

The Primordial Record

- Chapter 351: I Am A Reflection

Chapter 351: I Am A Reflection

A soul was the totality of a living being's life, all their loves and losses, pains and sorrows. He got to know and understand them more than anyone else they would ever know even their friends and lovers would never know the person as deeply as Rowan would.

But the question was how was he going to break down a gate of this size with his puny perception?

Rowan's perception reached the gate and an unknown force pressed down on it and his perception was molded into the form of a body.

It turned out to be his main body. He stood at eight feet tall with golden waist-length hair, his serpent-like eyes blazed with golden flames as lightning wandered through them.

"Interesting." He muttered and brought his hands forward and rested them on the gate. He gathered his strength and he pushed.

He could as well be a fly that was trying to shift a mountain.

Rowan was not used to obstacles he could not move while he was an Emyrean, having limits or planning about problems was only necessary with him because he was fighting gods when he was still less than a year old and he was still far from that level.

Rowan had faced epic setbacks and tough choices, but in the area where physical and mental strength was to be called upon he had never faltered, he did not intend to start now.

He set himself to the task and began using his Mental Power to assert dominance over his perception. He told himself he couldn't fail, he had crushed bigger mountains before as a side note, and this would not be different.

Push!

The gate did not budge and neither did he. He kept applying more pressure as he called upon a seemingly infinite amount of perseverance and strength.

The muscles on his entire body bloomed up. Every vein in his body stood out as thickly as snakes and his teeth were clenched so hard he could chew through diamonds.

I will not fail in the first great task I applied myself to in this new body.

Rowan from somewhere deep inside of him drew more strength and he yelled, but his shout did not overshadow the mighty crash that came from the gate, as a spider web of cracks spread out from beneath his hands and began to ascend through the gate.

The cracks spread for hundreds of feet and then it stopped.

Rowan had failed.

As always when Rowan faced a challenging situation he did not get flustered or hyperactive instead went the opposite route and became cold and logical.

He retreated from the gate and his head bowed in thought. It would be impossible for him to push through this gate, except his main body was here with him.

He was a Reflection of Rowan, and he possessed just a small fraction of his entire consciousness powers.

Just a single Consciousness Pillar of Rowan was ten times stronger than what the Reflection had to work with, and Rowan still had multiple consciousnesses, and by the time he woke up that number would have surely grown.

He would not succeed if he tried going through this task believing he had the same capacity for power as his main body. What then was he missing?

He placed his hands back in the gate, not pushing, he was just thinking.

It may seem like he had all the time in the world but he knew that he was on the clock. The new body of Andar was amazing but even it could not hold on for long as his perverse talent began to fill his body with Aether.

Soon he would return to the same situation the previous owner of this body had encountered, and the gate to Spirit Matrix would be covered under an endless wave of Aether.

What am I missing? Could I be wrong and the nature of my Soul Seizing bloodline has blocked any chance for me to open the Spirit Matrix gates?

Rowan reflected with no panic in his eyes even as the gate began to fog up, as the Aether inside Andar began to fill his body to the brim.

It could be observed outside the prone body of Andar, that small streams of silver Aether had begun to escape from his nose as he was breathing.

He was running out of time.

The fog had covered half the gate and Rowan still had no solution, and as it grew closer and covered ninety percent of the gate, Rowan paused and looked at his hands that were touching the gate, and he almost grinned as he figured out the answers.

I am no longer just the Reflection of Rowan Kuranos, I am here for a new start, to create a part without any visible ties to myself, and yet I have already begun failing.

The fog was now close to his hands and he would soon be rejected from the gates in any second. But slowly, that hand began to change as Rowan began to retreat and allow Andar character and consciousness to take the driver's seat.

His body shrank, and his massive muscles withered away, his golden hair turned white and faded, pouring down from his head like ashes, and Rowan was no more.

Andar stepped forth, and his hand pressed the tiny part of the gate where the only three people he had ever known were embossed, and except for the image of the Alchemist that held for a few seconds, the gate crumbled beneath his hand.

The collapse began to grow, as a massive hurricane of wind and stone thundered around him, as a gate tall enough to scrape the heavens began to collapse.

Beneath the mighty devastation, Andar appeared to be so small, as he peered at his single right hand that had collapsed the gate that would hold back a god.

He chuckled dryly, "Turns out, I'm my weakness." He looked up into the darkness of this consciousness space and sighed, "To become something new was harder than I thought. Rowan is no more, now I am Andar. Until when the time comes and Andar becomes Rowan. I shall wait and watch for am I not a reflection?"

Chapter 352: Silver Mountain

The merger of his Reflection with Andar was seamless, he was still Rowan but his mannerisms and goals had been replaced by Andar's. It was a con Rowan was familiar with, he would play the role of someone else so well, that he would become that person. He did it once inside the Nexus, he was doing it again now.

The collapsing stones began to be sucked into the void at the other side of the gate. This was the first step to awakening a Spirit Matrix.

Your gate was devoured as fuel for your Spirit Matrix to be born. The commotion was great, almost as if a thousand earthquakes were simultaneously happening.

Andar watched the last of his gate get sucked into the void and he waited for the next step. Even after it seemed like an eternity.

He knew that time was malleable during the awakening, and also he understood that his gate was beyond comparison. For something of that size to ignite, it would mean...

A bright flash of light, like the dawn of creation appeared inside the void and Andar flinched, his perception had no physical eyes or that bright light would have turned it to ash.

Rowan had seen a similar scene before and it was the moment of creation of a universe. It was eerily similar to the light he saw in the memories he snatched from his father.

Except the light of his awakening was silver.

The sound of the gate inside him igniting reached him a moment later and his perception was pressed flat like a board, as pieces of it began to shatter and fly off, each piece breaking off was agonizing. He would have screamed in pain, but such a level of uneasiness had no meaning for him anymore when his pain had exceeded a certain threshold.

He kept his perception open for as long as he could, for watching this scene was important.

It was different from all the visions of such scale that he had ever witnessed. Those had been filtered from the perception of someone else, and what he had experienced was diluted.

This was different, the things he was seeing were raw and untouched and he knew instinctively that memorizing as much of this scene would have undeterminable benefits in the future because he was memorizing so much that he could not currently interpret at this time, but it would not be the case in the future.

Whatever the Primogenitor of the Mages did to create the Spirit Matrix was a heaven-shaking endeavor, as he made the process of awakening to present the scene of a universe being created, mimicking that special moment that was hardly seen in countless Eras.

Andar perception began to collapse and yet he would not let go of this sight. It was like a drug that he did not want to stop taking even if it was killing him. No, it might end up killing him if he did not stop.

It was then that he saw it. It came like a wave of silver, like that last light of the evening that hits falling snow.

It was the Awakening.

As this light swept past his perception and began to fill his body, he understood it was all a side effect of creating his Spirit Matrix. The light exploded past his body, invisible, and escaped into the universe.

The feeling of a million ants chewing through every inch of his body was welcomed because it kept his perception awake just a bit longer so he could see that glorious sight.

Then it was over.

His Spirit Matrix was revealed and it was a lake filled with boundless silver water. At the center of the lake was a mountain made from silver, and it gleamed with a supernatural light.

