rare in that he didn't have any particular affinity he stuck to but instead used many different kinds of attacks. He was incredibly skilled in most of the high-concept ones, such as space and time, as both had axillary connections to his primary concept of bending reality according to stories and his will, resulting in many of his attacks taking on a silvery light.

Continuing to fight in the realms of high-tier gods, they progressed through the Seventh Circle, the Eighth, Ninth, and soon, they reached the Tenth Circle of Divinity- also known as the Supreme Circle of Divinity of Godkings and Godqueens.

Every clash at this point lit up the sky and sundered the earth beneath them. They had barely moved from where the fight initially began, as both refused to give any ground and whenever one of them did have to temporarily retreat, they made sure to swiftly retaliate, evening the score.

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At this level of power, both would already be considered beings near the pinnacle of the multiverse.

The realm of Godqueen and Godking had, for many years, been viewed as the limits of godhood. It was known as the limit because that was the realm that the Primordials managed to reach by the time other gods also rose – at least, this is what was estimated. No one truly knew.

All they did know was that it would take several eras for someone to break through the ceiling that was the Tenth Circle. Once more, history was very unclear as to who was first. All that was clear was that several of the top figures did it at roughly the same time, reaching a level beyond regular godhood.

Even reaching the Tenth Circle was something most gods would never be able to do, even if they were immortal. Well, perhaps one should never say never, but for some, it was an insurmountable task they didn't even try to attempt.

Perhaps they didn't have the foundation, or maybe they lacked the work ethic. Many gods also became far more averse to risk upon attaining immortality. Time no longer being a threat made many treat time as the infinite resources it was and would never be in a rush to do anything, especially not when rushing and taking risks was the one thing that could actually kill them.

All of this was part of why Yip of Yore was such a legendary figure in the multiverse... because within a single era, he had not only managed to become a Godking, he'd managed to go beyond that realm, and not just by a single step.

After clashing another few times, Yip flew back a little. No real harm had been done to him thus far, though he did have a few signs of damage taken here and there. Opposite him flew the Malefic Viper, his simple robe now mostly broken but his scaled body unmarked.

Yip looked at the Viper for a few moments before smiling and looking toward the sky.

"You know, I find it a bit funny... when I ascended to godhood, I would only hear whispers of those legendary figures who'd managed to go beyond the Circles of Divinity. They were spoken of like truly mythical individuals that one couldn't ever reach," Yip said, looking almost nostalgic.

"Back then, I was skeptical, but having no better way of knowing, I believed all those who said these things. Why wouldn't I? The few gods I interacted with then were in awe whenever they were even in the presence of a high-tier god, much less a Godking or Godqueen. They were only telling the truth from their perspective... which is why it was so odd," Yip continued talking as he looked at the Viper.

"If it was described as so hard by everyone... why was it so effortless for me?" Yip asked rhetorically with a smile. "I reached the so-called wall quickly. I saw the wall. Felt it. And then I made it crumble before me and stepped into the next realm. Was it harder than forming another Circle? Perhaps, but only slightly."

Vilastromoz let him brag as he spoke, knowing he was telling the truth. Again, Yip was the most talented individual to ever reach godhood for a good reason. He also held the record as the one to progress through the Circles of Divinity the fastest. Now the only question was... how far had he actually gone past the realm of Godking?

Yip of Yore's power began to grow as his aura spiked. The world around him began to slowly twist as he released more and more energy, the Viper finding himself forced to respond in kind as he, too, surpassed the realm of Godking to match his foe.

Their auras clashed in the sky, and for the very first time, neither held back from infusing said aura with energy as they didn't have to consider killing any mortals or weaker gods. The green aura matched the silvery one of Yip of Yore, tearing holes in space as both were roughly equally matched, having both taken a single step beyond the Circles of Divinity.

"Am I correct to assume you weren't that far off this level of power when you went into your isolation all those eras ago?" Yip of Yore asked with a smirk.

"Not quite there," the Viper responded coldly.

“Ah, but we’re not far off, I feel,” Yip said confidently. “Either way, I look forward to seeing how strong you truly are. I know you’ve grown even during your isolation and that we are still far from your limit. Then again, neither am I. Let’s not disappoint one another by failing to keep up too soon, alright?”

“You talk way too much,” Vilastromoz scoffed.

“Ah, but you allow me to, don’t pretend you aren’t,” Yip just grinned. “I personally find it more pleasant for the final moments of one of us not being filled with meaningless silence but a bit of banter. It gives them more meaning and adds more to the legend. I also know you obviously care about this fight as we try to figure out who has the highest ceiling in power. I almost feel like I’m being evaluated here for you to see if I’m worthy. Of course, the question still remains if I’m being evaluated to see if I’m worthy of being the one to kill you or worthy of being killed by you.”

Remaining silent, the Viper simply raised his hand and pointed a finger toward Yip of Yore as his hand began to glow green.

Yip’s eyes opened wide as he dodged to the side, only for where he had just been to implode as space shattered, and for a brief moment, one could glimpse the void on the other side. Seeing this, Yip grinned and responded in kind as he charged the Viper with energy revolving around him.

The concept of probability gathered as he punched. Vilastromoz tried to raise his hand to block but was unable to as if his actions were delayed by some unseen force. He was struck head-on, sending him flying back, Yip of Yore giving chase.

He teleported to appear right above the Viper, only to be met by a beam of malefic light, shooting him upwards as he blocked the blow... at least it looked like that for a moment, before reality warped. Yip of Yore avoided the beam as his teleport now no longer had him appear above but at the Viper’s side, allowing him to launch another shockwave of force, blowing back the Primordial yet again.

Yip of Yore prepared to follow up, but a curtain of dark green energy stopped him in his tracks as he nearly flew through it. The remnant energy entering it when he abruptly stopped was instantly turned to nothingness, and even if Yip dodged, he was still slightly affected and had to back away.

The Viper stopped himself as he raised a hand, a magic circle appearing behind him as magic manifested. Countless streams of energy were summoned that shot toward the other god, making him block or dodge all of them. Yip tried to counter, but the Viper went fully on the offensive as he deployed his magic to pressure his opponent. One had to remember that the Malefic Viper wasn’t a close-range melee fighter but was more of a mage than anything else. A master of magic, if you will.

For a moment, the Viper had the advantage once more as the two of them kept growing in power despite having already surpassed the Circles of Divinity. It was more gradual now, but with how impactful every Step was at this stage, the actual increase was substantial as they were closing in on the second Step.

The second they passed it, both had another massive increase in power as the scope of their battle increased. Now, things began to actually deal a bit of damage to the two of them.

Who had the advantage was constantly shifting, but throughout, the Viper was the one who mostly set the tempo. He was the one increasing his own level of power displayed with Yip simply matching him at all times. At some point, either the Viper would become unable to keep pulling out more hidden power or Yip would become unable to keep up, but both were not yet there.

Even as they entered the Third Step, both were able to continue fighting with roughly equal power. However, after another few clashes were both traded injuries, Yip once more took a step back and spoke.

“Things are finally getting a bit more serious, eh?” he asked casually. “With that in mind, let’s change things up a little...”

With those words, a sword appeared in his hand as the aura of the weapon filled the cosmos, actually forcing the Viper to take a step back, and not just because of the power inherent to the weapon, but the nature of that power.

In the same vein that some concepts opposed one another – such as how light countered dark – this sword held innate power that directly opposed the Malefic Viper’s. It was tailored to counter him and would, in simpler terms, be considered super effective against the Malefic Viper.

To counter, the Malefic Viper also pulled out a weapon of his own. He brought out an ancient-looking wooden staff with metal bindings covering its body, and at its head was a dark green orb with a faint glow that managed to push back the sword’s aura in the Viper’s immediate surroundings.

So far, the battle had been one where probing was the sole intent, neither able to do any meaningful damage to the other party... a dynamic that was now about to change. For more chapters visit novel.fire.net

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Chapter 1014: The Malefic Viper vs Yip of Yore (2)

Weapons were useful tools for not only mortals but gods alike. One also had to remember that upon becoming a god, one went through a fundamental change. No matter if one was a monster, enlightened, or anything else before achieving godhood, all gods shared certain circumstances after evolving.

One of those was the ability to use weapons and many forms of equipment or tools. A mortal dragon wouldn't be able to wield a staff the same way a human would, but an ascended human and dragon god would both be able to wield a staff on equal terms.

This resulted in weapons being incredibly important in the realm of godhood. Artifacts of legend were born based on the weapons gods used, with some of the most famous being the hammer of the Starseizing Titan and the axe of Valdemar. Of course, the use of weapons did assume the god fought using a humanoid form in the first place.

Another common trait among divine weapons was their tie to the god using them. Gods nearly always took an active role in the crafting process of their weapon, used a powerful Soulbound weapon they'd ascended alongside with, or even crafted the weapon entirely on their own. The reasons for this were multitude but could be boiled down to making a weapon that truly fit one as a god, and the more a god wielded a weapon, the more powerful they tended to be as the Records and bond improved.

The weapons pulled out by the Malefic Viper and Yip of Yore were both fully-fledged godly weapons worthy of being called weapons of myth. The staff wielded by Vilastromoz was made from roots gifted by Yggdrasil, metals taken from forbidden realms, and an orb from a Godking-level elemental god he'd corrupted using his malefic affinity before slaying many eras ago, the item only having been refined in the eras since.

Opposite, Yip of Yore wielded a weapon he simply named the Hero Sword. It was a weapon he'd recrafted several times and been in his possession ever since he was still a mortal, with the latest recraft coming shortly before his battle with the Viper. Each recraft specialized the sword, with the latest major one coming when he briefly battled the Starseizing Titan, managing to land a cut on the most durable of all Primordials.

At least, everyone assumed that was the latest recraft. However, it appeared that it had undergone yet another one, empowering the weapon further with the sole goal of making it more powerful against the Malefic Viper. It had been fed the Records of Yip of Yore's legend. The conceptual energy he'd gathered throughout his conquest to face the Malefic Viper, and as he lifted the blade toward the Viper, there was no doubt who was holding the superior weapon between them.

“Nice staff,” Yip said, an undertone of sarcasm. “Looks old. I’m almost surprised it hasn’t turned rotten yet.”

“Your weapon certainly is impressive, I can admit that,” the Viper shot back as he smirked on his own. “I do find the name of your weapon laughable, though. Hero Sword? You? A hero? Do people even know its true origin?”

“Do you?” Yip of Yore asked with some level of surprise, though he clearly expected Vilastromoz not to. While much of Yip’s history was known, there were also many unknowns, primarily because the god whose Blessing he held while a mortal had been part of the Pantheon Yip of Yore had later annihilated, in the process also erasing much knowledge of his earlier years. All that now remained was the knowledge of his multiversal accomplishments that happened on larger stages.

“What is the story you tell about the sword? Oh yes, that it was handed to you by your long-term friend and rival. A gift from him just before he died. Truly a tearjerker that one, though I prefer the story of what actually happened between you two,” the Viper smiled. “Altius the Blade... a talent that many compared you to in your mortal days. Your competitor in Nevermore and many other system events. You two were really close back then, I hear. It’s truly a shame that happened.”

Now, it was Yip’s turn to be quiet as he looked at the Malefic Viper with a cold gaze. In some ways, Altius could be called the Jake to Yip of Yore’s Ell’Hakan, except they didn’t have the same kind of antagonistic relationship primarily created by their gods being in conflict. If the Viper and Yip didn’t have this entire conflict, Vilastromoz couldn’t help but wonder what kind of relationship Jake and Ell’Hakan would have... though he still didn’t believe it would be a positive one.

“From what I remember, Altius was always more of a fighter than you. A better fighter. He was a prodigy with any bladed weapon, and if a system event revolved around combat, he would come out on top nearly every time. However, in the realm of politics and scheming, he was an absolute novice. Luckily, he had you,” Vilastromoz continued, ignoring Yip’s glare.

“You followed him. Helped him. In turn, he helped you, which is why I find it so damn weird...” the Viper smiled, tilting his head. “Why did you kill him, take his sword, and act the hero afterward? Did you view him as too big of a threat? Or was it perhaps jealousy?”

“Such confident words despite knowing nothing,” Yip said, his joking demeanor gone.

“Ah, but I do know,” the Viper smiled. “I also know that the only reason you beat Altius in Nevermore was because you fucked him over. I know you only killed him because he trusted you. You’re not a damn hero; you’re just an actor who would gladly kill the real heroes of the world to make yourself look better.”

"I guess you're not called the Keeper of Forbidden Knowledge for nothing... or was it Keeper of Forgotten Knowledge? Doesn't matter either way," Yip shook his head. "What are you trying to accomplish by showing off your knowledge? Destabilize my legend? Ruin my story? You should know as well as anyone it's way too late for that."

