

The Primordial Record

Chapter 1071: It Ends Here For Me

The Divine Ascendant had intense fear and frustration building inside him, and a healthy portion of confusion, the battle had been ridiculously fast and went in a direction that he could not have predicted, and the reason for that was simple when he thought about it more than a second, the amount of Ascendant Aura inside of his enemy was to be considered in the simplest term... impossible, not to add the fact that they were pure with no touch of Calamity inside of it, and in addition to that, he was still mortal, not even an Ascendant.

To achieve anything close to this, then he would need to devour countless trillions of Explorers, and even if there was a way this mysterious Explorer could do such a thing, how could any mortal flesh contain such a ridiculous amount of Aura? Not even he with his flesh now made of purified Aura could hold a fraction of what this creature had unleashed.

Then the second explanation would be his fighting techniques, despite all the power he had unleashed, he had controlled every move perfectly, blocking, countering, and attacking in such a smooth and violent manner that again was... impossible.

It was normal to wield a short sword with finesse, but applying the same concept to a great sword the height of a mountain was ridiculous, and yet that was what he had witnessed, that unreasonable power and control had torn him to pieces in less time than he would have ever dreamt possible.

"I am the last living part of a broken world, and I will match your strengths, and exceed them."

The words from his enemy rang in his mind and he now saw them through fresh eyes. Perhaps he should not have dismissed those words rather quickly when he had first heard them, and he should have realized that he was not fighting against an Explorer, but against the world itself, who else could make the entire heavens shake with a single palm?

He had always been blessed with the talent to read the mysteries behind reality, and for most of the time, he could not understand the words or visions that came to him, it was the reason he sequestered himself in the mortal world below, wishing to slowly peel apart his unknown talent.

The Divine Ascendant had always hated this talent, but he felt that one day it might show its effects properly, perhaps warn him about incoming dangers, but he had received nothing but cryptic messages about giants in gold.

At the end of his life, with the little hint Rowan had given him, Arthurius Rais began to find a connection between the present and the past, and he remembered a forbidden text about a piece of heaven falling from the sky nearly a million years ago that led to the death of eight Ascendant, an infant Calamity God and the descent of the World Will, he could not follow this stream of thought for the pain reached its crescendo, and everything went white, after all, he was being presently torn apart, and his Core Aura being violated.

"This is how it ends for me..."

Loud cries of anger and admonishment came from some of the descending lights as the Ascendants screamed out for Rowan to cease his actions, they could as well be ants for all the regard Rowan gave them.

The Divine Ascendant finally screamed, the blue light of Rowan's Aura shooting out from his mouth and eyes, and as the light from his insides built up to a feverish pitch, his body no longer able to hold cohesion, the Ascendant exploded.

A fourth Ascendant sun appeared in the sky for seven seconds before winking out.

"VRRBBOOOMMM!!!!!!!"

The greatest explosion of the battle erupted from the body of the Divine Ascendant, and all of reality seemed to turn white, silver, then red, as flames hotter than a star, and exploding out with the force of a supernova blasted out with a loud shriek.

Rowan set his feet steadily on the ground and held his hands wide as he was baptized under the heat and pressure of the explosion. He withstood the damages with a grin as his body struggled to contain the calamitous damages being inflicted upon it.

"Aahhh..." he groaned, "I remember this feeling once more, my blood is getting warmer."

He was never afraid of running out of Ascendant Aura and even when he was left with only bones, he could heal back nearly instantaneously, it helped that although Rowan appeared just eight feet tall at the moment, he was many many times larger than this, and every damage he was taking was spread out in a very large area.

When the explosion subsided leaving a field of flames that stretched for a thousand miles, only the figure of Rowan with eyes closed was left standing in the center, and on his left hand was a shining silver Ascendant Crystal.

Inside the crystal was a small form of the Divine Ascendant that appeared to be asleep. Rowan Ascendant Aura did not just blast the Ascendant apart, he had crushed his Core Aura into a crystal, almost as if he was manipulating soul energy. The similarities between the body of an Ascendant and souls made this an easy feat.

Rowan could feel something that felt like a heartbeat from the crystal and faint cries of pain that seemed to be coming from a distance.

"Traitor! You shall die for this." an angered roar came from above, an Ascendant who had pushed ahead from the rest and wearing similar gleaming armor and cape of the Divine Ascendant he had just slaughtered was already a few tens of miles away from Rowan, and he brought out a long silver greatsword.

Screaming his fury and the blade shining like a descending star, he swung it at Rowan unleashing a blade beam that drew the power of time like a storm, in a stunning move that was ten times greater than anything the Divine Ascendant was capable of unleashing. The blade beam vanished in midair, appearing an inch before Rowan's head, who calmly sidestepped the blow that then continued to travel and impacted by his side, tearing the field of flames in two before blasting it apart, creating a shockwave that disappeared far into the distance.

Rowan's red hair and golden robes were blown to the side with so much force that it appeared as if they were held in the air by invisible hands, but other than this he was completely unharmed, his feet did not move a single inch. He casually waved his hand and broke the shockwaves apart.

The descending Ascendant screamed in anger when he noticed that in the midst of all this, Rowan had not once acknowledged his presence but was focused on the Ascendant Crystal he

was holding.

Rowan breathed out, a slight tension in his heart, and he crushed the crystal. What would

happen next would determine which path he was going to follow.

"How much of the World Will can I penetrate before it finds me?"

The crystal turned into fine silvery dust that swayed slightly in the air before heading towards Rowan's head and he breathed them in and closed his eyes.

Around him, hundreds of Ascendants began to land.

Chapter 1072: Dan

The silvery dust traveled up Rowan's nostrils and entered his brain and a subtle wave of golden light pulsed down his robes as the silver dust was separated into two components, Ascendant Aura and Soul Essence.

The Core Aura of the Ascendant released what would be considered an overwhelming amount of purified Aura for anyone else below the Ascendant level, but it was like pouring a bucket of water inside a river in the case of Rowan whose body was filled with enough Aura to rival a thousand Ascendants.

With soul energy, he no longer needed to kill for Aura, the primary reason he killed an Ascendant was no longer for their Aura, but their memories.

With most of Rowan's consciousness in a dormant state, he could no longer process the Soul mountains of immortals, and so he devised another plan. The bodies of Ascendants were unique, existing more as souls than flesh, and so instead of assimilating the entirety of an Ascendant soul which would inevitably create a Soul mountain and therefore locked inside his dormant dimension, Rowan decided to disperse a majority of the Ascendant soul, leaving their core behind.