The pain of keeping his perception active reached its limit and he was forced to escape his mind.

Andar immediately felt a new pain, one from his head and body. He felt like two small imps were stabbing his eyes with electrified forks, and the endless wave of numbing headache he was feeling was no better either.

He heard a loud bang above him as if the ceiling had collapsed and he struggled to open his eyes, it was not easy and he gasped as tears rolled down his closed eyes, the tiny bit of light entering through his lashes was like whips to his brain.

It was then that he felt a warm hand support his head off the floor, and a bottle slipped between his clenched teeth, a sweet syrupy liquid touched his tongue, and a wave of energy and sweet pain relief spread from his tongue to all his head and down his spine till it reached all his extremities.

He grabbed the hand feeding him the liquid, pressed it more firmly against his mouth, and took long deep gulps.

The familiar laughter of his master entered his ears, "Slow down boy, you don't want to be drowning in this stuff."

Andar did not care as he drowned every drop and then he collapsed in a dreamy haze, his body gave tiny shivers as it suppressed the damage that had been done to it and was rapidly healing.

Andar opened his eyes and the world was different.

The face above him was of his Mentor and Master, Jonathan Melbrooks, his kind eyes and long beard that reached his stomach would fool anyone that this was a kind old man. The funny thing however was that he was just that—A kind man.

He was distracted from the sight of his master holding his head by the sights his eyes were showing him. Was this the way every awakened person saw the world?

The world Andar used to know was filled with colors, red, green, yellow, orange, whatever color he could imagine he could see, but now it was different, for he could now see more colors than before, a different kind of color.

Andar smiled, "Master." He tried to stand up, but the gentle but forceful hand of his master held him down.

"Stay still, let me check your body. You had a very tumultuous awakening, and you may have hidden injuries we need to do away with as quickly as possible before any troubling complications take root."

Chapter 353: Nivi

Andar whispered to himself, "I have awakened? I... have... awakened!" The first words were similar to a question and then it turned into a conclusion.

Andar's face lit up like the sun and he clutched his master's hand in excitement, "Master Jonathan, I have awakened."

"Hush child, and stay still, your body is worn out from its struggles."

Andar could barely keep himself still as he felt a numbing wave spread through his body, and his master's jaws slowly dropped open in shock. He swallowed loudly and shook his head in utter dumbfounded.

Andar who never felt his master was handsome suddenly found him so beautiful.

Of course, it was not because of his master's face, no matter how comical the prestigious Mage now appeared, it was the new colors he could see around his master and inside him, they were impossible to describe, but still incredibly vibrant, far more than nature could ever conceive, and his master was filled with the colors.

He found himself wanting to collect the light, but he held himself back and relaxed in his master's warm hand and he allowed himself to feel his new body, and the numbing echo resonating inside it that was being generated by his master scanning spell.

His current body would never be equal to his Empyrean body in tenacity or strength but it may be able to beat it in the future in terms of energy control.

He felt every single wave of the vibrational energy his master was sending through his body, and he felt he may be able to interfere with it. Yet that would be foolish, he could end up hurting himself.

He had to find ways to distract himself so he did not fall into any random musings and make mistakes at this time.

His eyes went beyond his master and looked above to see the sky... wait he was two floors below the ground, why could he see the sky?

Andar saw the hole was clean and round as if a hot laser had burned through the two floors above the ground and the two floors below it to reach him. Andar became slightly nervous as he feared the cost associated with this amount of destruction.

His master did all this damage to save him, and even though he knew logically it was not his responsibility he still felt burdened, as he knew he would never feel good about himself if he did not find a way to fix it.

"Okay, there is... em, nothing I can do about your body. You are fine... better than fine. You are almost like a Dreadbeast... this is ridiculous... how much Aether was your body really containing, all my previous measurements must be way off. I will need to refine all my findings about..." his master trailed into silence and was looking at him with a weird look that held countless complexities.

"Andar, tell me everything about your awakening, wait..."

He turned around and made a gesture. The damages behind began to reverse as the floating ashes that Andar did not notice began to return to their previous forms of mortars, metal, glass, and all the other items that were formerly within the gap, sealing the Alchemy Laboratory shut once more.

Andar sighed, "Transmutation." His surging heartbeat calmed down and his master noticed his situation and frowned, "Apprentice, did you think I would tear through my laboratory without a plan?"

Andar smiled sheepishly, he began attempting to stand and with the support of his master, he did, and instantly noticed he had grown another inch, also, that his clothes were in tatters as they were crusted with blood. His Awakening had been truly violent.

"I should have known it was Transmutation when I saw the purple energy of your lightning, but I'm not in my best state of mind, master." Andar coughed, "Master, I need to tell you about..."

His master seized him by the shoulder, "Hush Apprentice. It would seem I too am not in the best frame of mind. Andar we would soon be having guests. Whatever you do, don't agree to any terms they would offer you no matter how enticing the offer may sound, and don't tell them about the details of your Awakening, this is vitally important. Keep your Spirit Matrix secret, under no circumstance should you show anyone your Spirit Matrix. Is that clear?"

Andar's eyes were wide with confusion as he nodded his head like a chicken pecking rice.

"Go make yourself presentable and come find me in the lounge on the first floor." His master turned to leave and he paused, "I have sent a message to your mother and grandfather, be expecting their replies soon."

Andar was in a daze as he turned and headed to his quarters, his master looked him over with loving eyes before they went cold and he began moving upwards, already hearing the commotion that was heading their way.

Andar entered the bathroom and started peeling his clothes off as he was walking, letting them fall to the ground behind him, he called out, "Nivi, hot, full blast."

The ceiling above him steamed up before a veritable ocean of hot water drowned him, he retrieved soap and brush and began scrubbing himself down, and the water that escaped his body ran red.

Nivi was the name of the companion Spirit Artifact he had been working on his entire life. It was rudimentary with pitiful functionality, but every line of scripts inside it had been written by him and he cherished it.

It could only perform limited functions, but Andar hoped to one day make it a sentient Spirit Artifact and merge it with his Mage Tower.

He noticed that as he was scrubbing the sensation of the brush touching his skin was incredibly sensitive and yet he did not feel any discomfort, it was as if the vibration from the scrubbing brush was passing through his entire body, not harming him at all but he could still feel every piece of bristles in the brush.

He pushed towards the end of the bathroom and waved his hands. The blast of air that erupted from it shocked him a bit and he looked ahead to a full-length mirror and looked at himself.

The first thing that immediately attracted his attention was his eyes. His pupils were like silver metal, and as he breathed in and out his eyes would light up as if he had a bonfire inside his head.

Chapter 354: Let me help you

His skin was pale like milk, but the pallor was not unhealthy, his breathing did not only affect his eyes but also his body, as it seemed as if he had veins of silver flowing beneath his skin, that slowly pulsed with his breathing and his skin almost reflected light due to how lustrous it had become almost like jade.

His face still had the bone structure of a man, but his skin was incredibly soft, enhancing his already handsome face to nothing short of bewitching beauty, only his short hair still kept his attractiveness to a minimal degree. There was nothing human anymore about his beauty. It was now a thing of magic.