"I'm aware," the Viper nodded. "I just wanted to make sure you didn't actually begin to think yourself a hero. You, whose entire legend is built on lies and deceit and the shoulders of your betters."

"Lies, truths, deceit, honesty, does any of those words truly mean anything? Reality is what we perceive. It's what we believe. Records are nothing but the memories of the system, and all living beings are part of the system... so who is to say what we remember to be true isn't the actual truth?" Yip said with confidence.

"Who's to say? Well, maybe someone with a transcendent memory. Someone who knows objective truths, even if every other being in the multiverse forgets," the Viper shook his head and smiled.

"Someone like that would truly be annoying and worth getting rid of as they wouldn't be good for anything besides ruining good stories," Yip returned with his own sinister smile, and without any warning, he swung his blade.

The Viper wasn't ready and failed to completely dodge the sneak attack as a crescent line was cut through the sky. His shoulder was injured, the energy blade cutting straight through his scales like nothing.

Twisting his body to avoid any potential follow-ups, the Viper unleashed a barrage of magic upon his foe from his staff, the sky instantly being filled with a green sheen as thousands of streaming lines of malefic light. Before these attacks even had a chance to land, the Viper infused the staff once more as he pointed it toward the ground of the Great Planet below.

Stolen from its rightful place, this narrative is not meant to be on Amazon; report any sightings.

Yip of Yore's blade vibrated for a moment as every streamer in the sky was cut apart by silver light. However, the attack from the Viper did its job as Yip was slightly too slow at reacting when a microscopic needle-like stone shot up from far below, piercing his foot. Several hundred more of these small needles also flew toward him, but he was swift enough to dodge every other one as he charged toward the Viper to get in melee.

Teleporting back, the Viper tried to keep his distance as he unleashed several more attacks. Yip, in turn, continued attacking, the Primordial simply unable to keep up with every blow as he found himself unmatched in pure offensive might... which was totally fine for the Viper. He never planned on winning through regular attacks, after all.

Throughout the battle, the malefic presence of the Viper bathed the world and any being in it. He was poison incarnate, and through willpower and presence alone, anything and everything in his vicinity would be infected and slowly corrupted.

That is to say, Yip of Yore was constantly infected simply by being there. The poison was subtle and slow, seeping into the other god with every passing moment, laying dormant within him. Any interaction he had with the Viper also only served to poison him further. Striking the Viper with the sword resulted in malefic energy invading the body of Yip, and the Viper had taken quite a bit of damage. There was simply no escape, and the longer the fight continued, the bigger an advantage the Viper would have.

Even as they continued to increase their power level, the effect would linger. Despite having pulled out weapons, that didn't mean either was at their apex yet, just that the time for doing actual damage had come. The poison inflicted now mattered, and the blows Yip landed on the Viper would slowly dwindle away the Primordial's resource pools.

From the very beginning, the Viper had only focused on infecting Yip of Yore with poison, and every attack was laced with the most powerful venoms the Malefic Viper could produce at his current level of power at the time.

Everything Vilastromoz was doing built up to one crucial moment that would come when he finally approached the peak of his power. One moment where he would unleash all the toxic energy that infected Yip of Yore at once.

This was effectively how he'd killed the Brimstone Hedgemon back then. The poisonous energy from the Viper's presence had been enough to poison the Divine Realm of the god quickly and sufficiently enough for Touch to have something to amplify and bite unto.

Yip of Yore was far, far stronger than the Brimstone Hedgemon, so the Viper needed to build up enough toxins in the god's body before he would activate it. If not, he risked wasting all his preparations.

The fight continued with the Viper on the defensive as he tried to minimize damage as much as possible, but for every attack he landed, he took three in return. To make matters worse, every strike from Yip dealt significant damage, far more than any other regular blow of a weapon would.

A god's body was just a vessel of pure energy. Destroying it would not mean the instant death of a god, but it would consume their energy to regenerate. Usually, the Viper taking damage wouldn't bother him much, but that sword left injuries not so easily healed. Its conceptual power simply countered the Malefic Viper too much, the Hero Sword a weapon made to smite evil, and currently, the Viper was the greatest evil in existence.

However, as long as he could keep up with the escalating power level, things would be fine. By now, they'd already surpassed the realm of the Boundless Hydra and most of the figures who weren't truly at the peak of their major factions in the multiverse. The Viper felt that it wouldn't be long before he had no more reserves to pull on, and when that time came, it would be time to strike.

Time passed as this moment grew ever-close, and Yip of Yore closed in once more, aiming to land a solid blow. Reality warped as his blade seemed like it was coming from every direction simultaneously, and the Viper chose to use this opening where Yip was focused on offense to strike.

Without any warning, he unleashed all his latent energy as the crystal ball at the end of his staff exploded, sending out a wave of pure toxic energy that had been festering for several eras. The wave destroyed all the sword auras and struck the unprepared Yip of Yore, washing over him, making the entire front of his body begin to rot and turn gray and dead instantly as the powerful malefic affinity permeated his body. Even the sky and a massive swat of land below were left desolate and colorless wherever the wave had passed, and had this been the real world, energy would more than likely never return.

At the same time, the Viper didn't let up as he raised his hand toward Yip, with his entire body burning with power and the hand glowing a familiar dark green.

“Touch of the Malefic Viper,” Vilastromoz spoke, infusing the skill with Words of Power to further amplify it.

He took hold of all the poison he'd infected Yip of Yore with during their entire battle and brought it all to life while amplifying it. A dark light lit up the sky and enveloped Yip of Yore's body, corrupting and corroding everything. Even as he tried to use his skills and concepts to nullify the Viper's attack, those concepts ended up simply adding fuel to the fire as they, too, were corrupted and eliminated.

Channeling even more power into the skill, the Malefic Viper pushed himself to his limits as everything all around them began to break down. Space shattered as the concept was destroyed by the malefic light; time felt as if it slowed down, and for a brief moment, the world was still.

Then, the Viper felt something... a hint of poison hidden deep within Yip of Yore. Poison the Viper recognized but could no longer control. Poison that had once been his but had been claimed, and just as that realization struck, a loud crack sounded out.

A vertical cut split the malefic light apart as it struck the surprised Malefic Viper. Blood splurged out as he was cut across the chest, and the outstretched hand channeling Touch was severed at the wrist. Scales shattered in the process as the Malefic Viper stumbled back, his hand falling toward the ground below, but he didn't have time to focus on any of that.

He looked up with wide eyes and saw the light slowly fade as Yip of Yore walked forward, his entire body rotting and corrupted from the overwhelming amount of poison, with all but one limb gone, only half a head left, and likely less than a fifth of his total body mass remaining. However, within seconds, he began to rapidly heal as the Viper felt the poison lose its effect at a far too rapid pace.

“Are you surprised?” Yip asked despite his jaw not even having fully regenerated yet. “You shouldn’t be... you helped me accomplish this.”

The body of Yip healed more as his bare chest was shown, and on his body, a clear dark green handprint appeared, glowing dark green.

“You remember the little parting gift you gave me last we met, right? Well, to me, it truly was a gift. An unforgettable and invaluable opportunity,” Yip smiled, his body now nearly entirely fully healed as the poison in his body was eliminated.

“I relived that moment of infection... re-experienced it over and over again. Whenever it faded in power, I revived the story to be infused again and again as I slowly began to understand. Understand and make countermeasures as my body and soul adapted. For years now, I have lived infected with your poison, having built a tolerance that makes me near-immune. Seriously, did you really think your poison was anywhere near enough to stop me, let alone kill me?” Yip of Yore said in a mocking tone.

“I wanted you to infect me back then, and you played right into my hands. Perhaps you thought you were the one that had gotten one over me, as the poison allowed you to always keep track of where I was, no matter where I went in the multiverse. Oh yes, I understood that aspect of the poison, too. Now, I will give credit where credit is due; that was quite the attack, and without my preparations, I would not be doing that good right now... but I did prepare,” he continued as whatever remnants of the poison in his body dispersed for good.

The Malefic Viper assessed his own situation, knowing things weren’t good, far from it. It wasn’t that he was weaker than the current Yip of Yore... it was that Yip of Yore walked a Path that directly countered whatever the Viper did. The Primordial was like a fire mage facing a flame elemental that had trained against his particular brand of flames beforehand while wielding being able to use powerful water magic. Meanwhile, the Viper had nothing besides more fire spells – or poisons, in this instance. As things were looking, he had nothing.

At least he didn’t have anything else in his current form... This chapter is updated by
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“If that failed...” the Viper sighed. “I guess we’ll have to change things up.”

With those words, he took a step forward as his body began to morph. The small humanoid body changed from that of a mage to the creature known as the apex of

magic, and he assumed a form he hadn't in a long time as wings sprung from his back, his hands turned into claws, and a tale grew, his aura growing alongside his physical bulk.

Yip of Yore looked on with a serious gaze as he prepared himself, a sly smile forming on his lips, as the "hero" prepared to face off against the evil dragon god.

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Chapter 1015: The Malefic Viper vs Yip of Yore (3)

The aura of the Malefic Viper grew to new heights as he assumed his full dragon form. Yip took a few steps back, assessing the situation as the Viper finished his transformation from a small regular-sized humanoid into a nearly hundred-meter-long dragon. The injuries he'd suffered during the fight prior were mostly healed upon transformation as Vilastromoz's vibe changed entirely.

Spreading his wings, space shook, and Yip raised his blade, ready to defend. Just in time, too, as magic gathered, filling the sky with orbs of malefic energy, which were promptly sent flying toward Yip of Yore.

He dodged and blocked most, using his concept to nullify whatever damage he did take. With his seeming immunity to poisons, the Viper changed things up and focused solely on doing damage using more regular means... regular means in his book, that is.

The malefic affinity wasn't solely one of poison. It was one of corruption. While Yip could certainly raise his resistance to poison, he couldn't resist corruption, for corruption didn't have one unifying concept.

To the Malefic Viper, corruption was merely another word for transmutation, albeit an a bit more extreme variant. To corrupt something was to change it somehow, often for the worse, at least from the perspective of the changed entity. It was change without care about stability, forced upon the entity it was used on.

The most common form of corruption the Viper used was in the form of poisons. Poisons were energy that systematically wanted to cause harm, as that was what it was programmed to do. In many ways, corruption and poison were one and the same in many instances, but corruption had a far wider scope.

Another form of common corruption was desolation. Perhaps, to some, this was the ultimate expression of something being corrupted. To be emptied entirely of energy, making it hollow and unable to house anything ever again if made desolate for too long.

The malefic affinity was a fusion of all these concepts and more. It was a pinnacle-tier affinity primarily due to its extreme level of complexity, but that complexity also gave it many use cases. It could be applied in more places and more situations... and Yip was far from fully comprehending its true scope.

Something that was brilliantly displayed when he dodged two blows and tried to nullify the impact of the third by relying on the precedence that he was able to dodge the attacks through his concept.

However, rather than nullify the third blow, he was struck head-on, his eyes opening wide in genuine surprise. Even more so when a massive fang of pure magic descended from above, slamming into him and pinning him to the Great Planet below as a crater on an astronomical scale formed.

Not letting up, the Viper attacked again, but Yip managed to dodge as he teleported away, still leaving him with a giant hole straight through his chest that was quickly healing. It didn't heal as fast as the god probably expected, though.

He glanced at the Viper with confusion, but all he got as an answer was another barrage of attacks that didn't act how Yip expected them to, putting him on the back foot. Not losing his momentum at all, the Viper upped the pressure, truly unleashing every shred of power available to him.

By now, they'd well and truly surpassed a level even the Boundless Hydra could keep up with. It was a battle where Godkings would find themselves instantly killed, and the damage to their surroundings reached a new high.

If they hadn't been battling on a Great Planet, there wouldn't be anything left anywhere around them in a vast radius. Galaxies would have crumbled, planets would be nothing but invisible cosmic dust, and all the stars would have been blown out like candles in a hurricane.

What's more, due to the Viper being part of the fight, this damage would have left the entire area dead and barren for eras to come, if not permanently. If Yip of Yore hadn't used a Void Sphere at the pinnacle tier, it wouldn't have been able to hold up either, and the temporary dimension would have shattered, sending them both back to the real world.

Luckily, none of that happened, even as the Viper launched attack after attack toward the struggling Yip of Yore, who was trying to constantly adapt in vain. His confusion soon began to turn to realization after he'd taken significant damage.