If it was any other creature that Rowan had come across in the reality outside Doom Star, then he would not be able to do such a thing, but because every blow against an Ascendant that led to the injury was like breaking off a part of their souls, he thought he might be able to break them down enough to a digestible size for his now limited consciousness.

It was a risky plan, with a high chance of failure if he did not fully grasp the way an Ascendant's soul and body worked, but he ended up succeeding to an extent.

There were clear disadvantages to this process because every part of the soul that was lost represented missing memories but Rowan had no choice but to trim out the fat and bones and leave only a small choice meal that he should be able to digest.

Although Rowan made sure he seized the portion of the soul that was integral to the core of the Ascendant, which should contain all his most important and relevant memories, there was still a chance that he might lose something important, but that was not a problem when he could kill more Ascendants and cover up the gaps in his knowledge base.

Yet, all his speculations would be useless if he was not able to assimilate this soul he had just harvested. He felt a click in his mind, and everything fell into place as a familiar sensation overwhelmed his senses.

Like falling into a dream that seemed to last for an instant and simultaneously a thousand years, the memories of Arthurius Rais came to him like a flood.

Born into the prestigious Arthurius family in the upper continents, Rais's destiny was always to become an Ascendant, and he did not disappoint his clan, rapidly rising through the ranks of Explorer, he soon became an Ascendant, creating a faction in the lower continents called the Silver Alliance, alongside three other Ascendants, he was a man of many talents, including an in-depth understanding about Fate and....

Rowan rapidly parsed through the information emerging from the soul, he did not want to know about the life experiences of the Ascendant, he was only interested in his knowledge about Ascendant society, his other Consciousness Nodes would slowly take apart Rais's life, but for now he needed other kind of knowledge.

Rowan soon nodded in delight when the target of his inquiry began to emerge from the fog of memories, but there was not enough for him to understand the full picture of the Ascendant world, because he had gone for the core part of Rais's soul, most of the information he had collected was personal and linked to his life, but this was the only way Rowan was assured that he could harvest something tangible from a dead Explorer.

He opened his eyes to an army of angry faces, and Rowan smiled. There were many more targets to pick from.

There were a hundred and thirty-five extremely angry Ascendants surrounding him, and now Rowan could instantly understand their power levels as the awareness of the Ascendant stage for an Explorer was opened before him and another piece of the great plan he had been building together clicked into place.

Rowan learned that merging a single continent to their Natal Treasure as a Deific Explorer was the least requirement to become an Ascendant, because most techniques practiced by Explorers granted them the capability of only merging one to three continents to their Natal Treasures, and only extremely rare techniques like the Silver Golem technique of the Authurius family could merge with all six Natal Treasure.

This made the Authurius family one of the Pillars of the Ascendancy world and granted them a position as one of the Nine.

What guided the growth of Ascendants was a concept called Dan, and it had levels to it, but Rais only knew of Ascendants of the Third Dan, because he had not met anyone higher.

Ascendants who could only merge with one to three continents had limited growth opportunities, and would never grow past the First Dan.

Of the hundred and thirty-five Ascendants before him, a hundred and ten of them were basic Ascendant Explorers and had not attained the First Dan. It was not easy to attain the first Dan, and time and opportunities were needed.

The power of Ascendancy was straightforward, after becoming an Ascendant they became true immortals and unless they were killed, an Ascendant would live forever.

Rowan pegged the power base levels of a basic Ascendant to be equal to either a High God, God King, or a God Emperor; these power levels were all dependent on the

number of continents that were merged with the Natal Treasure when they became Ascendants.

The leap in power from Deific to Ascendant was extreme and was one of the largest dividing gaps between mortal and immortal that Rowan had ever seen. The Deific Rank was equal in power to an Earth god or a Minor god depending on the Explorer's techniques and talent, and becoming an Ascendant for a talented Explorer could push their power levels instantly to the realm of God Emperors.

After this level, came Dan.

The first Dan signifies the first stage of Will, which was the fourth dimension-Time.

The Second Dan was the fifth dimension, Space-Time, and the Third Dan was the sixth dimension, Memory-Mind. There was not much difference between the Wills of Doom Star and what was achievable in the outside reality.

Of the twenty-five Ascendants left, twenty-three were Ascendants of the first Dan, and among them was the Ascendant who had attacked him from afar.

This number of First Dan Ascendants in such a small sample size would be a ridiculous number outside the universe, Rowan had explored countless universes in the great darkness but he could barely find a dozen immortals in the fourth dimension, but here he could find twenty-three Ascendants who could control the power of time, and this must be a small percent of the total Ascendants as evidenced by the thousands of descending light now erupting from the continents above.

The two preeminent Ascendants leading these small groups were at the Second Dan.

Chapter 1073: Confinement

This realization was shocking, that before him was an army that could raze a small corner of reality.

'Truly, the soul is a wonderful vehicle for power. I wonder if this is the reason a Primordial of the soul had never arisen.'

Rowan looked around him and glanced at the sky at the thousands of descending lights, especially three of them that were releasing lights that were greater than the Second Dan Ascendants in front of him, his eyes twitched, and he thought that perhaps he might have underestimated this world and its powers.

A sixth level Will Holder should be equal to Elura, and three were descending towards him at the moment. There was no way Rowan would be able to fight against them,

perhaps if he was with his full strength that should work, but his limits should be the Second Dan, and he did not think he could kill a Second Dan Ascendant, only hold his own, and this would not change even if he became an Ascendant, the higher levels of Will held powers that were unfathomable.

Rowan sighed, it turned out he would have to follow a rather radical path to navigate what was coming ahead, and the risk would be terrible, he did not hesitate for an instant, but he was a bit too slow.

The Second Dan Ascendant, a figure who resembled purple smoke covered by a hooded robe, pointed at Rowan, and his body was frozen in place with a resounding snap that made reality for thousands of miles to convulse.

This was not just a minor application of time, but an enhanced version of space-time manipulation where a separate space was created over Rowan's body that he had no control over. In this realm, space and time were meaningless, a concept that was forcefully erased, placing Rowan in a dark zone that was impossible to break out from, at least, that was what the Ascendants previously thought.

The only thing Rowan's dormant dimension gave him was weight and strength, and if anyone wanted to hold him, they were not holding a man, but an entire dimension, that took the concept to another level entirely.

A loud crack emerged from the space surrounding Rowan's body, and the Ascendant holding him in place was shoved back by an invisible hand, he cursed aloud with a hint of panic in his voice as he hastily redoubled the power he was pouring over Rowan to hold him bound,

"Help me hold him, it feels like I am holding back an entire world rather than a single person!"