Andar physical appearance had never been of concern to him, but even his heart appeared to skip a beat when he saw himself. His silver eyes were entrancing and its metallic color only served to enhance the utter perfection of his features.

He was surprised his body was not yet covered by Aether and he looked inside himself with his perception and he noticed how starkly different he had become.

Before his Awakening, his body was robust and his physical vessel could already hold massive amounts of Aether that only a Mage could control, and now that depth had deepened until it was thrice as much.

Andar was not yet an Acolyte but he already had three times the amount of Aether that a peak Rank 1 mage could hold. This was simply ridiculous and had broken many long-held conceptions about what a Mage should be capable of.

It was no wonder his master was shaken, if the news got out of his Talent and his capabilities, a storm would arise. In addition to that he had not even begun exploring the mysteries of his Spirit Matrix.

The metal in his organs had been further integrated into his body and they now covered his entire skeletal structure. The Awakening light that escaped from the gate of his Spirit Matrix had further perfected his body, enhancing his organs and his cells, further boosting the changes he made.

He contemplated in shock and as he bent down in thought, the mirror began to fog up and his reflection seemed to warp as the figure of Rowan with golden serpent eyes looked at him, and when Andar looked up, but the figure had vanished.

He began to feel uneasy and a sense of despair, but he did not know where this emotion was coming from.

He proceeded to his room to wear his clothes, idly wondering if they would even fit anymore. Then he noticed an entirely new set of robes, underwear, and boots. Andar smiled, Nivi was stepping up big time, noticing his new change in height, and providing a new set of clothes for him.

The clothes were made from Refined Silk, and they were tough, able to handle dust and heat with no issue and keep their wearer comfortable. These were the chosen materials for Acolytes.

He did not rush while wearing his clothes as he slowly observed his physique, running his new senses over every single spot on his body.

As he placed each article of clothing on his body he shivered at the sensation of the material touching his skin. He had to linger to adjust himself to the new wave of input he was feeling.

The method his body sensed energy was interesting and thankfully although the inputs were plentiful, it was not overwhelming for him, his physique seemed capable of handling anything the world could throw at him.

Not wanting to keep his master waiting, he brushed his black hair back, while he adjusted his breathing, and began hurrying up to leave.

His haste made him apply too much force to his tread and his body was flung forward as if he was strapped to a catapult. He slammed through the door of his room and blasted into the passage walls with a loud boom he was sure could be heard from all over the Lab.

Andar became embedded inside the concrete, like a fly trapped in Amber.

"Wow, that looks... painful. Never knew using your face to open doors was a thing now... I knew I was getting out of touch with the in-things. Not that I would like, you know, to try to repeat your glorious feat."

Andar's eyes moved to the left and he saw a red-haired girl looking at him, her mouth was quivering as if she was trying hard to hold back her laughter.

He knew her, she was the mayor's last child, but he did not know her name as he had not bothered to learn it.

"Do you need any help? Or are you an art piece?" She pointed out again, "You certainly look the part." She ran her eyes down his body trapped in the wall, while surreptitiously licking her lips.

What an interesting young lady.

Gingerly pushing himself away from the wall and making sure he was exerting as little force as possible, he stepped down and looked at himself, his clothes were now ruined.

At this time he began to miss the cloud of Aether that covered his body and served as an ever-present shield.

"How did you get in here," Andar asked as he gently tried to brush the dust from his clothes, but he was not as careful as he thought, and a new rip came from his sleeves and he was left with a cool breeze blowing on his naked arm.

Andar glared at the girl who was now holding her stomach and in a full-blown laughing fit. He sighed and he hurried into his room.

Nivi his darling Spirit Artifact, had already prepared another batch of clothes for him to wear and he hurriedly tore away his robes. His skin suddenly felt a wave of cold touching his skin and he turned to find the girl inside his room.

She was looking at his shirtless body with a smile on her face, and she cleared her throat covering her mouth, "I think I should help you with the clothes."

Chapter 355: Begone..

Andar nearly rolled his eyes in anger, as he had seen the little fox take snapshots of his body with a camera hidden inside her sleeves. He had felt the light of the camera hitting and bouncing back from his skin, sadly his reaction speed was too slow to intercept the beam.

However, what interested him was his body's automatic selection of the energy it chooses to absorb. He was surprised that it automatically sensed the nature of the camera and allowed the light to touch him without collecting it.

If he thought about it for a bit then he would understand that his body had been doing the same thing to various energies reaching him from light to sound, else he was sure he would resemble a black hole that was endlessly sucking energy.

Aware that time was of the essence he nodded at the girl, he needed to dress up quickly and he did not trust his strength. He currently had so much strength that his mortal mind could not control, it was thanks to his experience in controlling his powerful Emyrean body that he was able to function.

She smiled as she walked up to him and began placing his robes over his shoulders, her hands flying over the buttons and smoothing any creases that could be found. She acted a bit nonchalant in her actions, but Andar could feel the slight shaking in her hands through the fabrics, although he was sure she did not know he could tell.

She was careful when placing the clothes on his body, her eyes for details were impressive, but she lingered on the last button, avoiding his eyes she said, "I can tell that you don't recognize me."

That was far from the truth and Andar felt she should know that, but it was the social game that was expected to be played, he groaned internally but he replied with no change in his tone, "I know you, I have seen you every year beside your father during the selection process for Acolytes of the Black Tower."

"Oh, I thought that you were..." She lapsed into silence, "You know what, forget it... there, done. We will need to get you clothes for Mage, your body is beautiful... amazing, I mean it em, strong..."

Andar smirked, her flustered expression was cute, the previous him would have brushed her away lacking any sort of social cues and only focusing on his drive for power, but Andar needed not just power, he also needed influence.

He smiled and he looked at her fully in the eyes and the slight shaking from her body was perfectly transmitted to him, was a few inches taller than her and he had experience with how a powerful presence and beauty could affect the mind of people and he intended to use it to the fullest.

Andar clasped his hands together and bowed, "Thank you for your assistance but my master is waiting. You never introduced yourself and how you reached my room."

She smiled and clasped her hands in front of her, "I am Livia Bolfrey and it is my honor to be in your presence. I just followed the passage down here, it's pretty straightforward. I don't know why I always thought this place would be a maze."

Andar blinked, "An honor to be in my presence? You sound almost sincere, did you practice that before a mirror?"

She sputtered in indignation at Andar's words and his fading laughter as he left.

Livia stamped her feet in anger, but quicker than a cat's blinking, her expression turned sly and she began looking around his room, her focus was on his wardrobe, especially his underwear.

A sick grin on her face transformed her from a cute girl into a lecherous old man, as she began her hunt. Above her, a hidden speaker crackles, "Begone from my master...." An invisible hand erupted from her sleeves and crushed it, "oops."

Andar suddenly had the urge to bathe once more, and he frowned, he should not have left that girl behind, but his mind was a bit distracted when he saw the signal jamming device his master recently created was switched on.

Reaching the lounge he saw four figures sitting, but none of them were looking at each other, all were busy with their Communication Devices as their fingers moved furiously through the touchscreen interface.