“You’re... poisoning my energy? No... concept? More than that...?” he said, perplexed as his skill failed to activate once more, leading to his arm being sent flying. He tried to heal it, but the arm didn’t reappear instantly like it normally would.

“Laws... you’re corrupting laws?” Yip continued speaking out loud, doing so very purposefully. He wasn’t asking the Viper, but the world itself and his own abilities. He was searching for confirmation through speaking theories into the world, looking for signs of truth from the theories he spouted.

Vilastromoz saw no need to confirm or deny anything as he pushed Yip into a corner while working his magic to unleash even larger attacks. Throughout, he’d also been charging a special little something Yip was sure to appreciate.

As their battle continued, they had long moved from where they originally fought, no longer caring about losing ground to the other party. They passed over deserts spanning the width of several galaxies, and a single claw swipe infused with energy tore up a jungle capable of housing even god-tier creatures.

Yip retaliated where he could, his sword blows creating now long fissures whenever they hit the ground below, redirecting rivers that moved more water every second than Earth even had several thousand times over, or creating canyons so deep a human before the system could fall into one and die of old age before reaching the bottom.

Pushing toward the northern end of the planet, Yip finally seemed to reach an adequate level of understanding of what the Malefic Viper was doing, once more proving he truly was worthy of the title of supreme genius.

“You corrupt the very laws that govern logic,” Yip said in a genuinely astonished voice. “You realized you couldn’t poison me directly, so you poisoned the world around me. Damaged the laws my concepts relied on, making my skills unstable. Even simple laws, such as how fast one can regenerate, were subtly affected... I didn’t even know that was possible without entering the realm of Transcendent Skills.”

Yip had indeed hit the nail on the head, and as he spoke this truth into reality, his entire presence seemed to solidify all around him. He smiled gleefully at his realization, his power growing slightly in the process.

“Amazing... truly amazing,” he said with praise. “However, the energy consumption must be immense. Far more than if you only had to target my body.”

Once more, he’d hit the nail on the head, and the Viper wasn’t just going this hard on the offensive because he had the momentum but because he had to. He would run out of energy faster than Yip unless he could continually do substantial damage, and while he had certainly done a lot... it wasn’t enough.

Upon realizing what the Viper did, Yip began to counter it. He only had to accomplish a feat once, and passively, he would be able to do it far more easily in the future due to his innate abilities, and he made liberal use of his fact as the tables turned once more.

Despite having been injured significantly, Yip attacked with newfound fervor, the Viper being pushed back once again. With both of them having seemingly reached their limits of power, neither held anything back as each unleashed dozens of skills upon one another, as they continued to travel around the utterly massive Great Planet.

Through the Forest of Titans, leaving trees the size of solar systems piled like timber, down into the ground where entire sections of the Great Planet's mantle collapsed as earthquakes began to rock the continents and even into space where there was nothing but wayward asteroids which were swiftly reduced to dust before they even had a chance to get close.

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The Viper was constantly on the back foot, yes, but he refused to give up as he kept up the fight, leaving plenty of wounds on his opponent. At this point in the fight, Yip had several black spots all over his body where his newfound poison "immunity" proved to not quite make him immune anyway, and while he did avoid taking any soul injuries, his body remained a mess as the Viper continued to hamper the universal law of regeneration all around Yip.

Admittedly, the Viper was far worse off. Both of his wings had been severed at this point, alongside his tail and one hind leg that simply wasn't worth wasting the energy to regenerate. Both of them had spent untold amounts of energy, and the Great Planet was left a mess worth recording in the history books of the multiverse. The damage was great enough to destabilize huge sections of it as the Planetary Core tried to address the pandemonium that unfolded, failing at every turn as even the atmosphere was shattered at times.

Both gods knew the fight was approaching its zenith, and Yip was fully aware the Viper was the one who had to make a large move if he wanted to try and grasp victory from the jaws of defeat. As they clashed several more times, the Viper was looking for this opening, with Yip trying not to give any, but in a move that showed the Viper's superior experience in combat, he managed to finally get this chance.

More than two hours earlier, when they passed by the exact same section of the Great Planet, the Viper had left a trap, and as they flew past, Yip was taken by surprise as half a dozen complex magic circles activated in the sky, creating a seal all around him.

Below him, the Viper was ready, knowing he had less than a second to make his move. For hours, he had been charging and preparing an attack that was known to surpass grades. One that used a concept Yip of Yore had not made prior preparations against facing whatsoever.

Opening his maw, the Viper breathed in and, without further warning, unleashed all the saved-up energy in an instant. The Dragon's Breath of a god erupted from his maw, sending out a shockwave that sundered half a continent on the Great Planet simply by being near the Malefic Viper.

Yip saw the Breath as he roared, a glimpse of genuine fear marring his face. His entire body erupted with power as he broke free of the seal by releasing whatever power he still kept hidden and swung his sword to meet the Breath that took the form of a massive dark green beam.

Energy washed over him as the Viper kept going, the Breath continuing for nearly ten full seconds while fully enveloping Yip of Yore. As the beam slowly faded, all that was left where it had passed was pure nothingness. It wasn't even void energy anymore... it was a far more fundamental extinction of existence.

The universe struggled to repair itself as a line of nothingness had been drawn across the cosmos, sucking in energy from all around as the natural laws tried – and failed – to fill the gap and make the world whole once more.

Vilastromoz stared up at the sky, slowly closing his maw as his body felt empty of energy. He had overextended himself significantly with an attack that would usually be able to kill a being several tiers above himself, one that even Valdemar had failed to block once upon a time, resulting in one of the times the Viper had won a duel against the Primordial.

Several moments passed, and there was no sign of Yip of Yore anywhere. Yet there was no notification either. Glancing about and sending out a wave of energy to feel for his opponent, the Viper searched for the other god for several seconds until, finally, he saw it.

A small blip appeared far away, walking toward him through space. His stride was slow but measured, and as the Viper saw the gleam from the sword, he knew... his final attack had failed.

Yip came closer, and as he did, the Viper also felt the aura he gave off, and he couldn't help but sigh.

"You still had another Step before you reached your peak..." the Primordial said.

"If I didn't, that one would have killed me," Yip said, his body finally coming into sight, revealing that the entire left side was gray and black, devoid of energy, and his limbs hung uselessly down as his face slumped. Half of his Soulshape had even been destroyed, and the damage would likely never heal unless he got some outside help... and even so, it would take thousands of years at a minimum using any semi-regular means. "Nearly still did... but a hero doesn't fall that easily, now does he?"

Trying to buy some time, the Viper spoke again. "That won't heal quickly, that's for sure."

"Oh, I don't really know about that," Yip smiled as he raised his sword again and began flying toward the Viper despite only being able to move half of his body. "I might just--"

Without giving Yip any chance, the Viper opened his mouth once more and unleashed a second Dragon's Breath immediately, drawing on the very last fumes of energy he had left. It was far weaker than before, but Yip was still taken by surprise. Yet he responded far better as he yelled and pointed his sword forward as a maelstrom of energy formed and rather than retreat, he accelerated.

The maelstrom and the Breath met one another as the sky erupted, and for a moment, they looked evenly matched until Yip's superior level of power won out. The Breath was split in half as Yip descended upon the Viper, and before the Primordial could react, he was stabbed through the chest as the two of them crashed down onto the Great Planet.

A massive crater formed, the impact powerful enough to make the entire planet move slightly downward and for hundreds of massive caves throughout the mantle to collapse as an indent formed on the sphere.

As the dust settled, the scene at the center of the crater was revealed, showing the Viper now back in his humanoid form, the sword stabbing him through the center of his chest, and Yip standing over him, still slumping and looking tired.

Yet, at this moment, they both knew that a victor had been decided.

"Before... you talked about why I killed Altius... but it seems like you didn't know the full truth," Yip said with a struggle as he smiled painfully while standing over the Viper, his sword pinning the Primordial down, emanating energy that made it impossible for Vilastromoz to move.

"So let me enlighten you... trust me, it'll be relevant shortly. Our first real conflict started in Nevermore and only got worse after that... because he did better than me there," Yip smiled, the Viper's eyes opening in confusion.

"You were right. I was jealous. He topped the damn Leaderboards, and with every other event, he only got further and further ahead... he always took the best titles, the best rewards, the best items, the best everything! I was forever in second, never in first," Yip said, the look in his eyes now almost fanatical.

"You... that isn't what--" the Viper tried to say as Yip pushed the sword down even harder.

"Seems even you have your flaws. Then again, you can only remember something you learned about in the first place," Yip said with a sinister smile. "Envy is a powerful

emotion, you know? So powerful it can make one do crazy things... and have crazy enlightenment.”

Yip made sure that the Viper saw him as he let go of his sword and raised his hand. On it, a ring was revealed. “Another little secret I don’t think you knew about. This ring is quite special. I got it during a system event I did together with Altius. The one he died in. The one I killed him in... and at the end, one could ask the system for a custom reward, and I asked for this, genuinely surprised when it was granted. The thing is, my method of killing Altius wasn’t simple, but indeed one born out of pure envy when I realized he would be number one in yet another event, and in that moment, I snapped... and my envy became power.”

The ring on his finger slowly slid off, and then it did; a new kind of aura flooded the area. One that made the Viper’s eyes open wide. “You...”

“Truly generous of the system to grant a ring hiding one’s identity as a Transcendent,” Yip said triumphantly. “Oh, but don’t think I hid it because I’m embarrassed by it; quite the opposite. It does have quite an annoying cost, but that won’t be any issue of yours, and compared to the gains, it’s more than worth it.”

Yip raised his hand as it began to glow with a Transcendent Light. “Considering my theory three, it has quite the poetic name... **Usurper of Legends**. It allows me to not merely mimic your Records but steal them entirely and take a part of your legend. You see, never once did I plan on only becoming the first Primordial Slayer... why do that when I can steal your title of Primordial for myself and be both!?”

With those words, Yip formed a clawed hand before he slammed it down into the Viper’s chest, shattering all the scales in the way as he grasped the heart of the Primordial. Transcendent power flooded the Viper’s body in an instant as Yip greedily began absorbing everything he could. Google search ~~novel~~~~fire~~~~net~~

Struggling, the Malefic Viper tried to fight back, but it was in vain. He had nothing left, and as Yip gave a final push, everything came to an end. The Primordial’s struggle stopped, and a flood of Records began streaming into Yip of Yore as the notification came

****You have slain [The Malefic Viper...***

An untold rush of power made Yip only briefly confirm the notification as he reveled in the feeling, and as he continued to grow, the levels coming in like a tide, Yip’s body also began to recover.

The injuries left by the Viper healed, his soul was restored, and as the Transcendent Skill was coming to an end, Yip felt himself nearly progress yet another level... take another Step as he ascended even further. He would be able to shortly, especially with the new title he was waiting to get.

However... to Yip's bemusement, the title never came. He felt the flood of Records he'd absorbed, and he tried to condense them and form the title he desired from them, but no matter what he did, something was missing.

"Are you saying I can't take that title?" Yip muttered as he looked down at the Viper's corpse... finding it looking weird. His body had sagged in an odd fashion, and through the hole in his chest, there was no flesh or blood visible anywhere. In fact, he now just looked like an empty husk... no, worse than that, a Viper-shaped bag of skin and scales.

Almost like...

That... isn't...

Yip froze, unable to move, and as the color of the world faded into a sheen of dark green, he fearfully glanced at the full kill notification.

[The Malefic Viper (Dragon Molt)]

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Chapter 1016: The Wall

Minaga was working on some ideas for the labyrinth in the next era, trying to find a balance between familiar challenges and adding just enough of a difference that it wouldn't be too similar. He definitely had a few new great inventions to test and *a lot* of additional safety measures he had to work on implementing after a certain someone had dominated the floors and Challenge Dungeon both.

However, recently, even someone like him who had quite a heads available to take his mind off things found himself distracted. Seeing as wasting a few months wasn't a big deal. He'd paused most things as he watched with interest the happenings in the first universe, spending a lot of time with the Wyrmgod, who, while interested, clearly wasn't as into it as Minaga.

Which, let's be honest, was really weird as the Viper was his fellow Primordial, and they were clearly on friendly terms based on what happened when Jake did Nevermore. Alas, perhaps the Wyrmgod was just trying to play it cool... at least Minaga thought this until the Wyrmgod barely blinked when Yip of Yore unleashed the Void Sphere and sealed the two within their own separate Void Dimension for the final showdown.

Before that, all the other stuff with Jake that had gone down seemed to have interested the Wyrmgod far more, but now that the finale was there, he began to turn his gaze to other matters... at which point Minaga couldn't help but question his long-term colleague and friend.