The other Second Dan Ascendant stretched out his hands and added his domain over the one holding Rowan bound, and the space further solidified around him, and he groaned also when it felt as if he was holding back a star from exploding using only his arms,

"Do not release him! Hold for a few more moments longer, the Third Dans would soon be here, no matter what sort of abomination he is, there would be no escape for him."

Another cracking sound escaped from the space around Rowan and an astonished gasp ran across the Ascendants here as more cracking sounds occurred in greater volume and intensity, making the space around him spiderweb like a broken mirror. Even a null zone could not hold back this monster.

Rowan's body suddenly vanished from the shattered space and the Second Dan Ascendant retreated in shock as Rowan appeared before him, his right hand like a

spear reaching for his head, and his left hand was already an inch into his chest, he would have not even known he was about to suffer damage if Rowan had not been frozen in place by a higher power.

The Third Dan Ascendants had arrived just in time, or Rowan would have begun another round of slaughter. The new space around him was not one he could easily break out from, and for all intent, he was basically helpless.

The threshold where an immortal ending battle had just been waged shuddered repeatedly as thousands of Ascendants slammed into it, and all these mighty and mysterious figures surrounded the singular form of Rowan, who was frozen in place.

The Ascendants all appeared like spirit creatures with their shifting body of smoke and Aura, and the fact that most Ascendants favored wearing hooded robes gave their surroundings a frightening essence as if these were a gathering of grim reapers.

At this moment everyone was silent, this was because of three presences in their midst. Three Ascendants at the Third Dan, a level most Ascendants would never reach in their lives even if they were given forever to work at it.

Yet it was because of this silence that it was possible to hear a slight keening sound, emerging from around Rowan's body, and the gaze of the entire Ascendants turned to him in astonishment and a hint of fear.

It could be slightly reasoned off if this monster was able to fight against the shackles of the Second Dan Ascendants, but to still have the power to struggle against the Third Dan was crazy. The difference between a Second Dan and the Third Dan was a gulf that was wider than the spaces between the heavens and the earth, for a seeming mortal creature to venture onto this realm was frightening.

What happened shocked them even further, Rowan who should have been frozen in place began to move.

It was slow as if he was a mortal moving through concrete, but it could not be denied that he was moving under the influence of a Third Dan. His head was slowly turning and he was stretching out his right hand as if he was about to give a sign, but his movements were so sluggish it would take nearly a minute for him to make a full range of motion.

Among the Ascendants was one who stood out among the rest even among the Third Dans, where the rest were outlined in darker shades, this Ascendant was pure white and gleaming like the sun, it was not difficult to feel the resonance between this Ascendant and one of the three suns overhead, this was a direct bloodline of the three most powerful Ascendants.

His voice was strong and commanding like an Emperor,

"Although we can all see it, it still boggles the mind. This individual is a pure Explorer with no taint of Calamity within, and the stores of Aura he contains are... unfathomable. When did such a monster arise? What abomination has the lower realms unleashed? Why can I not find the soul of Rais in the memory? Well, If I cannot find it, then let the memory of the Threshold speak for you."

With a wave of his hand, the surrounding space rippled, and the events of the past began to replay itself in front of all the Ascendants.

They all watched in reverse as the battle happened, but with their enhanced consciousness there was no confusion about what was transpiring.

They saw the explosion that killed the Divine Ascendant roll back into his body and the short and bitter battle between the Divine Ascendant and Rowan.

Inside the space imprisoning Rowan, his eyes went cold as a red light bloomed on his palm. His motion was not needed, he just needed to hide the arrival of Calamity for as long as

possible.

Chapter 1074: Unexpected Changes

In this area where time and space were measurable and malleable, premonition was a visible phenomenon, and reality darkened as the sky burned red, a trillion lost souls screamed to the heavens as they wept tears of blood that came down like a flood, drowning the world in red.

The darkness groaned and a voice that echoed from the depths of time spoke,

"My Queen Cometh..."

All these phenomena instantly vanished a moment later as if it was nothing but a figment of a dream, but everyone here heard, saw, and felt the crushing dread that had held the world bound.

The Ascendant in white opened his mouth to scream, but the world seemed to have been lost in time as everything froze, and a wave of red erupted from Rowan's body, as well as thirty mighty limbs that reached up for miles as if they were about to tear the heavens apart.

Rowan had been fighting by himself, but he was not alone, merged into his body was the Shiik, and it was his hidden ace, because, unlike an Ascendant that needed to

merge a continent with their Natal Treasure, a Calamity only needed Aura and experience to level up from the Deific Rank.

That experience came in the form of performing feats of terrible acclaim, like say, killing an Ascendant, and Rowan had not just killed any normal Ascendant, the Divine Ascendant who was at the First Dan, and with the Shiik merged into the hand that ripped the Ascendant into pieces, it gained all the tangible benefit of killing such a power being.

At this moment the Shiik had fulfilled all the necessary rites to become a Newborn Calamity God, and Rowan knew that even though the Shiik would become extremely powerful, he was not utilizing it for their strength in battle, against the opposition here, a thousand similar Shiik would be useless, the higher dimension was one where number could not cross, no he was using it as a channel to summon Calamity, the true Calamity.

He could hide the ascent of the Shiik to a Calamity God from the Ascendants around him because he was converting soul energy directly into Calamity Aura with no outside interference, and his potent Ascendant Aura infusing his body was enough of a shield to block any minute Calamity wave that might escape during the Ascension, in the end, reality had betrayed him but it was still too late, Rowan had already begun his preparation even before he fought the Divine Ascendant in the continents below.

When the red light surged out from his hands it was already too late. Rowan could not control higher dimensional forces, but with the right steps, he could manipulate them.

It was unknown who first detected something had changed because what happened next took place in a realm beyond the understanding of everyone present there. Rowan had pulled the trigger, but even he was not fully conversant of the effect that would follow.

A poet would say that the Heavens Changed and Hell took its place.

Rowan had seen the Calamity Suns take the place of the Ascendant Suns when he was at the lower Continents, and that time the effect had been jarring in its suddenness and unexpectedness, one moment there was light, and suddenly there was darkness. He should have paid more attention to this.

Being this close to the changing of reality as Ascendancy fled before Calamity, the Aura in Rowan's body was so suppressed completely that he could barely stand on his own two feet, only his golden robe kept him standing.

The space created by the White Ascendant holding him bound was broken with a loud shriek as the Threshold which had not shifted a single inch despite the previous battle groaned and began to shatter under a strain beyond the comprehension of immortals.

The Ascendants were thrown into disarray, and except for Rowan and the Ascendants who were at the First Dan and above, the rest collapsed to the ground as gravity and other fundamental rules of reality were thrown into chaos.

Overhead, something fantastic was happening, whereas from the lower continents, the change from Ascendancy to Calamity was fast, in the upper continents it was a mind-breaking battle.