He recognized only two of them, his master and the mayor, the other two were strangers, but from their robes which had the image of a Black Tower on their left shoulders, and the Aura of power and arrogance around them, he knew these were members of the famed Black Tower.

A burning question in his mind was how his Master and the rest knew about his Awakening. From the information he had collected, he needed the aid of a Spirit Matrix Orb to ascertain his awakening status and talent, or was his Awakening so apparent that everyone could sense it from the Mayor's hall which was twenty miles away?

He had gathered lots of information about the Mages, but it was apparent that he had not collected enough, because it was impossible to do so, in such a short period, it would take centuries at the least to gather more concise information about this powerful civilization.

His presence was soon noticed by the rest, and the Mayor leaped to his feet, and moved closer to him, the wide grin on his face was both cute and perverse at the same time, "Greetings young Andar, I am glad your Awakening went without a hitch, as the pride and glory of our small town, I am here to congratulate you and to inform you that the coffers of the town are unrestrictedly open to you, and you can pull any resources you the desire without limits, of course, this offer also extends to your master too."

He presented a purple card to Andar, and not even allowing him to accept, he stuffed it into his hand before quickly retreating, a pleased look on his face, everything that happened took place in less than a few seconds.

Chapter 356: The Tell...

Andar clasped his hands as a sign of respect to him and the Mayor beamed.

His gambit had worked, for it would be supremely difficult to enter Andar's good graces after this early period, and if he could provide any assistance that he might need at this time, he would be able to sow a seed of Karma with him, and in the future, a careless word of praise from Andar could elevate his town to the heavens.

It was the reason he had also sent his daughter ahead to meet Andar, he hoped she was able to get closer to him. They were the same age and she would also be proceeding to the Black Tower but she already had a master, and she would be skipping the trials. Relationships forged with such a talent like Andar would aid her greatly.

Andar went to his Master's side and bowed to him, looking at the other official Mage too, he also bowed.

The Mage smiled at him and turned to his Master, "Master Jonathan when they told me about the magnificent nature of your Apprentice, I thought it was mere compliments, but I see that the words do not do him any justice, he is a Titan among men. There is a reason the light blessed him with such a glorious talent."

His master smiled, "Thank you for your kind words Silas, he is a bit who still has the smell of milk around his body, don't overly praise him so his head would not fly off his shoulder. Please let all be seated, for today is a great day for Ikaron and all the mages, for a great star has risen among us."

Andar blinked. I thought my master wanted me to be humble.

His master turned to him, pointing at the seated figures " These are the representatives of the Black Tower here to collect candidates for the trials. They have come a long way, and your Awakening has drawn them here. The Rank 3 Mage here is Silas Wilsey and his younger brother disciple Daniel Redcliff, a Rank 3 Acolyte."

Andar stood and clasped his hands towards both of them as greetings, making sure he bowed when he greeted the Mage.

They both acknowledged his greeting with a smile, he noticed that the Acolyte's lips were white and his eyes were wild with a hidden mania, his rapid blinking eyes did not help his image, and it was impossible to hide the intense amount of jealousy, fear, and other negative emotion he tried to hide.

This boy wants to die.

Andar smiled and turned to his master, "Master you overpraise me, there is no reason why I'm that important, after all, we are all on the same journey of enlightenment."

Jonathan Melbrooks laughed, "My dear Apprentice, the path we are on is a thorny road filled with traps and dangers, and sadly that road has a limit, the same thing applies to you, with one fundamental difference, your path has no end or not anyone I can see at my level."

He looked at the confused face of Andar and he laughed again, it was a glorious laugh filled with pride and expectation. Andar was sure that for all the many years he had lived with his master, he had never seen this man laugh this much.

"I know you don't understand what has happened to you, you only know that you have Awakened, but not the nature of the specific type that transpired within your body. You see my Apprentice, the Awakening Process you went through is very rare, so rare in fact that it would be difficult to catch a glimpse of something similar ever happening in the next million or even ten million years."

"You don't just have an exceptional talent that is extremely difficult to come across, even in an esteemed Supreme World, you are also a Spirit Body. I don't know much about Spirit Bodies and all the hidden powers they command, but what I do know is that they are extremely special."

His master then took the time to explain to Andar what little he knew about Spirit bodies and his unique talent grade that had gone beyond the highest Black grade, any of which would lead him to the apex as a Mage. Now and then Silas would interject and expand on some details his master had missed or ignored.

Even as Andar was listening and contemplating his words, he could see the features of Silas, who looked like he was having an issue with his Communication device.

Apparently frustrated with his communication device, he then called out, "Excuse me, Master Jonathan, but do you have any issues receiving and sending messages? I have been attempting to reach my Master, the esteemed Archmage, but for some reason, I can not get through to him."

"Oh is that so?" Jonathan Melbrook scratched his nose, "I am having the same issue as well. This is a constant problem we have been having in this part of the world. I have sent my complaint countless times to the communication ministries but for some reason, their response is slow or nonexistent, but don't worry, such downtime would not last for long and it will be fixed, say in three hours from now."

Andar had lived with his Master long enough to know that when he scratched his nose, it was a tell that he was lying.

Silas cursed, "I will have those stupid bureaucrats strung up by their tendons! There are important reasons why Off Worlds Communication Arrays have to be properly maintained."

He turned to Andar and coughed, "This should be coming directly from my Master but due to the present circumstances we find ourselves, I will have to make do. Andar what do you know about the Trials to enter the Black Tower?"

Andar concentrated and replied, "It is a trial held to determine worthy participants for the Black Tower, inside the Trial Zone there would be chances to find specialized training manuals for Acolyte, also the Aether inside the Trial Zone is very dense and would increase the chances for participants to breakthrough to Acolyte."

Chapter 357: The Ambition Of Youth

Silas nodded at each of the points he made, "That's true, ultimately I am here to propose a better offer, you would indeed find training manuals in the Trial Zone but over the long years we have gathered copies of most of the Manuals that could be found inside the Trial Zone and for the benefit of increased Aether in the Trial Zone is frankly useless to someone like you."

Andar nodded, his body talent did not only draw on the Aether in the surroundings, it also generated Aether autonomously, although it was very slow but it made Andar someone that potentially would never run out of Aether even where none was to be found.

Because his Main body could accomplish this feat, Andar did not find it to be that impressive, but this was a heaven-defying talent that any Mage would willingly sacrifice their mother to have.

With the new upgrades to his physique, he could now contain a vast amount of Aether that he could neither use for training nor his spells unless he selected a specific Training Manual for him to use to unearth the mysteries behind his Spirit Matrix.

Without the Training Manual, he would just be sitting on a mountain of resources without any method to use it, and he would never become an Acolyte.

Silas continued, "My offer is this, my Master is an Archmage, and over the years he has gathered hundreds of Training Manuals, not just from the Trial Zone of the Black Tower but from Grand Towers all over the universe, he has some of the best Training Manuals you can ever hope to find, and as an Archmage you would find nobody better to direct you on your path."