"Hey... shouldn't you, you know, care a little?" Minaga asked. "Your old pal is fighting the top rising star to ever reach godhood, and stuff really isn't looking good for the Malefic Viper right now... he's strong, yes, but..."

The Wyrmgod seemed almost surprised at the question as he thought for a moment. "How well do you know Vilas?"

"Admittedly, not very well," Minaga shrugged. "Tended to stay out of his way most of the time. Still, neither of us really knows Yip of Yore either. In fact, what we do know makes him a lot more dangerous than others believe he is. We saw Altius beat him back then until one day, they switched places on the Leaderboards with no one finding it weird or questioning it at all... that level of reality and perception manipulation is of a Transcendent nature, yet he doesn't have the aura of a Transcendent. He has a lot of hidden cards is what I'm saying."

"I acknowledge Yip of Yore's powers and prowess," the Wyrmgod nodded. "But I also know Vilas."

Minaga remained skeptical as he sighed. "I'm just saying that things don't always go according to plan, not even for the Viper."

The Wyrmgod seemed in thought for a moment before he asked. "Do you believe you could beat Yip of Yore?"

"Me as in me, or me as in many mes?" Minaga asked.

"You, as in all of you," the Wyrmgod clarified.

"Probably? It wouldn't be easy to kill him, and if he is the one coming after me, it will definitely be annoying, but I also don't see any realistic scenario where he is capable of defeating me. Well, alright, he can defeat me a lot of times, but not enough times for it to matter if you get my drift," Minaga shrugged with a cheeky smile.

"Vilas is the same," the Wyrmgod said in a tone of certainty. "I also see no realistic scenario where Yip of Yore defeats him, for no matter how long passes, he is still the Malefic Viper."

Sylphie looked at Jake sitting within his big magic circle, clearly super nervous. Sylphie knew why he was nervous, as Big Snake Man was fighting a bad guy, and because Uncle was nervous, she felt nervous.

Suddenly, Sylphie got a super smart idea, as she closed her eyes on focused mega hard. Valhal – the Brawny Warrior Club – had done so they knew if anyone contacted gods in other places, but they didn't outright block it, so Sylphie thought it was fine to reach out to Big Bird and ask stuff.

It was a little bit harder than usual, but soon enough, Big Bird responded. Sylphie was only really good enough at talking to Big Bird to ask a few small things, so with that in mind, she asked the most important part first:

“Ree?” she asked if Big Snake Man would be okay or if Uncle would be sad

“Why you asking?” her Patron and Primordial – so she knew Big Snake Man – Stormild answered in a confused tone.

“Ree...” Sylphie said, still really bad at talking to Stormild without doing a super big ritual thing to meet beak to beak.

“Oh! That! Let me check... yep, they're inside the Void Sphere now, so no need to be all secretive, I guess,” Stormild answered, unconcerned. *“Anyway, yeah, I'm sure he's having fun.”*

“Ree?” Sylphie asked, still a bit concerned as she pointed out that Yip was supposed to be strong.

“A little, I guess? But he's fighting Vilas, and against him... yeah, nah, being strong just isn't enough there. You need to be super strong! Because Vilas is definitely super strong.”

Sylphie heard this and calmed down instantly as she chirped a bit happily to herself. If Big Snake Man was super strong, there was no need to be nervous. Though, looking at Uncle inside his ritual thing, she did feel bad for all the poor people from the Brawny Warrior Club who would end up wasting such a big magic circle...

A similar scene played out all throughout the multiverse, much to the befuddlement of many followers of the Primordials. While the top brass of the factions were carefully observing the happenings on Primordial-4, their leaders seemed far less interested than one would expect.

Their interest seemed purely professional, and there were never any signs of nervousness after Yip of Yore sealed himself with the Malefic Viper using the Void Sphere. One would expect that the Primordials would watch carefully as, potentially, the precedent that the Primordials could fall was about to be set with the Viper's death... yet they appeared casual about the entire thing.

Few dared ask them about their laissez-faire attitude about the entire thing, but once asked, their answers as to why they seemed so assured things would go according to their expectations tended to boil down to the same sentiment:

He's the Malefic Viper.

--

Yip of Yore felt a cold shiver run up his back as the aura of the Malefic Viper bore down on him, and before he had time to react or properly comprehend what was happening, the empty husk below him began to change. He still had his hand inside it as it wrapped around his arm, the rest of the empty skin and scales tearing itself into ribbons, flying up and wrapping itself around much of Yip's body.

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He tried to struggle free, but the aura of the Primordial intensified and pressed him down as he fell to his knees, his eyes opening wide in disbelief as he stared toward the sky and saw what looked like a green sun dawn... at least it looked like that until he saw the slit pupil run down its middle.

"I understand it, you know," the voice of the Malefic One echoed, every word vibrating Yip's body as the skin from the molt began to tear into and merge with his own.

"The Path is hard. Endless. Yet you are a genius. You walk forward with steady steps, always progressing, always growing stronger, leaving your peers in the dust. As for those who do manage to stand up to you? They are crushed, and a hundred years later, they become nothing more than forgotten memories or nostalgic moments of how weak you once were and how far you've come."

The green eye in the sky only seemed to grow larger, and Yip knew he wasn't truly looking at the Malefic Viper... merely a phenomenon born of his presence.

"However, all geniuses have one thing in common. All who walk the Path share one fate, one reality... the wall. To a genius, it comes later, but no matter who you are, it's inevitable," the Malefic Viper continued, as energy gathered, and from nothingness behind Yip, out walked the Primordial, wearing an untouched robe and unmarked body.

"The later you encounter this wall, the harder you hit it... and you, Yip of Yore, hit it hard," the Viper continued. **"You flew through the grades of mortality like none before you, especially after crushing Altius, the one person who could rival you. You reached S-grade, where many thought you would meet the same fate as other geniuses, falling short of godhood... but in no time, you ascended, breaking more and more records in the process."**

Yip wanted to turn his body and look at the Viper directly, but his body was paralyzed as the molt of the Viper slowly wrapped around his entire body, leaving only his head free. In his heart, he knew struggling was meaningless, and all he could do was listen.

“Through the Circles of Divinity, you went, reaching the realm of Godking and cementing yourself as an apex god. Yet once more, you proved why you were a genius, as not even that proved a true wall, as you condensed your Circles and placed your foot upon the first Empyrean Step.”

The energy from the molt wormed its way into Yip’s entire body as it mixed with whatever he had absorbed using his own Transcendent skill earlier, making a frightening thought enter his mind.

“Step after Step, you ascended further, growing more and more powerful, leaving more and more gods who once looked down on you in the dust. Perhaps you even thought this would go on forever. That you could endlessly ascend and constantly progress. But then... the wall.”

The Malefic Viper teleported and appeared in front of Yip as he looked down at the god.

“It’s horrible. It makes you question where you went wrong and if perhaps your Path was flawed from the very beginning. Many gods resign themselves to their fates when this happens; others accept it and move on with the hope that they can progress once more again in the future. But you... you grew desperate. You couldn’t meet a wall. You’re Yip of Yore! The greatest genius that has ever and will ever be seen! How could you, the apex of existence, encounter a wall!?” the Malefic Viper said in a semi-mocking voice.

“No... no, you had to keep progressing. Had to keep taking risks and prove you were right. That’s where I come in. The ultimate prey. A has-been Primordial, merely coasting along on his old legends... legends worthy of reaping and making your own. I was your ticket to breaking down the wall before you had to truly accept it was even there.”

Yip now just stared at the Viper, the emotion in his eyes hard to read as the Primordial sighed.

“And now... now we’re here. Your recklessness has led you to your current predicament. So tell me, oh hero of legends, was this all worth it to finally break through that wall?”

Yip was silent for several moments as he stared into empty space before he finally spoke, not even fighting the molt that had pretty much fully merged with his body by now. “Since when... since when was I fighting your clone?”

“Clone isn’t quite the right word, but to answer... it’s bold of you to assume you ever fought anything else,” the Viper said in a casual voice as he paused for a moment. **“Tell me, Yip, do you know why snakes mold?”**

Seeing as the god didn’t look like he would answer, the Viper did it for him. **“It’s to replace the old with the new. To rid yourself of something that has served its purpose. My dragon form... that part of myself... it had served its purpose. It’s a representation of what I was, and now I had shed those aspects of myself.”**

“From the beginning, huh... I barely beat your discarded skin...” Yip of Yore muttered before he looked up, a glimpse of clarity as a faint smile appeared. “Theory one all along...”

The Viper lessened the pressure around himself as he simply nodded, not even infusing his voice anymore. “Quite so.”

“Was I even close to standing a chance?” Yip continued to ask.

“Not in the slightest,” the Viper said. For a moment, in a display of pity, he released his full aura upon the world. It faded as quickly as it had come, leaving Yip staring.

“So... there was something beyond, huh...” he muttered to himself. “The wall... did you ever...?”

“I’ve overcome it thousands of times,” the Malefic Viper merely said as he kept an eye on the changes happening to Yip of Yore. Irreversible changes the god in question also knew and recognized.

“You planned all this from the beginning, didn’t you?” Yip asked. “I was dancing in the palm of your hand all along...”

“Now you’re overestimating me; I’m not omniscient. Alright, a bit omniscient, but not in the way you’re thinking,” the Malefic Viper said jokingly. “I did make some predictions, though, and you did jump in with both legs quite a few times. But to say I planned everything... not quite. I’m just good at adapting where necessary, so I understand how it can all seem predetermined in hindsight.”

“But our first meeting was planned... you wanted me to acclimate to your poison and make it part of myself,” Yip said.

The Viper didn’t deny that as he smiled. “I was merely priming you. Or, well, having you prime yourself. Also, I will admit I only had speculations regarding your Transcendence and took a bit of a gamble on that one, but it worked out quite spectacularly and proved a boon, making the process far more efficient.”

By now, the molt left by the Malefic Viper had fully merged with Yip of Yore, seeping into his soul and body. They had become one, and only Yip's head above his neck remained his own. He and the Viper both knew it, but for all intents and purposes...

He was already dead.

What the Malefic Viper intended to do was simple enough in concept, and Yip of Yore had been correct in many aspects during his quest against the Primordial. Vilastromoz lacked Records compared to many of his fellow Primordials due to his isolation, and he still relied on his "legends of old," as Yip had said.

The Viper realized this had to change. He needed "new" Records. Contemporary Records of progress, and of everyone in the entire multiverse, Yip was the poster boy of all this. He was the rising star, the hope of the next generation... he represented momentum incarnate.

Something the Viper dearly needed, and he could now claim.

"As I'm sure you know, I've always been more of an alchemist than anything else. Alchemy is, in its essence, the art of transformation. To take Records and energy and turn them from one thing into another, and in a sense, nothing is ever truly lost," the Viper said, speaking softly. "Death may seem like a frightening thing, but fear not, for you shall not disappear. Your Records will live on through me. No... rather than mourn, be proud that you, Yip of Yore, is perhaps the finest ingredient I have ever obtained."

The words were far from comforting to the sealed god, who hadn't even been able to struggle in the final moments where his fate was determined.

"Granted, it took a bit of careful nurturing to get you there, and I've invested quite a lot of time and resources in getting you there, but in the end, it was worth it," the Viper said as he held out his hand as a staff appeared in it. It was simple-looking, seemingly made entirely of metal with a snake head at its end.

"This would usually hurt... but I guess you don't have any feeling remaining," Vilastromoz said casually as he pinned the staff to the ground, and the moment he did, a magic circle appeared beneath Yip as complex magic came to light.

Yip's eyes opened wide when he now fully realized the Viper's plan as he spoke. "You're... fucking lunatic, you really are the villain, huh?"

"A matter of perspective, I guess," Vilastromoz shrugged with a smile as he reached out and placed his hand on Yip's face, and as he kept eye contact with the god, his aura exploded with the powers of a Transcendent as he spoke the final words Yip would ever hear:

"Malefic Alchemy: Transmutation." Google search *novel***

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Chapter 1017: A Proper Reintroduction

What even are Records?

Tension hung thick in the air above Primordial-4 as the standoff continued, neither side making any moves as they waited for the battle between the Malefic Viper and Yip of Yore to conclude.

One side was obviously more confident than the other as if they were just waiting for Yip to clean things up and claim his rightful title of Primordial Slayer. Yip of Yore had made all the preparations possible, made himself into a being specialized in killing the Malefic Viper, and grown faster than any other god in recorded history.

If he couldn't kill the Malefic Viper, who could? The result was inevitable to the gods supporting Yip, making them adopt a gloating demeanor in front of the gods from the Order of the Malefic Viper.