It was nearly impossible to describe what happened next, as darkness began bleeding into the light, the Ascendant Suns overhead shuddered intensely before they started to shatter into pieces, flinging out large geysers of flames and light that were rapidly swallowed by red flames and darkness. Millions of Ascendant Continents above shattered to pieces, in an orgy of violence that could be least described with the word, Calamity.

The shattering of the continents was just the first step for they transformed into black flesh and eldritch blood, and the three ascendant suns exploded as seven Calamity Suns were birthed from their ruin. It was like watching a child tear its way out of a mother's womb from her back. It was a sickening display of perversity.

"What have you done!" The White Ascendant screamed, no longer bound by time, and Rowan simply shrugged, at first he was surprised that the cry from the Ascendant carried a large amount of pain, but his eyes widened when all the Ascendants here began to transform.

Massive tentacles burst out from their bodies, snapping against space and drawing harsh shrieks of pain from reality. Tens of thousands of hungry eyes erupted from the darkness as madness took their place.

Rowan almost laughed when he realized that the abrupt transition in the sky was easily explained when it meant there was no difference between Calamity and Ascendancy, at least to the powers controlling everything from the shadows. At the right juncture, they could switch places.

This entire war was a farce, and as always, it was the mortals that suffered for it.

An intense wave of danger assaulted Rowan, and he took a step back as his body rippled, replaced by the Shiik.

Rowan's vision was reduced to a dot as the emerging Newborn Calamity God took over, but the danger he felt did not reduce, instead, it heightened and with a sigh, he placed himself into a coma and he became the Shiik, and the Shiik became him. His mind slowed, and everything came to him as if he was dreaming, yet his awareness never faded.

It was a backdoor he had created when merging with the Shiik.

At the time when the mind of the creature was yet formless, Rowan did not tamper with it, so as not to draw attention from the World's Will, instead, he replaced all the neural framework of the Shiik with his Parasitic cells, creating a situation where the emerging mind of the Shiik belonged to the Calamity but the framework that held the mind in place belonged to Rowan. The same process he used to create the body of this Ascendant Explorer, he could also create a body inside the Shiik using the bloodline of Calamity.

The feeling of danger passed, Rowan had become as much a Calamity as the Shiik itself, existing as the container that held its mind, and at this moment that mind was in turmoil as great changes swept over it.

Its mind which contained nothing but instincts and a childlike but cruel notion of morality began to bloom into an infernal tapestry of madness. Thoughts formed at lightning speeds and to accommodate them, Rowan had to grow. The Shiik exploded in size and somehow its body remained the same.

Chapter 1075: True Freedom Lies In Truth

A voice whispered across the expanse, "Who has known glory like this.... Let them show themselves, or forever remain silent."

"My Queen..."

Due to its evolution being more ordered than an average Calamity, its merger with a Temple Maiden, and because the Shiik was the first of its kind, crafted by the hands of Rowan, a Creator without peer, its evolution was different from any Calamity God in history. It was unique, the only one that was, is and to be.

Instead of tentacles and a thousand eyes filled with madness, the body of the Shiik slimmed down, flesh replacing chitin, and finger replacing claws, a series of sickening squelching noises as flesh reorganized itself and loud cracking rackets as bones were remade filled the air, and when it was over, a female form standing more than a hundred miles tall was revealed.

The Shiik was majestic, a queen whose presence would rival a universe, and bring all to their knees. Jet black skin that glinted like marbles with vivid red tattoos covering her entire body like a bodysuit. The nails on her hand were sharpened to needlepoint and glowing red like a dying star. Her long red hair flowed like a python, coiling across her feet and lifting her into the air.

The darkness of the Calamity suns bathed her, placing a crown of seven bleeding eyes on her forehead, and when she opened her eyes, they were filled with life and curiosity with no hint of madness, and standing before her was a powerful figure with multiple green fox tails with hands outstretched, the Undying.

"Art thou my queen promised?"

The Shiik ignored the figure and his questions and lowered herself to the ground, gracefully walking past him, her majesty undeniable.

She looked at the world before her. Under the light of the Calamity suns, the world before her had transformed into one of madness, massive eldritch beings whose size defied meaning and whose shape was incomprehensible appeared in their multitude. Their powers were so great they burned the darkness with a foul glow, emitting colors impossible to be found in a lower dimension. Madness reigned, yet they were all leashed.

Above them all were seven Calamities who held the leash.

The air seethes with power as foul cries that echo across eternity reverberate through the warped realm. The Shiik looked down at her feet, and stretching for eternity was a field of skulls from all creatures that had ever existed in this realm and they were infinite in number, stretching back to a time when nothing was supposed to exist.

The skulls cried out, their voices so loud it drowned the sounds emerging from the countless powerful Calamities that rove the corrupted void.

All of them weeping blood, and the blood came crashing to the earth, a flood, a cataclysm, a calamity.

It was this blood that fueled the endless tides of calamity that would arise in the lower continent any time any Explorer released a whiff of Ascendant energy. This was the root of the current state of power in the Realm of Doom Star, the dead whose souls could never rest. Rowan was horrified. These poor souls had been tortured for infinities without number.

The Shiik spread her hands wide and the endless flood of blood rose like threads and linked to her tattoos, and she appeared to become the center of a grand web, her dress woven from the stuff of nightmares, and the tears of pain from an infinite amount of souls.

"My Queen... Thou Art Beautiful... My Yearning Grows, and My Darkness I Shall Give, Freely In Communion. Give Me Your Hand And Let The Heavens Shake."

The Shiik looked at the immensity of the grandeur that was being offered to her, and she turned away and began to descend toward the lower realms.

"I once heard in a dream that I had at my birth," the Shiik spoke, her voice more lovely than the sound of a tambourine, "that there would come a day when my hands shall pull down the suns from the sky, yet I stand at the sky, and I see none. This is not how it should be... My throne shall be claimed by my hands!"

The threads of Calamity slowly peeled away from her skin as she broke past the threshold and proceeded to the lower realms, yet her glory shone like a red sun in the sky, and every eye who could, looked at the dark heavens and saw a new scarlet sun arising.

"My Queen, your throne awaits you, anytime you seek to rise and claim it."

The fading figure of the Undying looked down at her as she disappeared into the distance before he turned around and faded into nothingness.

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The moment the Shiik went past the threshold, the change in reality began to reverse itself. The Calamity Suns vanished and the Ascendant Suns took their place. Below the threshold no one could observe the changes that happened anytime Ascendancy and Calamity traded places, they only knew that the seven Calamity Suns vanished and were replaced by the sun of the Ascendant.