He licked his lips, his eyes shining, "Perhaps you might not understand what being an Archmage is. Every Archmage is a world-shaking genius, with at least a White Ranked Talent or even a Spirit Body. They are immortal and invincible, and over the long year, they have gathered an impressive amount of experience and powerful items. Each of them is a fount of knowledge and to be acknowledged as a disciple of an Archmage is the only hope for you to reach that level, no matter how talented you are."

"I want you to come under the tutelage of my Master Andar and become my fellow disciple. I am sure with your talent my master would forgive me for going behind his

back to accept a disciple on his behalf. This is an opportunity I'm giving you that you would never get anywhere else, as a mortal. So what do you say?"

Andar considered his words carefully, the warning from his Master and the lie he told about the communication breakdown made him understand that he had to speak with a degree of both the wiseness of a man and the foolishness of youth.

Silas should not be apprehensive about him giving his youth, and so he needed to play his cards right.

There was a signal-jamming device inside his Masters Lab, and he had noticed the lights were on. So he understands that this communication gap was a situation manufactured by his master.

His Master had warned him not to reveal details about his Spirit Matrix to anyone, and Andar suspected that if he agreed to become the disciple of this Archmage, he would have to follow certain orders, like sharing the details of his Spirit Matrix with his fellow disciples in the guise of them trying to teach or direct him, and there would be no way to refuse.

He also refused to believe that with his talent he would not be able to find other Archmages as teachers, and he knew that as Mages had different ranks, there were also different ranks to an Archmage, and their specialties and strengths were different.

It would be quite foolish not to carefully select the best Archmage for his advancement.

To just pick the first Archmage that found him without selecting the best one for him was to cripple himself. He had the greatest advantage at this time when he was unaffiliated with any powers. Andar had great ambitions and he needed a great pedestal to accomplish it if he wanted to be of any use to his main body.

Yet he needed to be wise in his replies, or else Silas may take offense.

All these thoughts ran through his mind in the blink of an eye and he opened his mouth, "I thank you for the offer Mage Silas, it is a surprise to me that a great Archmage would want me to become their disciple even before meeting me, but this time, I'm determined to go to the Trial Zone, not because I am looking down on your gifts, but because I made a promise to myself."

Andar sighed, his silver eyes appeared downcasted, You may not know this Mage Silas, but before today no one believed I would ever awaken. I was labeled by my peers to be the most talented failure in history, and except for the wisdom and grace of my master, who had tried many methods to awaken me, I would have given up. I suspect that my Awakening was a result of all the efforts he had made on my behalf, is it not said that many streams make a river? The many actions of my master have led to my success today. Year after year, I've had to watch my peers leave me behind to achieve greater

things. Every day was a constant reminder of my failure, and the chance to ever embark onto the Trial Zone became slimmer."

He detected the face of Silas was beginning to change but continued as if he did not notice, in a self-righteous manner he spoke, "I made a promise to myself that if I ever awakened, then I would go to the Trial Zone and prove to myself that I was worth it. That it was worth the effort of my master." Andar ended his little speech with a fist in his chest, his face the very picture of a vibrant youth who strived to fight against the world and conquer it.

Chapter 358: The Token Of Participation

Silas was finding it hard to hold back his irritation, if not for the presence of a stronger mage by his side, he would have kidnapped this kid and carried him away the instant he found him.

He was not afraid of Andar's Master per se, but the man was connected, with the position in the Alchemist Union, and other executive positions on Ikaron V. He did not want to be delayed any more than he could bear, as every moment spent outside the Black Tower was a waste of time in his opinion.

If he truly needed to, Silas would consider the option of kidnapping Andae, he had weapons that were crafted by an Archmage, with enough power to raze this corner of the planet to ash. That option was becoming more attractive to him by the second, but he knew such actions were ultimately foolish and would serve to cause more harm than benefit for him in the long run.

Silas coughed, and nothing on his features showed the tumultuous emotions beneath his facade.

"Have you considered my words properly Andar, this is a one-in-a-lifetime opportunity I am presenting to you on a silver platter. Your vision is too small at this time and you believe the Trial Zone is something special, but we who have seen much know it is just a starting point, and the only thing you would find inside it is endless competition and maybe the Training Manual you would end up with would be basic and lackluster. Do not be foolish and throw away your future for some childish attempt at independence."

Andar nodded, and he bowed towards the mage, "I understand and I am truly grateful for the chance you have given me, although it might be the biggest mistake I will ever make, I still choose to undertake this journey to the Trial Zone, only with this would be depression and heartache in my heart be wiped away."

Daniel the Acolyte snorted, and muttered, "Foolish countryside bumpkin, kicking a gift horse in the mouth."

Andar eyes lit up, whether Daniel intended for him to hear his words or not, it was all he needed to finalize his decision, "I am sorry if my thoughts offend you. But even a country bumpkin like me has his dreams and aspirations, my goal ever since I was a child was to enter the Trial Zone, and no matter the obstacles I will face, I will make that trip."

Silas' face went white in anger as he noticed the resolve on Andar's face became fully set. He believed he might have been able to pressure the kid to become their master's disciple soon enough, but this stupid bastard beside him had to open his smelly mouth.

He had just effectively shut down any hope for him to easily convince the kid to follow his Master. Silas feared this was his fault for not mentoring Daniel well enough, he had grown too arrogant as a disciple of an Archmage and had forgotten the meaning of tact.

He pointed at Daniel, the anger on his face was not feigned, "You shall apologize to him this instant, this is a genius that would be hard to come across in ten thousand millennia, you should be putting forth words of encouragement and wisdom, not stupidity. When we return to the Black Tower, your punishment shall be severe."

Daniel bit his lips, reopening the closing wounds and he bowed before Andar, his tone stiff as a cinder block, "Apologies for my rashness, I meant nothing detrimental when I spoke."

Andar nodded and looked away from him, his pride and aloofness were on full display. Daniel's face went white and he choked back something inside his chest.

The Alchemist cleared his throat, "The child has made his decision, it is as they say, the beauty of youth is the time and the opportunities to make mistakes. Also, it is not as if the offer for discipleship was refused by my Apprentice. I am sure when he experienced the world outside he would understand this opportunity that had been given to him."

Silas knew he could no longer push ahead with his desires or it would come across as suspicious about his intentions. Going too far would inevitably lead to conflict, and that was something that he did not want at this time, for there was still time for other options.

They were already the first ones here and the communication blackout was a hidden blessing. He would quickly finish testing the other children and then immediately begin his leave taking them all with him.

Along the way, he would contact his master to meet them halfway, and he refused to believe that Andar would be able to keep his cool before the presence of an Archmage. If he was stubborn, then nothing was stopping his Master to forcefully bring him away.

Silas laughed and stood up, and he patted Andar on the shoulders, "If that is truly your desire, then so shall it be, I am barely 200 years old, so that means I'm still a youth. I have not forgotten the burning ambition inside my breast to prove to the world my talent.

I will be fulfilling my duty to my master's and finish the selection of candidates for the Trial. Rest well and prepare yourself Andar for in three hours I will be bringing the candidates away, you shall be coming along too."

He turned to leave but was stopped by Andar's master, "Silas I believe you are forgetting something. The token of participation."