Valhal kept the same stance as before, with the only thing change being Eversmile who'd appeared beside Valdemar, something that didn't strike anyone as weird as they were obviously both gods supporting Yip's conquest.

As they stood there, Valdemar looked down at Eversmile with a raised eyebrow, the area around them already isolated. "What's in this for you?"

Eversmile looked up at the War God with his eternal smile. "Whatever do you mean?"

"You know what I mean. You're not the type to do anything out of the kindness of your heart, so why get involved in all this?" Valdemar asked, not showing his usual simple demeanor. "Even you siding with Yip wouldn't make any sense unless he offered you something really good."

"He did offer me something really good," Eversmile said casually.

"And what did Vilas offer you?"

"Nothing," Eversmile sighed. "At least nothing tangible. It's more accurate to say that after this, we are considered even regarding certain matters."

Valdemar frowned a bit at what he said before his eyes lit up in realization. "This was all to pay him back for what happened with that kid?"

"Oh? I'm surprised you know about that," Eversmile said in genuine surprise.

"Had to watch some clips of Jake's Tutorial... I guess you can say that was part of my deal," Valdemar said with a laugh before turning a bit more serious again. "I still don't get it... you owed him a favor, sure, but not all favors are the same. This seems like you did quite a bit more for him than he did for you. Especially seeing as how your experiment fell through. Pretty sure that boy of yours is now a heretic."

Now it was Eversmile's turn to chuckle. "Who says the experiment is over?"

Valdemar looked at him for a few seconds before sighing. "I still don't get you... oh, and also, I heard you sold being on Yip's side by saying you want Vilas dead? How did you pull that one off?"

"There is nothing to pull off when speaking the truth."

"You actually want Yip to kill Vilas?" Valdemar asked, his emotions hard to read.

"Of course I do," the karmic mage said without a moment's hesitation as he kept waiting for the battle between the two gods to fully conclude and for the result to be announced to everyone... even if said result was entirely predictable.

As for wanting the Viper dead, he really was speaking the truth. Eversmile was a researcher. He researched karma and the best way for new karma to be formed was through new situations. Nothing was better than entirely original scenarios with several actors taking part. Especially high-level actors with genuine power.

So why wouldn't he want Yip of Yore to kill the Malefic Viper? Because nothing was better than when the outcome wasn't the expected one but something no one had seen coming. Well, more accurately, a result no one with full information could see coming.

So that's why he wanted to see the Viper fall... because he'd always loved it when the impossible happened.

The Malefic Viper stood on the ruined Great Planet within the Void Sphere dimension as he admired his creation. Admittedly, it wasn't impressive from a visual perspective, seeing as it was just an odd mass made of skin, scales, and flesh that was pulsing as if it had a heartbeat, but how it looked wasn't important in the slightest.

What mattered was what it could do.

It had taken a while to shave off all the useless parts, such as Yip's entire own Path. Yip's Path was impressive in the eyes of many, and it had allowed him to get where he

was today, but that didn't mean consuming such Records would help the Viper in any way. Quite the opposite.

All it would do was dilute his own Path with the Records of a lesser being. His own Path was already superior to Yip's, so why would he bother absorbing any part of it? No, the only thing he needed was the contemporary Records and aspects of Yip's Path related to momentum, growth, and "newness." The Records that would help him to make up for all the time he'd missed and all the Records he hadn't gained from actively taking part in current events for so many eras.

As he looked at his creation, he couldn't help but sigh at just how much Yip had miscalculated everything, with his biggest miscalculation being that the Viper wouldn't have been able to grow a lot during his many eras of isolation.

Perhaps it wasn't an entirely ridiculous assumption, and under normal circumstances, it would be right, but the Viper had been far from lazy despite his isolation. He'd been progressing all the time, absorbed the Records of the multiverse whenever a new universe was integrated, and pushed himself further and further. Plus, he had several extra little things to allow him to keep going...

At least when it came to alchemy.

The only thing he hadn't done was proper fighting. He hadn't killed anything for perhaps the longest period of time of any being in the entire multiverse. He hadn't done any system events either.

All he had been doing was progressing his own Path. Progressing his alchemy. That meant right now, he was more likely than not the weakest of all the Primordials... though not by a wide margin. With the treasure he'd just created, he would make up for most of his own shortcomings. In some ways, he could even be compared to a mortal with both a profession and a class, where his class had fallen significantly behind his profession due to neglect.

When that happened, it tended to be quite easy to get a lot of class levels fast, something that was also true for the Viper's situation. The Records would complement his own, merge with them, and create something greater than what he started with.

As for what exactly he'd created... UPDATE FROM novel.fire.net

The Records and energy of the Dragon Molt – ones that represented the Viper's past – had now been replaced with Yip's Records entirely, meaning that the Viper would essentially be reabsorbing his own Records only, at least in the eyes of the system. One couldn't easily absorb the Records of other beings, after all, especially not as a god, which was why he needed to do a bit of alchemy to get it to work.

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Smiling to himself, the Viper still waited a bit longer as everything settled down entirely within the item he'd dubbed the Dragon Molt's Embrace. He was waiting for the system to do its thing, the aura of the item to change, and its pulsating heartbeat to stop, and after another few minutes, it finally happened.

The final remnants of life left the large mass of scales, flesh, and skin... and with its death, Yip also finally found his end.

You have slain [Yip of Yore...]

Perhaps it could be viewed as a bit macabre that Yip was alive and conscious throughout the entire process, but keeping him alive resulted in a better end product. The Viper licked his lips and just looked at the mass but stopped himself as he smiled and shook his head.

"I guess he deserves a little treat for the assist," the god said as he reached forward and from the mass, pulled a small ball of scales. Summoning a small wooden box for preservation, he put it in there to keep it nice and fresh for his dear Chosen later.

With it stored away, it was time to finally dig in. The Viper opened his mouth as space distorted, and the mass of flesh flew toward the Viper, shrinking as it entered his maw and into his internal stomach for slow consumption.

The moment he had it in there, the Viper's eyes opened wide as he gritted his teeth from the rush of energy flooding his body, his aura fluctuating for a moment before calming down, settling as a few levels came in from just that. Taking a deep breath, he looked at his hand and opened and closed his fist a few times.

"Turned out even better than first expected..."

This was likely the best treasure the Malefic Viper had ever consumed, especially taking into considering all the additional items he used as part of the transmutation process. The sheer amount of energy within that mass had been enough to kill a few hundred Godkings at least, and absorbing it all would take a while, several years at least, but once it was all digested...

Well, he had promised Valdemar a good spar as part of getting him to lend a hand.

Just as the Viper had consumed the mass of flesh, the Void Sphere dimension also began to slowly break apart. With one of the two gods trapped within dead, it would crumble within minutes, something the Viper had naturally planned for.

He didn't want anyone to see what he'd done during this entire battle, nor the aftermath. Truthfully, there had been a few moments during the "fight" where the Viper had gotten a bit concerned, as Void Spheres had a limited duration, and Yip of Yore had quite frankly proven a lot slower at killing his Dragon Molt than first expected.

At least it had been well worth it to fatten him up adequately through all his and Jake's scheming, but then again, the best ingredients always needed good nurturing and cultivating to become their most useful versions.

Finally, as for all the parts of Yip's Records the Viper had cut off because they weren't needed... well, those were gone along with the Truesoul back to the system, though the Viper had a good idea where at least some of them would end up. Not that Vilastromoz could do much about that besides trusting in his Chosen the same way his Chosen had trusted him.

For now, he still had one more important thing to do before he could focus on other matters:

Properly reintroduce himself to the multiverse.

Space and reality shuddered as the Void Sphere dimension collapsed. The two within would appear in roughly the same place they had entered, and based on how it had only taken a bit over a day for the sphere to end its duration, everyone knew that a victor had been decided.

The many gods associated with Yip were still looking confident, while the ones with the Order were nervous. The Lord Protector also hadn't stopped defending the Order's headquarters at any point, with many of those present even expecting to see the Boundless Hydra attempt to put up a final stand against Yip.

However, the gloating expressions of the thousands of gods – including over a dozen Godkings or Godqueens – associated with Yip of Yore fell once the dimension sufficiently broke down, and an unexpected aura began to seep through.

Before the dimension could even fully break down by itself, a shockwave shattered what remained as reality cracked like a broken mirror, the Malefic Viper confidently walking out between the falling shards.

No other sound but the clattering of space repairing itself was heard as all simply stared at the Viper in shock. Not only because he'd won but because of how he looked. Not a single sign of injury could be seen on his body; his soul and presence were both absolutely stable, and he exuded a casual demeanor not reminiscent of someone having just fought for their life against an equal opponent. His aura also felt... different. Hard to read.

It took a moment, but very quickly, the first god tried to enter the void, but the Viper raised a hand and snapped.

“It would be rude to leave so suddenly after coming for a visit,” he spoke, his snap sending out a subtle wave of energy that solidified space on that entire section of the Great Planet, making it impossible to escape through the void or other forms of teleportation.

Some looked to Valdemar and Eversmile who continued to just stand there casually, Eversmile having his usual unreadable expression with Valdemar grinning, a look of expectation in his eyes.

Eversmile noticed the staring people before just shaking his head... he was just there to observe and record what was happening, after all. Not to interfere. Valdemar also wasn't going to make a move as he'd also done his part, right? He'd made sure that Yip got the one-on-one fight he wanted without any outside interference.

“Now, why do I feel such disappointment from so many of you just because I showed up?” the Malefic Viper smiled, walking forward a bit as he looked at Yip's gods before looking down at those behind the barrier within the Order. **“At least there are some who look glad to see me.”**

The Boundless Hydra didn't hesitate as he transformed his entire body and shrank, becoming humanoid once more as he looked at the Viper with what looked like tears in his eyes as he bowed. **“I greet the Malefic One.”**

As he did this, all the ones behind the barrier followed suit as they all bowed their heads and repeated the phrase. The Viper smiled, looking down at them with a nod before turning his attention back to all the gods in the sky. He scanned through them as he sighed.

“I see a few familiar faces among you... truly disappointing,” the Viper said, focusing on the gods who had once been part of his own faction only a few months ago. It was the ones who'd defected and joined Yip of Yore when things were looking bad, and it wasn't just a few either.

The Viper wasn't surprised, though. He'd taken this entire scenario as a good opportunity to do a bit of spring cleaning among the Hidden Ones or other gods associated with the Order. A loyalty test, if one will. One that dozens of gods failed as they now stood on the wrong side of history.

“I would scold you, but you are no longer worthy of my recognition at all,” the Viper said, disowning them all. As he spoke, the gods who formerly supported Yip had time to gather, and Vilastromoz didn't doubt that they spoke plenty using telepathy, especially after he sealed off space.

As expected, soon enough, the strongest individual walked forward. A powerful Godking who ruled a large faction of his own and a figure recognized throughout the multiverse. He respectfully bowed and spoke.

“Malefic One, we do not wish to propagate this conflict any further... a victor has been decided, and with Yip of Yore’s defeat, we also recognize our defeat. Representing everyone, we swear that proper compensation shall-“

“You killed my people,” the Viper interrupted him as he tilted his head. **“Pretty sure there’s only one right way to compensate for that.”**

The Godking frowned. **“Malefic One, continuing this conflict will benefit you nothing. If forced into a corner, our defeat is inevitable, yes, but the fallout from the fight would-“**

“I think you’re misunderstanding something,” the Viper said in a cold tone. **“There won’t be any fighting.”**

With those words, the Malefic Viper unleashed his presence – his Pride – upon the many gods. They were prepared for him to attack, ready to retaliate, ready to band together and try to escape or at least make the Viper pay dearly for his choice... but none of it mattered.

They didn’t have time to react at all.

The aura of a god surpassing themselves by several realms washed over them in an instant, as soundlessly, they fell. Thousands of divine beings, those who stood at the top of the multiverse, tumbled out of the sky, falling lifelessly toward the ground below with their souls extinguished.

Even the Godkings and Godqueens had time to do nothing but open their eyes in fear before death claimed them. It was a sight that even made those on the side of the Viper have their blood run cold as they felt absolute relief they’d made the right choice.

This sight of the Viper standing there with a prideful gaze as he looked at all the falling gods was a display of power that communicated just how foolish everything Yip had done was and how the Viper could have ended everything at any time he decided. It showed that he was still a being of absolute power that no one could look down on...

And all was recorded and would be spread by Eversmile, who’d been hired by Yip to spread the legend of all that had happened on Primordial-4 when the hero and the villain had their final battle... probably not expecting this to be the kind of story where the bad guy wins.