As she fell her body was covered by a dark cloud covering her from sight, from the cloud emerged Rowan in the shape of a golden arrow who shot in another direction, leaving the Shiik to walk the path he had set out for her. The revelation he had uncovered made such a move to become necessary.

In the threshold above, the Ascendants returned to their previous form, and all knowledge of what happened was gone from their mind, they only knew that one of their number, a glorious Ascendant who took the moniker of Divine, had perished in the battle against Calamity, and they mourned him.

In the descent into the lower continents, Rowan reviewed everything he had seen, and he shook his head in shock.

At first, he had thought the mortals were the fodder and Ascendants and Calamities were the chess pieces, but it would seem that he had overrated the value of an Ascendant/Calamities, they were not even aware that they were chess pieces, helpless pawns in the game of a mad

realm.

"Power without knowledge is useless, this is why I will always chase the Truth, for only in truth is there freedom."

Chapter 1076: Temple Matron

Seven Years Later.

In one of the most protected places in the realm, only found in the Higher Continents, Temple Maiden Nyla Sheritz was performing the ceremony to become a Temple Matron, because she had unexpectedly become an Ascendant, shocking the entire order because of her youth, she was less than five thousand years old.

The Temple Maiden with the record for the earliest Ascendancy did it at the age of 3,760, and she was now the foremost Temple Mother.

The hall Nyla was waiting inside was dark, only brightened by several statues of powerful Ascendants whose heads were aflame.

The light from the flames hardly pushed back the gloom, but for those inside this hall the flames were not there for lighting, but for their significance. Their lives were meant to burn for their service, and no matter how small the flames, it still lit up a small part of the darkness.

For such an important and elevated ritual, the atmosphere was surprisingly solemn, as there were only three Temple Matrons and a single Temple Mother here with Nyla who oversaw the rite of Ascendance.

The five women were all on their knees, their bodies covered with voluminous red robes that hid their appearances. Their hands were clasped to their breasts and for the last few days, there was nothing but silence as they meditated together.

The oath Nyla was about to swear required deep contemplation and she was expected to review her creed in-depth. The presence of the Temple Matrons and the Temple Mother was to give her a familiar presence to assure her and give her strength in the eternal journey ahead. When they had determined that the right time had come to proceed with the ceremony, the strong voice of the Temple Mother resounded in the hall, holding the attention of everyone bound,

"Nyla Sheritz, today you kneel as a Temple Maiden who has served the Great Cause for four thousand years, and you shall rise a Temple Matron who will serve for eternity. Do you accept this burden?"

"I accept this burden with grace, Temple Mother."

"Nyla Sheritz, today you kneel as a Temple Maiden who has died three thousand six hundred and fifty-three times in the service of all, and you shall rise a Temple Mateon who would carry the deaths of all Temple Maidens under you. Do you accept this burden?"

"I accept this burden with an open heart, Temple Mother."

"Nyla Sheritz, you shall stand a Temple Matron, and your eternal service has just begun."

"I accept this burden with honor, Temple Mother."

The five women stood, and their bodies were revealed no longer made of flesh, but Aura. They rose into the air and the space inside the hall trembled and for the next few hours, they remained silent in communion.

After a while it was Nyla who made the first move to leave, she bowed towards the rest and left the hall. Passing through a massive door she arrived before a great teleportation prism that was seven thousand feet tall and was capable of reaching nearly all continents in the lower realm.

At the bottom of the Teleportation prism was a massive map that contained a greater portion of all the continents in the lower realm, even after millions of years, it was impossible to document the total number of continents in the lower realm because new continents were being born at every moment, and the sea was infinite.

What was striking about the map were several areas painted in different colors. These places were the trouble regions that drew the most attention from the Ascendants, and in recent years there was one location that troubled everyone-The Time Blight Regions.

This place where time did not exist was growing. Nyla briefly glanced at that position before looking away, her target was somewhere else.

At a corner of the teleportation prism were thirteen Temple Maidens, who would escort her and be her assistant for the foreseeable future. With her presence, they all came up behind her and waited for her orders.

A Temple Matron had their Convent, a place where Temple Maidens from all over the world gathered to rest and gain valuable insights for their journey ahead. New Temple Maidens were trained here and the history of their order was curated and studied.

Nyla had bargained for one of the biggest and oldest convents available, and because of her sheer talent in reaching the Ascendant level in less than five thousand years and her clear devotion to the creed, she was granted this honor to lead this convent after the sudden death of its previous Matron.

The Convent she would be overseeing was called, Temple of Silence, but her first act even before she arrived was to change the name, she called the temple, Trion. It was a strange name, but as a Temple Matron, her wishes were seen as an inviolable command and were taken as such. Trion became the new seat of Nyla.

In her new position, Nyla would be a Temple Matron overseeing more than a million Temple Maidens, a massive number for any new Matron, and it was expected that in time, she would have to reduce the Maidens under her care, but everything was seen as a learning experience, and if she was a genius, this was a chance to prove herself.

Under her robes, a brief flash of red shone that took the shape of an eye before vanishing, this went by so quickly no one here could detect it, and Nyla smiled as she touched the prism, she was going to spread the truth about their mission to every Temple Maiden and her convent was the first step.

R

The corruption began slowly, Nyla did not make any move for three years, instead, she began what most would consider a maniacal devotion to the creed. Every single moment of her day was spent advising and uplifting the Temple Maiden, her insight into the challenges they faced was poignant, and she seemed to be able to touch the right place in their hearts, to reach the roots of their pain.

News of the new Temple Matron spread quickly, and soon the older Temple Maidens, women who had lived for tens of thousands of years and had gone through intense suffering and were on the verge of giving up and forsaking their oath began to flock towards Nyla.

These Temple Maidens she kept separately in an enclosed hall underground, and when they reached a hundred, Nyla came to them at night, her presence made all the Temple Maidens kneel, and they pressed their faces to the ground.

She gave them the command to rise and when they did they no longer saw a temple maiden, but a dreadful queen, whose crown were bleeding eyes, and in the face of the queen they saw the truth. Suffering was a choice and their redemption was also a choice. The weight they carried did not need to be a weakness, instead, it could be their strength.

Calamity was not all about death. It possesses a powerful strength that was the right balance of Ascendancy, almost as if they were made to work together.

Chapter 1077: The Redeemer

The realization of this truth made the Ascendant energy inside their bodies rebel, and these hundred Temple Maiden began to follow the same route that Nyla once did, their body

accepting both Calamity and Ascendancy, but they were unable to reconcile these two separate Auras in themselves and death was inevitable, but with the presence of the Shiik, this would no longer be the case.