Silas snapped his fingers, "Forgive me Master Jonathan, but the excitement of the discovery of such a great talent has caused me to forget my manners."

He opened his hand and on it was a purple cube hovering above it. The cube was spinning by itself with a consistent speed and he presented it to Andar, "Here is your ticket to the Trial ground. Congratulations."

Andar eyes were starstruck and he brought his hands forward and the purple cube was sent over resting on his hands.

The cube flashed and transformed into a tattoo that became imprinted on his forearm. It appeared very mystical because the tattoo still maintained its movement.

"Let's go." With a wave of his hand, Silas dragged Daniel and they were covered by a swirling tornado that sent them hurtling into the air.

Chapter 359: Exit Strategy

The Mayor stood and bowed to his Master before turning to Andar, "Remember to check the public storage for anything you require before you leave. I will see myself off, please take care of my daughter on your trip, she is a silly girl, but I'm sure she would be of assistance to you."

A few seconds later Livia ran after her father, clutching something tightly in her left hand, Andar looked after her retreating form with suspicion before turning to his master.

His master gestured for him to be quiet and to follow him. Andar nodded and his master hurried down to his studies, where he reached his desk and activated a hidden switch.

Andar felt the floor below him jolt as the room began to revolve. His eyes widened as he was not aware that such a mechanism had been built into this office after all the years he had spent here.

The revolving room revealed a long passageway and at the end of it, a staircase that led straight down. His master began descending the stairs and Andar followed, the staircase was carved from the rock beneath the laboratory, and from the marks on it, this was all handmade.

The curiosity in his heart was only tempered with deep thoughts about the current actions of his master.

They descended for more than seven stories when Andar had initially thought there were only two floors below the ground. When they reached the bottom, he heard the faint sound of rushing water, and it soon revealed an underground stream was below them all this while.

Andar looked around in amazement to see a functional mini-port, with a boat and provisions arranged in different sections, enough to feed and provide for a small army for a month.

His master began hurrying about and placing what he needed on the boat and pushing others into a Spatial Ring.

"Andar, connect the fuel nozzle to the boat, the injector port is closer to the stern, twist the cap to the left, not the right, with your strength you would tear the hull off the boat. I will tell you the reason why we are leaving like this, but we are running out of time and you are in danger."

Andar did not hesitate and he went to his task without any questions. He trusted his master. This man could have used or abused Andar on his quest to understand his talent, but he did not, he had treated Andar like his son and had given him no reason to ever believe he would betray him.

This was the thought of Andar, but deep down his wariness had increased and he had begun making plans, although he doubted he would be able to escape or fight back if his master had bad intentions in mind for him.

He successfully connected the pumps to the boat, and the fuel tank began to fill up. This technology was primitive. He looked away and watched his master in his preparations.

The Alchemist began to speak to him in a distracted manner while he was busy arranging the provisions. Andar doubted they would need most of what he was gathering, but his Master was someone who was always prepared for the worst.

"This is a boat I constructed using ancient fossil fuel technology. I cannot use Scripts, Aether Stones, or Magic to power it in order to prevent anyone from detecting any emission from it. Of course, it is silent. This was the backup route for the laboratory I created fifty years ago. Remember Andar, you must always have an exit strategy."

Andar was familiar with this habit of his master to speak about general matters while his mind was far away on other things.

In a few minutes, his master was done, and they boarded the boat, which started up with a few button pushes. The engine below whined to life with a quiet purr and the boat

began to move forward, navigation was automatic, yet his master still kept his eyes around, and with the focused look on his face, he must have other surveillance methods he was actively using.

The first part of the ride was silent and it left Andar wondering how far this underground river flowed, for they must have moved for at least thirty miles, and this would put them outside the town's territory.

His master seemed to breathe a sigh of relief after they had crossed a certain distance and he increased the speed of the boat and turned to him,

"We were lucky that the Mage that was sent during your awakening was so young, else he would have seized you at once and taken you away... sheer luck."

Andar's heart skipped a beat, "Master, is there anything wrong with my awakening?"

"Wrong?" his master shook his head, "No, there is nothing wrong, it is, in fact, the opposite, everything went right in your awakening. Everything went so right it is abnormal and... scary."

His master looked at him with a strange light in his eyes, as he took Andar's hand and began tracing the glowing silver veins beneath his skin with his fingers,

"Your body is the perfect vessel for a mage, do you understand that Andar? It does not seem like a byproduct of any awakening I have ever seen, it is..." his master seemed to be struggling to find the words to describe him, "...art!"

The curiosity and hunger burning in his eyes were shocking and with a strength of will he pulled himself away and seemed to collapse beside him, his voice became low as he said, "My apprentice, due to the unique nature of your talents, I began investigating intensively on all subjects of Awakening and so, I can boldly say in the entire planet I am one of the foremost researchers on the awakening process."

As he was speaking his voice gained volume and clarity as he went lost inside his memories, "As you know during your awakening, you crushed your gate and opened up your Spirit Matrix, the combination of your gate being drawn into your Spirit Matrix combined with a unique factor inside that space would produce a byproduct that would upgrade and change the body of the awakened. The mysteries of that process are beyond me."

Chapter 360: Trials Of A Mage

Andar was listening to his Master while watching his surroundings, curious about where this river led.

They had already moved past hundreds of miles by now as the boat was speeding along in that uncontested stretch of water with no obstacles inside the river to slow or delay them. This was the farthest place he had ever traveled to since being brought to this planet by his mother. Andar had never left the town.

This underground river was lit by bioluminescent corals and algae that made them almost feel like they were traveling above ground while beneath the stars.

The Alchemist began speaking more quickly as if he wanted to impart more information as fast as he could,

"There are many beneficial aspects to the change brought on by your Awakening, but for the most part it is random, it also depends on the talent of the awakened how much changes would be made in the body, and even the awakened who received the best benefits still had some areas in their bodies that remained unchanged, so it may appear as if their bodies were totally changed on the surface but inside, there would still be remnants of their old self."

He looked over to see if Andar was following his explanation and he nodded with satisfaction to see that was the case, he licked his lips and continued, "Over time as they ascend from Acolyte to Mage and hopefully Archmage, they would slowly perfect the rest of their bodies. To my knowledge, the best degree of change created by an Awakening was at 25 percent. I have not studied you deeply enough Andar but from what I can tell, your body's change is as high as 90 percent, maybe even higher."

"Is that number significant?" Andar asked

The Alchemist laughed in a self-deprecating manner, "It all depends on your talent, but I am a glorious Rank 4 Mage and my percentage of change is just a mere 61 percent. This is the limit of my talent and the end of my road. With my words, I think you understand what this change means."

Andar nodded, "This is the path for a Mage. We change our bodies to become closer to Aether. My body as a Mortal is almost equal to a Mage or maybe even greater, perhaps an Archmage"

The Alchemist's eyes were shining at his deduction and he nodded his head,

"Now I suspect it is because there has never been anyone with your talent before in recent history or perhaps even ever. This leads me back to the reason we are escaping, which should be obvious to you by now."

Andar gulped, he was silent, but that silence was enough acknowledgment. He began thinking that perhaps he may have gone a bit too hard on the body modification.