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Chapter 1018: A Relationship Doomed From The Start

It had been a mutually beneficial relationship. One that had helped them both greatly to accomplish their respective goals, yet throughout it all, they'd kept each other at arm's length. It wasn't that out of the ordinary, though, as two beings recognized as supreme geniuses tended to each have quite the ego, but this had still been different.

Ell'Hakan and Yip of Yore hadn't respected each other like the Malefic Viper and Jake. They hadn't considered each other close from the very beginning but merely used the other as a useful tool to further their own interests. Everything was transactional, Ell'hakan playing the role Yip wanted while reaping the rewards of his actions.

One of the primary reasons their relationship could never grow beyond this was due to their limited interactions. They never spoke when it wasn't purely about business, and the number of times they had met in person could be counted on one's fingers.

The cause of this was an emotion far more simple than respect... fear. Something that made their relationship doomed from the start.

Ell'Hakan was afraid of Yip of Yore because he knew the god would discard or even gladly kill him if he believed that would be of benefit to him. At one point, he even felt as if Yip of Yore was floating the idea of killing Ell'Hakan and framing it as if the Viper had it secretly done as a way to further justify his crusade against the Primordial.

At the same time, the mere fact that Ell'Hakan knew this was something that made Yip of Yore apprehensive. It was an odd concept for a god to hold some level of fear of his own Chosen, but it was nevertheless the truth. His Bloodline was fundamentally dangerous, even to gods, and Yip of Yore recognized this.

Sure, they had many methods to ensure they weren't manipulated by it, but there were no guarantees, especially not if exposed for a prolonged period, and that in itself was a scary thought. If an extremely subtle sentiment was planted and amplified by a fraction with every meeting, not even gods could say they hadn't been affected in some fashion at the end of it, and any kind of uncertainty, even if it was minuscule, was too much for most gods to accept.

Even assuming any kind of manipulation he did was impossible, that didn't remove his ability to read emotions perfectly. Again, gods could try to hide their emotions, something many of them did most of the time anyway, but they would need to use different methods than normal against Ell'Hakan. Perfect control of outward expression or even one's soul simply wasn't enough, as against Ell'Hakan one didn't need to hide one's emotions but fully control and not have them in the first place to fool him. That

required a certain kind of mindset and focus, one it would be hard to find many people with, even among gods, as it simply wasn't a skill they had ever needed to learn.

Someone like Valdemar could be read like an open book by Ell'Hakan. So could many others who thought they had him fooled. Yet he knew the emotions they tried to hide, the truths they wanted no one to know... which was also why he had the feeling something was off for a long time.

No, more than feeling... for a long time now, Ell'Hakan had felt a high level of certainty that his own Patron wasn't as in control as he believed and thus began to make his own preparations accordingly.

Oh, and as for the question if a small planted sentiment was possible to implement in a god... well, at least it appeared to have when it came to affecting a god's subconscious decision-making in their final moments before death.

Ell'Hakan breathed calmly as the ritual around him was ready to activate at any moment, humming with energy. It had a level of complexity beyond his understanding, but that didn't matter as he wasn't even the one to operate it, only benefit from it.

The ones in charge of the ritual were people he'd trusted and vetted himself, and those he knew wouldn't dare cause him harm as that wasn't what their higher-ups wanted. In many ways, the fact that the universe had been cut off was a great boon, as it allowed Ell'Hakan to speak more with the Holy Church and put his plans into motion, which was how he ended up standing within a massive magic circle constructed by the single-largest faction in the multiverse.

Considering how massive the Holy Church was, they naturally also had insight into rituals to usurp other gods, though it wasn't anything they would "officially" do. Ell'Hakan had heard some whispers of defector gods being slain and their prior blessed or even Chosen to end up usurping their Path happening a few times, but that was purely coincidentally, of course.

As he still stood waiting within the ritual, waiting to either hear that the seemingly impossible had happened and that his Patron had won or of the god's death, Ell'Hakan didn't feel any nervousness, though there was a hint of impatience for learning the outcome. He also couldn't help but consider how things had even ended up like this. Follow current novels on [novel●fire●net](#)

In truth, this hadn't been the plan for that long. For the longest time, he'd genuinely believed in Yip of Yore and that he would defeat the Malefic Viper and become the first Primordial Slayer. Ell'Hakan had seen his Patron as someone worthy of that title and a presence in his life that would only lead to further greatness as he would be the Chosen of a truly great being.

He'd gone along with everything Yip of Yore asked of him without questioning anything, as why would he question someone he genuinely believed was the most powerful person in the multiverse – or at least had the potential to soon be the most powerful?

But, slowly, cracks began to form, and then... Nevermore. More accurately, what happened during the Colosseum of Mortals in Nevermore.

Ell'Hakan had done well there and pulled on his experience as a warrior even before the system arrived. He'd risen through the gladiator ranks and swiftly defeated many top gods in their mortal forms, even if some of them proved quite tricky before he finally ended up before Valdemar. The Grand Champion.

Perhaps it was vanity, or maybe doubt had already begun to sprout in his heart then, but Ell'Hakan couldn't help but try and take advantage of the fact that Valdemar seemed to have full knowledge of the multiverse up until not that long before the integration.

So, he'd asked him some questions, all of which Valdemar had naturally not answered... but he didn't have to. Even if the system didn't allow him to answer, it couldn't stop his emotions from confirming or denying his words.

When Ell'Hakan said that the god Yip of Yore was aiming to kill the Malefic Viper, the god didn't react much... but his emotions were clear. At first, he didn't believe the Viper was back, but once he was convinced of that... he found the sentiment absolutely hilarious. As if Yip killing the Malefic would be the biggest joke ever told.

He confirmed this time and time again as he reframed his questions with every life he spent against the War God, confirming things more and more, all the way up to the fight where he finally earned the god's recognition.

Walking out of that Challenge Dungeon, Ell'Hakan was full of doubt and began to question many things and look for clues to confirm these doubts. He began to make backup plans in case Yip of Yore was indeed simply a fool being played by the Primordial, and luckily, he already had an easy in with the Holy Church, who he was already working with at the time for Nevermore.

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One might ask... why didn't Ell'Hakan warn Yip of Yore if he was his Chosen? He could have told him so many times. Voiced his doubt that maybe Yip was making a mistake. Shared what he'd learned from Valdemar.

But he couldn't. This all harkened back to the fact they had never truly trusted one another. Perhaps Ell'Hakan warning Yip would have made the god reconsider what he was doing or changed the strategy in some way. Maybe it would just make him double

and triple-check some things himself, leading to the conclusion that he either wanted to back off or continue according to plan.

However, far more likely, the second Ell'Hakan voiced his doubt would be the same day he signed his own death sentence. Yip of Yore was too deep into his own story. He had become a slave to the legend he was forging. At least, he seemed to think that way. If his own Chosen began to show signs of doubt, Ell'Hakan believed he would only have viewed that as a weakness that had to be cut off.

No... it would have been far too risky.

So, Ell'Hakan had done what he believed safest and hedged his bets by doing so that both outcomes of the confrontation between gods would end up beneficial to him... and as part of that preparation, he'd planted a small seed that took advantage of Yip's obsession. A single emotion and thought that would only appear in his final moments:

Indignation... and a desire for someone to carry on his Legacy. To not let his legend die, even after perishing. It wasn't hard to do either, as he only very subtly amplified the strong emotions Yip already had.

It was all part of a gamble that very soon had its time to prove if it would pay off.

Despite it not really being something that should come as a surprise, Ell'Hakan still found himself a little shocked when he felt it happen.

When his Patron died.

The connection he'd shared with his Patron for so many years was severed in an instant, but right before he could fall to his knees from the backlash, the formation all around him came to life.

Complex magic activated and grasped unto the remnants of Ell'Hakan's connection with Yip of Yore and his Records, and the moment it got a grip, it yanked hard. As it did, Ell'Hakan felt his connection with Yip of Yore's Legacy strengthen but felt very different from usual, as a rush of Records streamed down toward him.

He also instantly knew that his small planted emotion in Yip had worked... or perhaps Yip had already known what Ell'Hakan was planning and viewed this as a valid backup. Either way, despite being a Usurper in the making, he didn't truly have to usurp much as the Records more than gladly came to him.

The more than a thousand members of the Holy Church helping with the ritual had a slightly easier time due to this, but they still strained themselves as Ell'Hakan bathed in the stream of energy and Records. Light began to envelop him as a pillar formed all around, the rush of energy only intensifying as it combined with the Records.

Ell'Hakan smiled as the first level arrived, and shortly after, one of his skills upgraded. The entire scenario reminded him of when one picked a skill upon reaching a level milestone. Instinctual knowledge of how a skill worked would enter one's mind, making the person aware of how to use the skill while still leaving plenty of room for future improvements.

Right now the same was happening to Ell'Hakan. The Records of Yip of Yore were funneled into his former Chosen, improving and empowering the Records of all the dead god's Legacy skills, and with the help of the ritual below, a constant stream of energy entered Ell'Hakan to support the entire process, making it as if he was repeatedly consuming high-quality treasures.

Knowledge flooded his mind as he began to understand more and more of his Legacy skills. His passive skills – which were the main part of what Yip of Yore had mainly given him - also got better as he used them to amplify his other core skills.

Hours passed as the ritual went on, the members of the Holy Church occasionally being switched out with ones who had sufficient energy remaining. Ell'Hakan kept pushing the ritual further and further, even if he could only claim a few scraps toward the end.

As the ritual eventually winded down, a final fragment of Records came and entered Ell'Hakan... one that felt different than any prior. Usually, the Records were scrambled and just puzzle pieces that could help make a greater whole, but this final part wasn't like that.

It was something Ell'Hakan didn't even know could exist, and despite feeling a bit apprehensive, he absorbed it into himself. It was a full puzzle in itself. Rather than help upgrade a skill or anything like that, Ell'Hakan saw something way more interesting when he absorbed it.

Memories... more put together than anything Ell'Hakan had ever experienced before and more than understandable. For a moment, he felt as if he wasn't even in his own body but instead trapped inside someone else's. It was like his own skin had become a prison, and his insides were boiling, making him want to scream out in pain, but he couldn't, for he no longer had a mouth.

All his limbs were also gone, and all that was left was soul-searing pain that permeated every part of his being. He felt the Viper's presence, the hopelessness of being utterly suppressed by a superior being, and then... clarity. Everything became calm as Ell'Hakan heard a familiar voice in his head echo.

“Listen, my Chosen, to the final ode of a fallen fool...”

Ell'Hakan listened, unable to do anything else, and despite the final words of Yip of Yore not actually being an ode at all, his former Chosen still took in everything, his eyes wide

as he learned things he wasn't sure he wanted or needed to know as a mortal. Things with implications he wasn't sure he could handle.

As the knowledge stopped flooding his mind, the ritual around him also came to an end, and Ell'Hakan fell down on one knee. The entire magic circle cracked as the ground shattered all around him, several hundred high-level C-grade mages and priests being sent flying back with severe internal injuries from the backlash of the ritual stopping so abruptly.

Breathing heavily, Ell'Hakan stood up. The ritual had not broken apart because anything had gone wrong. There had just never been any considerations for a safe way to end it without the parties performing it taking damage... one of the sacrifices that had to be made when cutting corners and having C-grades perform a Usurper Ritual.

While still basking in the feeling of being reborn, he saw the human approach with steady steps, turning his head to see him. "Augur... you're here, huh?"

Should Ell'Hakan be surprised? Perhaps... he'd chosen a small, unassuming planet in the galaxy – one not even a part of the alliance initially – to perform this ritual on and only brought the most necessary people there. Despite the ones making and performing the ritual being from the Church, they weren't necessarily in the Augur's camp.

The Holy Church was not a monolith, especially not in a new universe, and quite a few smaller competing factions were constantly opposing one another. However, even so, it was a fact that the Augur was a special existence within the faction with influence wherever he wanted it.

"I wouldn't have missed it," the Augur answered with a light smile, observing the broken ritual. "These kinds of things are... rare. Once-in-a-lifetime kind of rare, if not more so. Your Path has been solidified to a frightening extent, and I feel as if a burden has been lifted from your shoulders and shackles removed from your ankles."

Ell'Hakan looked at the Augur for a moment, knowing what the Augur said was the truth. He did feel as if he had been freed from Yip. Freed from his plots and schemes. Smiling, Ell'Hakan nodded.

"The help from the Church won't be forgotten, and our deal honored," he said, turning a bit more serious as he rolled his shoulders a bit.

"I would be disappointed if it was... now, if I may, would you share some insight into the ritual? As I said, this is not something one has the chance to encounter often," the Augur asked.