Their mortal bodies were quickly losing cohesion, especially those who were nearing the peak of the Deific Rank, and if not that they were deep underground, the eruption from their bodies would alert everyone on the continent.

Tendrils of blood that resembled spider limbs erupted from the back of the Shiik and pierced into the forehead of every Temple Maiden on the verge of death, with this link the Shiik came to dwell in their brains, and from here she collected all the energy of death they were generating, stabilizing them and injecting a potent surge of vitality into their bodies.

This death that afflicted the Explorers after they knew of the truth was Calamity Aura and it was linked to Pure Darkness, which was the energy that Calamity Gods consumed.

At the moment of death, all beings in this realm release a small bit of pure darkness, and except for Calamity Gods, no one else could harvest this energy. A Calamity God could dwell beneath the earth for millions of years, slowly gathering Pure Darkness from the dead until they evolved to a higher state.

With the interference of Rowan, the Shiik no longer had to use such an inefficient method as the Pure Darkness being generated constantly by Nyla alone was almost equal to ten thousand dead Deific Ranked Explorers. Adding another hundred Temple Maiden feeding her a stream of Pure Darkness made the Shiik shudder in pleasure.

In this manner, she would no longer need millions of years to grow, and since this new method of harvesting Pure Darkness could be scaled upwards with no discernable limits, then the Shiik could rapidly evolve to a higher state of power in such a short time it would leave the rest of reality speechless.

The next level to the Shiik's ability was to acquire the power of Will, and where other immortals could live for an eternity without touching this realm, the Shiik only had to eat the Pure Darkness generated by the Temple Maidens.

"Yes, this is the path for me... I shall rise not on the bones of the dead, but the backs of the living. My throne shall be Life itself and death my footstool!... Look upon your works Father, is it not marvelous, am I not glorious? Worthy of being called your first!"

R

The hundred Temple Maidens left in jubilation, their goal was to preach about the new Matron and the powerful insight that had been granted to her, and it was not long for the improvement in their demeanor to reach the ears of the rest.

These Temple Maidens who had once appeared on the verge of defeat now pursued their duties with renewed responsibilities. They spoke of the wisdom of the newly ascended Matron and in a short while Trion was filled with new Temple Maidens who had been on the fence about the abilities of the newly ascended matron who seemed able to touch the soul and heal the hurt within.

A single candidate could be seen as chance, two would be a coincidence, but a hundred meant there was certain truth in these experiences, and although freeing yourself of the burden of service went against their creed, the renewed Temple Maiden preached they were not freed of their burden, only given the means to accept it, and even carry a greater load, they said the newly ascended Matron was a miracle worker.

And so, another hundred came with their shoulders bowed, and they left with their backs straight. Then another hundred, and another, and then a thousand came, then ten thousand... A new name began to arise from the Trion Convent, they no longer called Nyla a Temple Matron, now they called her The Redeemer. Her fame exceeded any other Temple Matron that had ever lived, when inching out the Temple Mothers who had guided their order for millions of years.

Months go by and the number of Temple Maidens that arrived on the shores of Trion reached the hundreds of thousands... daily. The convent had become something more, almost holy, and the reverence given to the inhabitants was like they were royalty.

Everything was going well and the morale of Ascendants in various continents was never greater, for their Temple Maidens were changing, leading them to victories after victories and pushing their morale to new heights. Every Temple Maiden seemed ten times stronger than before, able to heal from grievous injuries and rescuing a greater amount of their charges from every conflicts they entered.

It was said any Temple Maiden that visited Trion became a thousand times more powerful, and the light of The Redeemer followed them wherever they went.

However, problems began to arise when these newly awakened Temple Maidens after a while returned to Trion and refused to leave. They gathered in massive halls and bowed in worship to an invisible figure who stood in the air, held up by a million red thread.

In the beginning, this change was not noticeable as it was normal for a Temple Maiden to remain outside their posting zones for months and sometimes even decades, but after a year, the number of Temple Maidens remaining behind in Trion had reached almost forty million, nearly a third of all Temple Maidens in existence.

They clustered around a massive temple, and they were so numerous that from afar they resembled sands on a beach, and because these new Temple Maidens favored wearing red robes, this sands thereby transformed into a sea of blood.

After a while, it was inevitable that an investigative party was sent down to Trion. In this party were a hundred Temple Maidens, seven Temple Matrons, and a Temple Mother.

In the entirety of the Order, there were only five Temple Mothers, and for one to travel all the way to Trion was proof of the seriousness of this issue.

And on this day she stepped foot on Trion.

Chapter 1078: Golden Temple

Temple Mother Eliaxha had not left her Convent in the upper continents for more than six million years, and it was for good reasons. Called the Mighty Fist, Temple Mother Eliaxha was known for her warlike tendencies and her no-nonsense policies in handling issues. Having little patience for pandering or negotiation, Eliaxha dominated whatever space she entered with power.

The remaining Temple Mothers knew her to be a blunt instrument that was used when absolute force was necessary, she was not a scalpel but a falling meteor, and they never used her for affairs in the lower continents to avoid situations where she could destroy thousands or even millions of continents if she was struck by her famous fury.

Yet strange things had begun to happen, and the world was increasingly moving out of balance, the time for subtlety had passed, and the Temple Mothers were ordered to root out any dissident in their flock for the end of the world was coming. Not known to all but those at the top, it was said that another Ascendant Sun was about to fall.

Their unending war was on the verge of becoming more desperate and bitter, and any unknown factor must be plucked out before the already tenuous situation spiraled out of control.

On the way to Trion-Strange name, the Temple Mother had thought-Eliaxha had been furious, although this was not known to many, this famous Temple Mother loved to sleep, and her naps lasted for millennia at a time, and she could not wait to return to sleep every time she was awakened which gave her a reputation for rashness, not that she cared, and she made sure she played to that identity, anything for her to get more space to sleep away time. With the incoming chaos, Eliaxha knew that sleep would become harder to find, and she was desperate to end this problem and catch a few decades or mercifully centuries of shut-eye before the rat race, the screaming, and the dying began.

'Why cannot I have these few moments of peace before the war?'

She saw no reason why she was dragged to this continent, sure the millions of Maidens who remained behind on Trion were suspicious, but it had only been a few months and that was not enough time for panicking, they should have waited for a decade, perhaps two or even three before she was summoned to bring this so-called Redeemer to her knees and the Temple maidens to their duty, they would be needed more than ever.

"Matrons of this day and age," she muttered with annoyance in her voice, making the Temple Matrons behind her shudder in fright, "Gain the gift of insight and suddenly they

are out of bounds. Newer rules would have to be enforced to police these new batches. Anything to ensure that I am not woken up until the world is about to end....Oh, the rest of you stay behind, I don't want to crush you all."