" I told you we were lucky, that is because Silas was the one that discovered you, and he is ultimately a young Mage and he could not fully grasp the frightening nature of your talent. He has been blown away by your Spirit Matrix grade and your Spirit Body, but he did not bother to investigate your body, possibly it was because of my presence or might be he must have thought you would never reject his offer. He knows you are a great talent but he does not truly understand what makes you great. This would not last for long, for he would soon realize his mistakes and he would return to inspect your body and I would not be able to refuse him. If we fight, I will lose. But that is just a small part of a larger problem."

The river they were on began to curve and the water began getting rougher as the waves began to increase around them, the sound of the river was growing, but Andar could still catch every single word said by his master, who became a bit more focused on their oath, but still left the navigation to the boat.

The Alchemist looked at Andar and sighed, "I don't think even I can understand all the intricacies of your talent, nevertheless, this undoubtedly places you in danger. You are still young with no powers or influence of your own, which means you can be easily controlled. Your mind can be taken over and your body seized. No great power would love to see you grow unchecked without placing you under their control. If not for seeing it with my own eyes, I would never believe a Mortal can have such talents."

His master paused for a while as if he was in deep thought and Andar waited for him patiently to continue, and he did after he seemed to have arrived at a conclusion.

"My Apprentice, If you would ever hope to have a chance to be able to grow then your only opportunity would be at the Trials. Yet, you must be strategic to arrive at the best outcome for yourself. In the Trials, you should reveal all your brilliance without fear, and when your name has resounded all over the Black Federation, every great power would take an interest in you. Ultimately you would be a public figure and anyone who wishes to take you under their wings would be wary of tampering with you else they would draw the ire of the entire Black Federation. Your talent would now be your shield against the world, instead of a curse."

As his master continued speaking, Andar began to shake in a complex blend of excitement and fear, he swallowed back a question he wanted to ask, as he wanted his master to finish talking. When the Alchemist saw his reaction, he smiled and rubbed his hair.

"All is not all bad my apprentice, you just have to get through this obstacle at the start of your journey. These are the trials all mages must go through at every step in their lives, for the moment we stop having problems, that is the time we have stopped growing, and if so, we are better off dead."

Chapter 361: The Alchemist Gift

Andar was silent after he heard those words from his Master's words. The conviction in his tone was unmistakable, this was a man who understands the journey of a Mage, and the road to fulfilling their potential.

Andar suddenly had the urge to stay beside this man, after all, his Master had spent more than a decade finding ways to manage his condition, and he had asked for nothing more from him than his dedication and perseverance.

They could go to another place and begin life anew. With his talents, he would be able to protect his master in a short amount of time.

[Rowan was amused by this thought process of Andar and he let it play out, he would be doing similar things in the future to create a more natural growth of this character from a naive youth to a jaded Mage. Of course, Rowan was Andar, but he had perfectly duplicated the child's consciousness.]

"Master, I know you have some Training Manuals, I can use them to become an Acolyte and embark on my path as a Mage, so I can stay by your side. You are the one responsible for most of my achievements, and I would rather be your disciple for as long as I live than to become an Archmage who forgets all who loved him."

"Silly child." The Alchemist cracked up, "The Training Manual I have on me can only get you so far. It would be the greatest waste of your talent, and I will kill myself first before I allow someone as great as you to destroy his future. As you know there are distinct levels to the Training Manual we have, and the best I have with me is at the Superb Grade. I found this Manual recently and I also included it in the possessions I will give you soon, but I hope you will do better than this, the danger ahead would be too great, and it would be impossible to hide from it. You can only face it head-on."

Noticing his confusion, the Alchemist began to elaborate, "There are seven grades to each Training Manual, which are Ordinary, Outstanding, Superb, Legacy, Mythical, Heavenly Fate, and Supreme. The proper divisions for Training Manuals would be explained better at the Trial Ground, but their division is self-apparent from the lowest to the highest."

Andar silently repeated the grades in his mind, "Master, would I find better grades of Training Manuals inside the Trial Zone?"

"Of course, that is one of the best places to find the perfect Manual for you. It is also a great reason for you to go to the Trial Zone because the place is a special region that intersects with many Great Towers, and it is a shared Trial Ground. You might be able to find a manual at the Mythical grade or even higher."

They soon reached their destination and Andar saw a small port on the West side of the flowing river, his master took over the navigation of the boat and steered them correctly towards it.

They both got off and proceeded to a hidden lift that carried them upwards, on their way to the surface, the face of the Alchemist changed and he cursed,

"They just broke my Signal Disruptor, that happened quicker than I planned. We would need to hurry. Here, take this Spatial Ring, it contains all the necessities you might need, including the Training Manual, Origin Crystals, and all your Alchemy Tool Kits, books, and other minor things you will need along your journey."

Collecting the Spatial Ring, he placed it on his left index finger and followed his master upwards until they reached the surface, and they found themselves inside an empty warehouse that was hundreds of feet wide.

His master brought out his staff from his Spatial Ring, it was made with a purple wood sourced from the rare Lightning Burst Tree. It was seven feet long and at the top of the staff were four purple flowers that resembled roses, the flowers were illuminated by lightning that shot out bright purple bolts that resembled wandering snakes.

He brought the end of the staff down and hit the ground thrice, sending bolts of purple lightning into the ground, the sounds of the staff hitting the earth were unnaturally drawn out, and Andar had to steady himself when the ground below him began to move.

His jaws dropped when the earth opened and a giant creature emerged, hundreds of feet long, it did not take long for him to figure out that this creature was, a sleeping Cloud Whale.

This was a famous beast that was reared by Mages for the purpose of traveling over long distances. They grew to massive proportions and could freely fly in the skies for long periods of time and at great speeds. Their Adults were even capable of moving through space, at that time they were called Void Whales.

This Cloud Whale was a juvenile as it was just three hundred feet from snout to tail, its skin was a mesmerizing blue and it had four pairs of eyes that were arranged from its mouth down to its massive fins.

"This is my gift to you, my dear Apprentice, it was to be my present to you when you awakened and reached the rank of Mage, but circumstances have forced me to present it to you earlier than I expected. Now open your left hand so I can attach its Spirit to yours while it sleeps. This is a powerful creature that is equal to a Mage, but with the aid of the Scripts I shall place on you, it would bear a major part of the burden."

Now open your left hand so I can attach its Spirit to yours while it sleeps. This is a powerful creature that is equal to a Mage, but with the aid of the Scripts I shall place on you, it would bear a major part of the burden."

Andar with no hesitation whatsoever stretched his hands forward. His eyes were trusting and filled with excitement at the possibility of owning a Cloud Whale.

His Master sighed, his Apprentice was still too trusting. He had warned him about the dangers his talent would bring to him when others discovered it, but, this child...

The alchemist began muttering the words to a spell while placing the Scripts on Andar's arm.

Chapter 362: The Hunt Begins

Andar small town was greeted with a loud bang from an explosion, and everyone in the street looked with dread as the entire top half of the four-story laboratory of the esteemed Alchemist in their town rose as if gripped by the hand of a giant before it slammed down destroying the entire building and any others in its vicinity.