Ell'Hakan was more than happy to share his accomplishments and make sure the Augur understood just how much he'd gained. He knew he had to raise his own value in

the eyes of the Holy Church and make them view him as more than just his Bloodline. Far more.

So he spoke of everything he didn't see as something he shouldn't share. The Augur engaged throughout and asked several questions, as all around them, the mages and priests were helping each other recover from the aftermath of the ritual.

After a good while, they had covered mostly everything and Ell'Hakan sighed.

"Oh well, I guess we should get to work. Things can't be stable once the news of Yip's death spreads throughout the alliance."

"They most certainly are not," the Augur nodded. "Especially not after they initiated their counterattack."

"What counterattack?" Ell'Hakan asked with confusion.

"The one happening right now," the Augur just shrugged.

Ell'Hakan was still confused as he hurried away from the ritual site, where a large formation had been overlaid across it to cut them off from the outside world for further protection. The second he got out of it, he was flooded with messages from his allies across the galaxy. His eyes opened wide as he read the many reports, and in anger, he turned toward the Augur.

"You knew?"

"Naturally," the human nodded.

"And yet you saw the need to..." Ell'Hakan said before shaking his head. "Why didn't you tell me right away?"

"You didn't ask," the Augur just shrugged, a sly smile on his lips as Ell'Hakan really wanted to just put a trident through the human's neck, but knew it would be a waste of time as he instead turned and headed toward the teleporters, leaving the still-smiling Augur behind.

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Chapter 1019: Chaos Across the Milky Way

People tended to believe what they wanted to believe... at least until that belief got them punched in the face, leading to heavy personal consequences. At that point, they could either blame the other party for reacting the way they did, or they could realize that perhaps their belief hadn't been the best.

This was a scenario quite a few individuals throughout the Milky Way Galaxy were going through in the hours past the death of Yip of Yore. Many of the allies of Ell'Hakan were all scrambling, especially one of the two major groups that supported him.

Ell'Hakan primarily had two factions helping him out. The first one was the Holy Church, which naturally remained stable even with the happenings in the first universe, but the other one was facing quite a set of difficulties.

This group consisted of those not supporting Ell'Hakan as much as they supported Yip of Yore, and thus only his Chosen by extension. They were made up primarily of people blessed by gods who'd allied with Yip of Yore, and the thing about those gods was that they were all now... well... dead.

Having your god die turned out to be quite a recipe for disaster, especially for the planets who held their entire leadership structure together through religion. When the believers saw the priests fall on the ground, bleeding from every orifice as they screamed in pain, or the World Leader have a mental breakdown as he faced the backlash from losing his high-level Blessing, the general populace quickly realized something was wrong.

The Malefic Viper's display of power, which wiped out a four-figure number of gods, ended up having an absolutely massive effect on the Milky Way as nearly all these gods had blessed the natives there, and where there was chaos, there were those quick to take advantage.

Despite being allies on the surface, the Holy Church was quick to make its move and fill the vacuum of faith created by the many deaths. They had already integrated themselves on these planets, especially over the last few months of the truce, which made many suspect they had expected Yip of Yore to be the one to fall from the very beginning.

An unprovable theory, sure, but not one the Holy Church outright denied either.

On many of these planets who were scrambling, a representative from the Church was in front of the World Leader within minutes. The clergy of the Church came to help the priests who had fallen in the streets, helping them despite their differing faith, and overall, they proved themselves a symbol of stability that many World Leaders didn't even need an hour to forge an alliance with – said alliance pretty much turning them into vassals of the Church.

Those who knew more about how the faction of the Holy Mother operated knew it was only a question of time before they would become full members, as that was how things tended to just go.

Within these first few hours, the Holy Church did much, but they didn't make moves everywhere.

Despite everything happening, some stuck by Ell'Hakan's side despite not being associated with the Church. Some of these were World Leaders who simply had joined hands with Ell'Hakan before they got blessed with any gods, or were individuals without any Blessings at all. These were faithful to Ell'Hakan and almost viewed him as if he were their god, and no matter what happened, they would keep supporting him.

There were also some gods who supported Yip who hadn't followed him to Primordial-4, and these tended to not be quick to turn to another faction... mainly because they didn't really have to time to consider if they should yet.

But they would have to move fast, for there was one other faction that instantly made their move once Yip of Yore fell.

Miranda realized about an hour before Yip of Yore died that he was definitely going to die, at least she began preparations with that assumption. She couldn't prepare much herself, being busy locking down the planet to prevent outside communication, but she could relay some information to get Lillian started with things.

She also learned then that her Patrons had known more than they initially let on... at least, she thought so at first. They hadn't truly known the full plot of everything, far from it, and when Miranda heard their reasoning, she seriously questioned if her Patrons were as competent as they claimed to be.

Because their only argument for why the Viper was going to win with absolute certainty was that he'd "promised he would." She wished she could have asked anything, but she was told all this through a medium with a recorded message sent to it before the barrier even went up.

Alas, Miranda was a good witch and got things started immediately. The way she ended up learning that Yip was dead wasn't through her Patrons either – as they couldn't really communicate with her – but surprisingly enough from Neil, of all people.

The space mage had helped use his magic to subtly watch some recently caught spies associated with Yip of Yore who still thought Earth wasn't onto them. He'd watched them inside their home, both nervous but expectant... until suddenly, one of them began screaming, with the other one crying.

Similar scenes played out elsewhere, and Neil quickly sent a message to Miranda, as he was one of the people who had an Identify skill that allowed him to see if people had Blessings, and he confirmed that the spies had lost theirs.

Combined with all the other reports, Miranda was certain of what'd happened and instantly let down the barrier sealing in Earth and sent out a message instead, informing them that Yip of Yore was dead... and now it was time to take advantage of that fact.

Earth didn't really have an official standing army, unlike many other planets in the universe. This was mainly because they'd never worked on establishing one, instead focusing on powerful individuals to handle battles instead.

This isn't to say they didn't have the powers of an army, though. There were a lot of powerful people on Earth, many of them more than willing to take part in the upcoming conquest as they moved to attack the former allies of Yip of Yore alongside the current allies of Ell'Hakan.

Miranda didn't even need to offer any compensation, the loot on the planets themselves would be more than enough reward for these greedy parties of fighters. At least it would be far more rewarding than fighting random monsters.

Plus, getting into the good graces of Earth seemed smart if one wanted a continued good existence in the Milky Way Galaxy. At least, that's what many of those who were on Earth's side assumed, especially those who knew of the power the planet held.

The major factions also still wouldn't get involved, and Miranda didn't want them to either... which was why the target wasn't any of the planets they had claimed or were working on claiming. Attacking the Church directly could lead to many annoying outcomes, and she judged it far better to use soft power against them if push came to shove.

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Instead, they focused on the planets identified to, without a doubt, be in support of Ell'Hakan. With the Sword Saint leading the offensive with the biggest non-multiversal faction of Earth behind him – the Noboru Clan – he was the first to be teleported to an enemy planet with the goal of taking control of an alliance teleportation circle and forcing the people there to open up the planet.

They just needed one person, and it would be enough. They were aware it would be hard to convince some of the true fanatics, but that's where William came in. Karmic magic could fuck with people quite badly, and while it wasn't something Miranda was a fan of, she recognized William's skill at manipulating people and making them think he was trustworthy. Trustworthy enough to accept "reinforcements" from another planet.

However, should even that fail, they had one more secret weapon... one Miranda only recently learned about, and perhaps the greatest method of invasion available to them:

Sandy.

The squad of vampires from the Noboru Clan prepped their weapons as the voice of their method of transportation echoed in their minds, and the minds of the hundred other squads who were also present.

"Should be there in two after I get done charging up!" the Cosmic Genesis Worm said, the vampires looking surprised.

"And here I thought I had enough time for lunch," one of the vampires tried to crack a bad joke, only getting him a few glares, though they could only be in agreement that it was faster than expected.

One of the challenges with invading other planets, even with the system-assisted teleporters made for the system event, was that one needed permission. If one couldn't get permission, the only alternative was the teleporter created by the scientist of Haven, but that one came with a massive cost, and it was impossible to send too many people. The source of this content is [movel·fire·net](#)

That's why the initial plan had only been to send a few elites at most to the planets where they couldn't get someone to open up a teleporter, which would soon be all of them, as the second news of the invasions spread, most World Leaders would definitely retract all permissions to minimize the damage.

However, the Cosmic Worm popped up and changed the status quo in an instant. As everyone else had been progressing and doing their own things, so had Sandy. The worm had eaten *a lot* of things and helped the scientist with his research into the teleportation circles in the galaxy, and while it seemed as if Sandy was just passively taking part, the worm was also learning.

To Sandy, space was like a large desert filled with sand for them to dig through. Entering subspace was equivalent to diving inside the sand and traveling through it, but as space itself was like sand, wasn't Sandy always inside the sand?

Sandy had pondered this and realized something... Sandy never really dove into the sand when entering subspace. Sandy just dove deeper into the sand they were already in. As one got deeper, the sand would become more condensed and harder to travel through, but at the same time, Sandy would be able to travel faster the deeper they were.

With this realization, Sandy also began to consider something else... a method of moving that was only rarely used but was a necessity for hunting:

Jumping.

Most food wasn't inside the sand but on top of it, and naturally, any worm worth their salt would know when to do a proper jumping-chomp.

The thing is... if Sandy saw sand as the representation of space, what did it mean to jump outside of space? What did it mean to temporarily dislodge oneself from the concept itself only to reenter it once more?

To Sandy, it materialized as teleportation. Teleportation with limitations, yes... but teleportation at a far higher level than someone like Neil could perform, even with much preparation.

These limitations mainly materialized in three ways, the first of which being very logical to Sandy. Any good worm knew that when jumping, one had to know where one was jumping to. If not, the worm could end up a dead worm due to hitting something dangerous like a sharp, spiky rock or something else like that. In the same vein, Sandy needed to know where to jump by having either been there before or by being inside the worm's area of detection.

The second restriction was naturally distance. Sandy was good at jumping, but there was still a limit... a limit that turned out to be a far smaller problem than first assumed, as with little practice, Sandy learned to jump many solar systems at once, allowing the worm to effectively travel through the galaxy.

Could they teleport from one end to the other? No... but Sandy could jump between different planets that were supporting Ell'Hakan. All it took was the worm getting sent there by Arnold at least once before, and with months of preparation and a lot of investment, they had done just that.

The final cost for this kind of ability was the resource cost and cooldown, which once more turned out to be quite manageable. Sandy had to channel a good jump for a while based on distance, with the worm comparing it to building momentum before doing a big jump. However, at worst, it never took more than ten minutes for Sandy to charge any teleport, even at their max distance

All of this ultimately resulted in a Cosmic Space Worm capable of teleporting across the Milky Way Galaxy with relative ease, and in concert with Sandy's ever-growing internal stomach, the worm was now effectively an armored personnel carrier capable of bringing an entire army to any unsuspecting planet Sandy had ever been to before.

Something that was about to happen as the vampire squad soon felt the worm perform a jump. For a brief moment, everything seemed to stand still for a moment as space froze, but it was gone as fast as it had come.

“Disembark all passengers! I repeat, disembark all passengers!” the worm said only a few seconds later.

Before any of said passengers even had a chance to respond to the worm, they were all spat out as they appeared in mid-air, floating far up in the sky but within the confines of the planet’s atmosphere.

“You guys have fun!” Sandy said before quickly turning around and flying a bit away while preparing to do another jump.

The leader of the vampire squad quickly gathered himself as he had to appear representable. All the others around him turned his way, seeing as he was the de-facto leader of this entire strike team that consisted of around five hundred vampires from the Noboru Clan.

“Remember, the goal is to secure the capital... with the World Leader immobilized, the rest of their resistance will quickly fall. Oh yeah, and needless to say, avoid needless civilian deaths. No need to harm the reputation of our kin more than necessary,” the squad leader said, his gaze piercing the clouds as he saw what had been identified as the capital city below.

“Move out,” he finished, pulling out his bow as he and all the other vampires descended upon the capital, all of them solidly in the mid-tier C-grade at least.

It was a scene similar to many others playing out all across the galaxy, as all of Earth’s elites went on the offensive, making use of their more powerful yet less numerous members. The planets with the most fighters from Ell’Hakan’s faction would be targeted by the true elites, as Miranda held nothing back.

Yet there was one planet they hadn’t even considered attacking. One that no one on Earth dared to approach carelessly, not even the Sword Saint. It was an entire world that would struggle to their last breath in case of an attack. A planet full of absolute fanatics who were entirely unaffected by the death of Yip, as he was never their god... Ell’Hakan was.