"Boom!!!"

The moment she stepped her feet on Trion, a shockwave went through her head, and the anger that had previously filled her heart vanished and in its place was intense caution. Eliaxha's demeanor might seem rash, but she was actually the opposite, her great talents and acumen meant she could be lazy because it was easy for her to peer into the nature of things and figure out the truth.

She stopped walking and took the time to observe her surroundings with a more discerning gaze, and the first thing she noticed was the three Ascendant Suns overhead were brighter, far brighter than they should have ever been on a lower continent, almost as if she was not standing on a lower continent but a higher one.

Her suspicion increased when she felt the overwhelming density of Aura and a surprising amount of vitality in this place.

Aura was usually only present in living beings, who while performing daily activities would lead to Aura being naturally dispersed into the surroundings from their bodies, but you needed a lot of powerful Ascendants in one place to produce the amount of Aura that was present here, nothing millions of Deific Ranked Explorers were supposed to be able to give off even if their numbers were multiplied a hundred times.

The second was the vitality essence, there was so much of it that mortals living here would easily survive just by breathing and effortlessly live for hundreds of years if not more. This was a condition only available on the best of the higher continents, and no mortal could ever hope to enjoy it, how could they be found here?

Then she looked ahead at the millions of kneeling Temple Maidens who despite her appearance had not even turned around to acknowledge her presence, instead their eyes were fixed in the air and they were muttering under their breath. Her frown deepened and the air around her began to emit faint blue light as they were frozen.

The bodies of every Temple Maiden were overflowing with vitality and Aura, so much so that it could not be natural, she tracked the direction of their gaze and could find nothing, she idly tapped the air, and the heads of a million Temple maidens exploded, but in the next seconds it was regrown, and the Maidens continued their chanting, appearing as if they were unaware that a moments before their heads had been vaporized.

"Now, that's not right," Eliaxha muttered and then she began to rapidly tap the air, killing millions of Temple maidens at a time, turning them to dust, burning, freezing, electrocution, poison... she could have used more permanent methods, but the Temple

Mother was fascinated by how the healing of these Maiden did not seem to be losing steam and nothing had changed in their bodies; in fact, they appeared to be even more vigorous as if they fed off their own deaths.

Their gazes were unerringly focused on the skies and for the words they chanted, Eliaxha did not know the meaning or the language used.

She was slowly losing her patience and with a wave of her hand, the entire continent of Trion was frozen in place as time stood still. Experiments could be made later, and Eliaxha was determined to know what was causing these changes.

Once again she looked back at the position where all the Temple Maidens were watching in the sky, and now it was no longer empty, instead a massive golden temple with an alien design was floating in the air. The temple almost resembled an eye with feathers waving out of it.

The Temple Mother frowned and began walking to the golden temple, and in two steps she was before the gate, raising a hand to crush it, the gate instead silently flew open and she paused in her actions before snorting and entering fearlessly into the golden temple.

She came before a massive passageway that extended for an unknown number of miles, and standing orderly on both sides of the passageway as far as the eye could see were gigantic faceless golden statues. She peered curiously at these statues, noticing the odd features they carried which were their wings, and the weird armor they wore.

The only difference in these statues was the number of wings on the backs of these giants, most were two and others were more. Except for Calamities, she knew of no humanoid species on the lower continents or the higher continents that had wings.

Chapter 1079: Nature Of Continents

These golden giants were strange and Eliaxha found it interesting that in her mind she referred to them as golden giants and not the statues that they were. She stroked her chin, could the giants be alive? Looking down at the seemingly endless rows of giants, she wondered if she was looking at an alien army.

Curious, she tried to yank off a wing from the statue to examine it, but the golden giant collapsed into golden dust. Shaking her head in irritation that despite the frozen state of time, these statues could still possess such peculiar characteristics, she was not too surprised about this change after the door of the temple previously opened despite being under her time-stop ability.

It simply meant that someone was here who could challenge her domain over space-time, which was interesting because she was at the Second Dan, on the verge of becoming a Third. She was a master of Space-Time, and when pushed, she could access powers from the Third Dan, at that state she was invincible. Her heart began to throb with excitement with a clear target in mind, she could not wait to finish investigating this mystery and go back to sleep.

Her body flitted past the miles of corridor, passing extremely long distances that made no sense considering the size of the temple from the outside, by now she had gone past more than a billion golden giants and there seemed to be no end in sight. With every moment that passed, Eliaxha's frustration increased, if not for her perfect memory that assured her that the passageway was not looped and every golden giant she had passed by was unique, she would have suspected foul play,

"I am the wrong person to play these games with," the Temple Mother growled and clawed at space and her surroundings began to zoom past her at blistering speeds, and she stood still and watched everything go past, after a while when more than a hundred billion golden statues had gone by and still no end in sight, the Temple Mother yawned and surprisingly fell asleep.

It was unknown how long she slept, but Eliaxha opened her eyes to find herself in a small clearing underneath an alien sky, and before her, was a woman sitting and staring at three pieces of burning logs. The Temple Mother looked around her and noticed there were two empty chairs, and she proceeded to sit on one of them while staring at the woman who was looking at the burning flames, she recognized her target at a glance,

"If the flames can still burn under my domain, why do you remain silent, Nyla, or should I call you, Redeemer? I heard of your ascent to a Temple Matron in less than five thousand years, and at first, I was glad that a new star had arisen from our number, but you are nothing but tainted."

Eliaxha spat at the still figure of Nyla, "Do you have nothing to say for yourself before I take your head?"

Nyla who remained still spoke, but her voice strangely did not come from her body, it came from the burning flame,

"I do not speak because there is still someone else missing in this gathering."

"Oh, how curious," Eliaxha turned to the last chair, "I would assume you mean this missing person? Who could be so bold to challenge the Ascendant at this time? Carrions all hoping to feed on dead flesh should wait until their mark has fallen, greed would be their undoing. Fallen Matron, who is it that we wait for?"

Nyla smiled, an eerie light in her eyes, "My master... My creator."

Eliaxha went silent for a while before she smiled back wolfishly, "I can't wait to meet them. Wake me up when they arrive."

R

It took Rowan three years after the battle against the Divine Ascendant to get to his destination, which was the origin continent of the Blood Bound. He had crossed countless continents on his way here and although he had not rushed his trip, there were many things to think about, and he needed the time to order his thoughts, the land was vast and three years was what he needed to cross it.

All through his travels, he had taken the shape of an arrow until he reached the continent of his choice, and reconstituting his body, he looked down at the continent below, and what a strange continent it was, yet so familiar, a part of himself that was taken from him... his corpse.