For he was the Celestial Child. Born to the sun and twin moons. He was never simply the Chosen of some random god... no, he was the Chosen of the multiverse itself.

Attacking such a planet would be akin to fighting an entire world... to fight everyone from the weakest F-grade to their strongest C-grades... something no one would be willing to do, right?

... right?

Within the darkness of space, a figure sat with his legs crossed as he stared down at the red planet. He was able to see the surface despite still being outside of the atmosphere, and from what he saw and felt, it was clear.

He's not here...

The plan had been to strike him at the ritual site, but it seemed as if Ell'Hakan had smartly decided to go elsewhere for the suspected Usurper ritual.

Jake wasn't that disappointed, though. As he sat there and looked down at the planet, he made a decision based on what he'd heard from William about the state of the planet... based on his memories of the last time Ell'Hakan visited his planet.

While Ell'Hakan's invasion had wanted to limit the damage done as it was all part of a larger plot, Jake didn't have any such concerns as he took out his bow. His plan was still to kill Ell'Hakan first and foremost, but the problem is, he had no idea where the former Chosen was, and neither was he able to track him. Even William had been unable to locate Ell'Hakan. So, with that in mind...

If he's not here yet... I'll just have to make him come to me.

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Chapter 1020: Gifts From the Heavens

"Acceptable quality, but the production time was above the estimated average," the overseer said in a slightly scolding tone, making the woman bow in apology.

"I'm sorry... the new apprentices assigned to me have taken more time than initially expected, meaning I didn't have enough time to cultivate as I normally did," she said.

"I don't ask for any excuses; just make sure it's better next time. Even if the speed is lower, you should make up for it with quality. Your level is pretty high, so the herbs you can produce shouldn't only be of this quality," the overseer continued in his usual harsh tone.

As the sole C-grade in charge of this greenhouse, he was known as someone who ran a tight ship, and the results of the workers reflected on him, so he couldn't accept those who were mediocre. Especially not with how things had been recently.

"I understand," the woman bowed once more as she put her hand on her heart. "May the Celestial Child smile down upon us."

"May he do so eternally," the overseer responded with a satisfied nod.

He still couldn't believe that he would maybe soon have a chance to meet the Celestial Child in person... if his greenhouse performed among the top five, the minister had talked about a ceremony to award those who'd contributed the most during this time of strife, so if he could have the top-performing D-grade greenhouse...

Resolving himself, he began his inspections of the day as he went outside his office to get a proper look at things. He was in charge of a total of thirteen greenhouses, all producing herbs for D-grades that helped train their alchemists primarily, with all these greenhouses placed in their own small complex, not that far outside a large city nearby.

As he walked between two of these greenhouses, he suddenly spotted three workers who were just standing around with a cart they were supposed to transport from one greenhouse to another, making him furious immediately. Storming over, he didn't hesitate to yell:

"Who authorized you three to take a break, huh!?"

The workers were frightened, and one of them even jumped back before the calmest of them pointed toward the sky. "It's just... that."

Annoyed, the overseer followed the man's finger and looked to the sky, where he saw something odd. It looked as if several small dots of light had appeared, almost reminiscent of distant stars... but with it still being day and Sun-Father still blessing them with sunlight, they usually weren't that visible.

"Is it a meteor shower?" one of the other workers asked.

Another worker suddenly got all giddy as her eyes began to shine. "A celestial event... to be blessed with such a sight..."

The overseer slowly nodded, as seeing such a thing was indeed fortunate. The Celestial Child was the rightful ruler of the skies, and all that lay beyond it, with any celestial event happening only doing so according to his will... who knows, perhaps they were truly being blessed?

At least, he thought so for a moment before one of the other workers began to look worried.

"Is it just me... or are they getting closer?"

Looking more closely, the overseer squinted and saw that... yeah, it did look like they were getting closer?

“Gifts from the celestial heavens...” the overseer muttered, the others also realizing that as it came from the realm of the celestial, it had to be a gift from the Celestial Child.

He couldn't help but smile at the sight of the small pink-purple glowing objects falling down, accelerating as they got closer to the surface of the planet. Turning, he saw one of the workers point out where the first one would land, and he was nearly jealous he couldn't be there to receive the celestial blessing of the-

Purple-ish light filled his vision, and as the overseer still stood there smiling, a massive sphere of destructive energy appeared several hundred kilometers away, a shockwave striking him a few seconds later, making the D-grade workers stumble and fall.

“What is-“ one of the workers began as a second flash appeared in another direction... followed by a third, a fourth, and a fifth, as all around them – especially in the direction of the major city, these fragments from heaven fell.

“Did we do wrong?” another worker questioned, not understanding what was going on.

“Is this... the will of the Celestial child?” the man who had first seen the “meteors” asked out loud, not even trying to stand up.

The overseer had no answer as he lifted his head and saw a fragment... the punishment from the heavens descended straight toward them, and all he could do was place a hand on his heart. “If this is the will of the Celestial Child... then we can only be grateful to play a role in his grand vision.”

With that thought, he smiled, the other workers also calming down instantly... if they were facing doom according to the will of the Celestial Child, then it was an honor they couldn't possibly be worthy of. Even as the destructive arcane arrow struck only a dozen meters from them, exploding and sending out pure destructive energy that consumed all three, they only felt grateful to take part in the grand design of their god.

-- This chapter is updated by *novel*fire*net*

Jake watched as the orbital bombardment descended upon the planet, each arrow exploding with the impact of a small nuclear warhead, destroying several cities in the process alongside many other complexes. RÅNÖBÈŠ

He struck indiscriminately, not caring about who was caught in the explosions, acting as if he was fighting a civilization of mushroom people. Notifications flooded his system as millions instantly died, not a single one of them rewarding even a single experience point, but Jake wasn't there for the experience in the first place... at least not yet.

As the explosions below subsided, the few survivors began to show themselves. This mainly took the form of mid-tier C-grades who specialized in defense, and with Jake focusing on making his arrows large in scope and not intensity, they'd managed to survive, some of them even looking relatively unharmed.

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There was no sense in trying to finish them off, though, as Jake unleashed another Rain of Arcane Arrows upon another spot on the planet, taking full advantage of the fact he was still a good distance outside the atmosphere.

In truth, Jake had doubted he could even penetrate the atmosphere, but it turned out that Unblemished Arrows worked wonders, resulting in the arrows traveling through unobstructed. Of course, if he had been dealing with an actual planetary defensive barrier, things would have been different... but there wasn't one, something that genuinely surprised Jake. Even Miranda had tapped into Jake's World Leader abilities to make sure there was a basic barrier that should help with attacks coming from outside, but Ell'Hakan didn't even have that, relying purely on the passive defenses supplied by the atmosphere. This was good enough to stop any regular wayward meteor... but not Jake's arrows.

Was it arrogance from Ell'Hakan to not secure his home more safely? Some other reason? Either way, Jake was betting on him still caring about his homeworld and that the news of it being in peril would make him return.

Nocking another arrow, Jake took aim once more. He sent death raining down again, and not that long after, explosions of light appeared on the planet below. Jake moved again after shooting, not wanting to stay in the same place for too long. He even shot a few arrows that curved weirdly while flying, doing all he could to remain undetected.

He repeatedly activated his stealth skill, as even if he wanted to bait out Ell'Hakan, he also still wanted the advantage of seeing the former Chosen before he saw Jake. If he kept moving and shot arrows would weird angles, pin-pointing his location would be near-impossible, so Jake kept doing it as he functioned like an orbiting satellite that constantly shot down nukes on the planet below.

It took a bit longer than expected, but not that long in retrospect, for countermeasures to begin appearing. From so far up, Jake saw a dozen cities enact powerful barriers, and Jake also finally turned his gaze toward his main target: the capital.

Locating it had been easy, as it was the only place on the planet with entities Jake could see any value in fighting. Even from space, he could feel the collection of auras, and the capital was also the only city to have a powerful barrier constantly active.

Finally... it was really fucking big. Like, not Great Planet city big, but extremely big by any reasonable standards pre-system. If it had been on Earth, it would likely have been the largest one, at least by area.

Population-wise, probably not as much. The city was very spread out from what Jake saw, and based on what he'd heard, the entire city had pretty much survived the initiation as-is, unlike the cities on Earth.

Granted, a big reason why all the cities on Earth had been utterly wrecked was due to all the beasts and other monsters who had free roam with all the enlightened in the Tutorial... but the same had happened on Ell'Hakan's planet. Yet no beasts had ruined the city. Instead, they'd protected it. Something the natives viewed as just another display of power by the almighty Celestial Child, while to Jake, it was just further proof of how utterly fucked up his Bloodline was. His influence had spread so far that it even included the animals within and around the city before the system, making even them have absolute loyalty toward him.

Even without the system, Ell'Hakan had evidently been a fucked-up existence, with the system only providing him a proper framework to take advantage of this fact. With the system, the entire planet had turned into something quite frankly horrific, and if Ell'Hakan was allowed to continue growing in power... yeah...

Jake had admittedly doubted William a bit when he first talked about just how fucked the planet was. Jake didn't doubt it would be fucked, sure, but just how fucked it was remained beyond him.

Even outside the atmosphere, Jake could feel something subtly poking away at his emotions. It made thinking about Ell'Hakan incredibly weird, as whenever he had any thoughts regarding the former Chosen, he instantly felt an odd rush of... something. He wasn't sure what, but it was definitely of a positive nature. Way, way too positive.

Not that long before he headed off to Valhal – back when he was still planning to ambush Ell'Hakan out of nowhere - he had a follow-up talk with William about Ell'Hakan. A talk to expand on the metal mage's former words about how Ell'Hakan had managed to make his followers have an emotion that went beyond anything else.

It was one that wasn't even on the normal emotional spectrum but in the realm of psychosis. An absolutely unbreakable delusion that couldn't be broken by anything due to how ingrained it had become in their minds. What they felt toward Ell'Hakan was a feeling that surpassed regular worship of gods. Surpassed love, adoration, and anything else... for lack of a better word, the emotion was Transcendent in nature.

Walking away from the conversation, Jake had the understanding that if one wanted to break the delusion, there were only two choices. The first one was with one's own Bloodline or Transcendent skill capable of manipulating emotions at a similar or superior level. Needless to say, no one Jake knew had such a thing handy.

The second one was for the person under the delusion to break out of it themselves. This one was a bit of a paradox, though. Because in order to even be allowed to begin doubting Ell'Hakan, the person needed to not be as delusional as they were in the first place. They would need to have realization from within, with external factors having little effect.

Jake could show them anything fucked up about Ell'Hakan he wanted. He could have the former Chosen show up in person, calling all his followers delusional asshats while explaining how they had all just been manipulated by his Bloodline, and it would be a miracle if just two people managed to break out of their delusion from that.

All of this is to say... death would be the only way for them to lose faith. Seeing as how Ell'Hakan got empowered by having them all believe in him to such a fanatical level, killing them was almost like killing an extension of Ell'Hakan himself.

At least thinking that way made Jake feel less awkward about bombarding large population centers from orbit. He truthfully didn't like doing something like this. He didn't like getting flooded with notifications of killing low-level people or monsters. It felt wrong on a fundamental level to kill people that weak, especially when none of them had anything mushroom-related in their names, but sometimes, one had to do something even if it made them a little uncomfortable.

If it managed to draw out Ell'Hakan, it would all be worth it.

With this thought, Jake continued attacking even as the natives below scrambled to form a response. However, they couldn't defend everywhere, allowing Jake to continue landing solid attacks spread throughout the equivalent of an entire continent, and as with Earth, most of the natives had been condensed to a relatively small area, meaning Jake could hit borderline any city of note on the entire planet.

Also, due to the massive distance, Jake's Perception was really coming into effect helping the exploding arrows to deal quite a lot of damage despite how much he focused on the scope of the explosions.

As time passed, Jake began to feel that something was wrong... it took way too long. Where the hell was Ell'Hakan at? How long would Jake be allowed to continue raining down death and destruction before Ell'Hakan – or anyone for that matter – would step in and try to stop him? No, Jake didn't count the C-grades who had flown up as legitimate attempts to stop him, as they frankly weren't even worth wasting mana on.

On that note... mana or stamina could end up becoming a legitimate concern if something didn't happen soon, and as more time passed with Jake just flying around and shooting, he began to reconsider if this was really the best way to approach things.

He kept going, but in his mind, a different thought began to form. Jake had considered it before... practiced the methods required... and he now had the tools... so...

Alright... we give him another thirty minutes.

And if he wasn't back by then, Jake was going to attack something that would make his assault on the planet's surface meaningless: the Planetary Pylon. Oh, but not to take it over... no, to do something he was sure Villy would be far more approving of.

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