It was a land that resembled the coils of a gigantic snake, each scale was a dozen miles across and there were millions of these scales creating a truly gigantic continent that staggered the imagination, along the cracks that separated each scale were spewing lava, painting this land into a hellish landscape.

This land was unlike any that could be found in this realm, and was the birthplace of the Blood Bound, Rowan had come here to collect all the broken portion of his consciousness, because this land was special. To become an Ascendant he would not be using a random continent, but one that was born of his flesh.

Continents were not equal and were ranked in this realm, divided into two large sectors called the Lower or Mortal Continents, and the Upper or Higher Continents.

Within the lower or mortal continents were three levels: New, Rising, and Central. In the Higher Continents, there were also three ranks, Ascended, Ancient, and Primal.

New Continents were born at every moment, arising from the endless ocean, and in a short time it would spawn mortal creatures, and the circle of Ascendancy and Calamity would begin, and when a Deific Ranked Explorer merges with these New Continents, it evolves into a Rising Continent, if the Explorer could become an Ascendant, the Continent would evolve to its final state and become a Central Continent.

At this point, an Ascendant would begin to pursue the Dan, and after gaining mastery in it, they could fight through the threshold that separated the lower continents from the heavens, and if they succeeded, their continent, hence their Natal Treasures would evolve to become an Ascended Continent.

From this point, it was yet unknown the requirement needed for a Continent to reach the Ancient and finally the Primal Rank.

Chapter 1080: Forsaken People

This continent below seemed not to follow any of the normal conventions of continents in this realm, for one it was so large it defied all concepts of size when it came to lower continents.

There were no mountains on this land, nor were there trees, nothing could grow on its surface because its nature was alien to this world, and despite its massive size, it floated on the surface of the ocean. The inhabitants of this land were stuck with exchanging the rare resources they could find on this land for food, weapons, and other living necessities.

They were stuck in a vicious cycle where they had to perform back-breaking labor for just the barest necessities for survival, as they fought against the land and the Calamities that inhabited its dark corners, despite all that when the time was ripe, Ascendants would swoop down and gather the youngest and strongest of their numbers and send them to other continents to be used as fodder in the endless war.

Ascendants were not afraid of the number of Blood Bounds running out because they would regularly gather mortals from other continents to this forsaken land where in a short while, the alien nature of this place would corrupt their bodies, mutating them into Blood Bounds whose distinctive traits were their heights, enhanced strengths and bronze scales on their bodies.

At lower levels, these scales only covered a small part of their forearms and spine, but as they grew stronger, the scales covered more of their bodies and hardened like armor. With this natural defensive armor and their increased strength, they could fight and survive in harsh conditions, but the inability of any of their members to become Ascendants meant they would forever be slaves.

Usually, continents grow in size when they ascend to higher ranking, but the greatest lower continent in existence could not reach a thousandth of the size of this one, meaning the number of Blood Bound in this single location was in the tens of billions, despite the horrifying death rate.

Rowan kept his presence shielded and descended toward the continents below, his golden robe rippled as if it was being attracted by the continent below, their similar roots drawing them together, the bones of his children called to him.

As he came lower to the ground he began to observe the changes across its surface and the billions of minds that brushed across his own as the bloodline resonance between him and the Blood Bound intertwined. They could not sense his presence, he did not allow that, but he could sense them, from the newly born to the old at the edge

of death, surprisingly there were some among them he could not easily sense, as if they were shielded from his senses.

The presence of so much of his bloodline, even though incredibly corrupted and diluted scratched an itch deep inside him that he had suppressed.

This was a mystery that he intended to investigate thoroughly, but for this moment, Rowan closed his eyes and allowed himself to luxuriate in this feeling for a while.

For so long his mind had been linked to his Angels and his other children, their lives and purpose enriching his own, balancing his great power and giving him a measure of empathy and compassion that his increasingly alien mind lacked. His mental space was never silent, now the only thoughts inside him were his own and not the countless multitude that filled his mind even if their thoughts were whispers, they came in such massive numbers that they could drown the mind of a thousand gods, and yet Rowan loved it.

As a creator, he was never meant to be alone, and sleeping in death for nearly a million years while knowing that so many of his children had perished. With his dormant consciousness, he could not tell which of his children had perished, but he knew that the Primordial Weapon destroyed not just their souls, but their Soul Origin as well.

It was the reason that despite his alone consciousness who saw life and death as just two sides to a coin, he still mourned because he had lost something he was not sure he would be ever able to get back.

Rowan swallowed his hatred as his appearance began to change. He allowed the minds of the Blood Bound below, who did not know him to influence his shape, and the moment his feet touched the ground he was a skinny old man whose red hair had turned white. His golden robes transformed into a beggar's wrap and he began walking through the harsh streets of this land.

This shape was rather interesting, for there were few old people among the Blood Bounds, and for that reason, they were treated with reverence, called Old Fathers or Old Mothers, these Blood Bound were allowed to live a life of relative peace and security.

Rowan roamed the continents for eight months on his feet, not using any of his powers, he only observed the world and he learned, and he felt pain about what he would need to do going forward.

The Blood Bounds had his blood but it had been corrupted. He could not integrate these mortals with himself, what was coming would kill them all.

Before he stepped foot on this land, Rowan would not have cared about this but after eight months of understanding the plight of these mortals, especially those who had

unknowingly shared his blood due to being corrupted by the shattered bodies of his Ouroboros Serpents, he could not wipe them out as easily as before, a small part of him saw them as his children.

He wondered if there was a small part of him that wanted to replace those that he had lost with these new ones. Rowan shook his head, surely he was not that lost and jaded. His children were irreplaceable.

Rowan was at a crossroads, he could make two choices, the first would be to go ahead, integrate this land into his Natal Treasure, become an Ascendant, and take the third part of his consciousness, pushing the battle against this world to the next stage or he could slowly strip his power from this land leaving just an empty shell behind, the Blood Bound would lose their fleshy body powers and when he integrated with this land, he would not be harming any of the mortals.

The second option would mean he would have to give up a sizable portion of his advantage in this conflict. After nearly a million years of slumber, his enemies had become stronger, the Eye of Time had grown, and the Undying was stirring as Ascendancy fell.

Without completing his consciousness he had no leverage against these forces, and every single second he could use to gain more power was necessary.

Was he willing to give it all up for mortals who had only a tainted version of his bloodline? Were they worth the sacrifice?

He could be done with gathering a third part of his consciousness, unlocking more of his abilities, and becoming an ascendant in less than a year, or he could spend maybe four to five years slowly stripping away his bloodline from mortals who would perish not long after he

was gone.

The answer to this was so simple, yet why did he hesitate?