A huge wave of dust and debris was scattered as many chemicals and reagents kept inside the laboratory began releasing fumes and some of them combusted, creating many-colored flames that lit up the skies.

Luckily enough, the Alchemist had purchased the entire street decades ago, and the houses there were empty, else the casualties would have been in the hundreds.

Two figures emerged from the dust, Silas and a shaken Mayor, who was finding it difficult to comprehend the quick changes happening, just a moment ago, they had all been smiling and celebrating the birth of a profound genius, now... it was all chaos.

Silas roughly turned the Mayor to face himself, "Find that duplicitous son of a cantankerous whore!" Silas spat his outrage in the face of the Mayor.

It did not take long for Silas to put together all the little pieces that he had missed when he had been enraptured by surprise, especially when he questioned the Mayor about the so-called communication hideout, and the man informed him that indeed they were usually such blackouts, but it did not last for more than a few minutes, any more than that, then the supervisors in charge know their heads would roll.

Silas was about to give a new order to the flustered Mayor when the Communication device on his waist lit up, he saw the imprint on the surface of the device and like a deflated balloon, all his outrage left his body only to be replaced by deep terror.

He began to shiver and he held the Device aloft in the air with magic and he backed away and bowed, his eyes fixed on the ground.

"Don't look up, you fool," Silas whispered furiously at the startled Mayor.

The Mayor was slow to respond and the words of Silas even made him inquisitive, he looked at the floating device, and he shrieked, his eyes bulged from his sockets and his head exploded.

The explosion did not stop at his head and continued down his body until there was nothing left. What was even more strange was that his body was blown into bloody bits but into pieces of red glass.

A soft female voice came from over the Communication Device, "I see my disciple is still fond of handing over his duties to his servants. I have received several urgent alerts from you Silas, for the fact you choose to contact me instead of your master must mean you have something important to tell me. Have there been any new developments in your task? Wait, don't answer that, my image is already here, let me see for myself."

Four seconds later a cold voice escaped from the Device, the anger of the Archmage was apparent, "You foolish child."

The word was like a divine curse and Silas' body began to crack like glass, he coughed and pieces of red glass escaped from his mouth. He knelt and his left leg cracked and detached from his body and fell at his side where it shattered into pieces.

Silas gasped in pain, but he made sure his voice was still steady, "Great One forgive me, I had no idea the Alchemist would flee with the child, I will swiftly pursue them, they would not have gone far."

The voice snorted, "At least tell me you checked the degree of change of this Spirit Body, how much of his body was Elementalised?"

Silas began to panic, "I... was about to do that when..."

"You are useless, pursue quickly, and I will chart a course for you. I am occupied with many issues at this time and I cannot send any help down to you to avoid any attention being drawn to this place."

The shattered body of the mayor that was lying on the floor began to shake and then the red glass on the floor began to grow and change configurations. Three minutes later, five large beasts made from glass arose from the body pieces.

"Follow my hounds, hunt them down, and bring the boy to me. I have checked there is no deep Karma with the people of this town with any major power, wipe all their

memories of this event. Silas if you do not bring the boy to me, then never return. I shall punish your master for his laziness, you do not send a dog to do the work of a man."

The cold female voice disappeared and the Communication Device fell from the air, and Silas fumbled and drew it to him, carefully placing it away before letting himself feel the effect of the Archmage's anger.

Silas groaned and reattached his leg with a chanted spell, it was a rough job and the edges of the wound still glinted with pieces of glass. He could not reverse his body back to flesh, and unless he brought Andar to the Great One, he would be cursed to become a hybrid half-man, half-glass creature until he perished.

His master would also face severe punishment from the Archmage. Indeed Silas was not the personal disciple of the Archmage as he had touted to the people here, he was simply a servant of one of the disciples of the Archmage, the same as Daniel. They were simply too talentless to enter the eyes of an Archmage.

It was one reason why Daniel was so frustrated and jealous when he saw Andar refusing the discipleship of an Archmage, countless geniuses would do anything to become acknowledged by an Archmage, while a backwater bumpkin was refusing a divine grace.

Silas began to walk towards the town. Each step he took brought him great pain, and he almost barked with rage at the hounds, but he managed to keep his tone in check, who knew what the Archmage left inside these creatures, "Find him!"

He began chanting a spell to erase the mind of every mortal in this town. It was not a particularly difficult one, it just involved a bit of Aura Manipulation, and in a short while he was done, he released a pale yellow light that rose into the air where it shattered into tiny bits and began to slowly spread all over the town, infecting every mind and robbing them of their memories.

Chapter 363: Rank 2 Scripts

Silas slowly walked outside, in a few moments his spell would have accomplished its purpose. He grimaced in pain when the voice of Daniel who was shocked at his present appearance entered his ears,

"Disciple Brother, what happened to you? Is the master displeased? It is all the fault of that brat, isn't it? We should contact our master so she can reach the Great One."

Each word spoken by Daniel only increased Silas' rage and irritation, he had gone over the shoulders of his master and contacted the Archmage directly, it was all because of greed. He knew such a great find would give him considerable rewards.

Yet with this setback, he was now on the clock, and his future was grim if he failed. His anger burst out and he seized the young Acolyte by the throat, "Silence you whining mongrel, your foolish attempt at jealousy may have pushed that boy far from our reach. By the Light, if I'm able to, I should kill you now."

Daniel's eyes were wide with surprise and anger, "What do you mean?.. I..."

Silas sneered and threw the boy roughly to the side with so much force he slammed against the rubble of the collapsed building, he broke his left arm and fractured three ribs. Daniel let out a scream of pain as his body spasmed.

Silas walked to him and stepped on his throat, he licked his lips, and Daniel could hardly do anything but claw at his feet using both his arms, disregarding the intense pain that was emerging from his broken hand.

Silas looked at the thrashing boy beneath his feet, the mania and cruelty in his eyes growing, as they seemed to be feeding on the pain his half-glass body was inflicting on him. The pain made him more manic and his mania increased his sense of pain, this unholy feedback was causing his mental state to rapidly distort.

With an effort of will he suppressed his cruelty, rotating his Spirit Matrix and sending cool streams of Aether into his Spirit to reduce his pain and irritation.

Removing his feet from the throat of the boy, he growled, "Finish the selection of candidates, when you are done, lead them to the western gate of the town, we shall leave when I return. All memories of this day had been wiped from their heads, so be careful with your words. Go!"

Suppressing the anger inside his chest, Daniel nodded, pushed himself to a sitting position, and began struggling to stand up. Silas regarded him for a while like a small child who plucked out the legs of an ant and watched it squirm.

He chanted a spell of Reinvigoration on the Acolyte, and Daniel sprang to his feet as if he had been shot full of adrenaline, Silas tossed a healing potion to the Acolyte and brought out his staff, he chanted a spell and the wind carried him into the sky where he vanished a few moments later, following the trails of the glass hounds.

The signs they were giving him were that they had caught a scent. It was of the Alchemist. Silas' smile was as wide as a crocodile's.

Daniel drank the bitter potion while muttering in his mind that he expected Silas to give him the bitter ones. He looked away from the shrinking figure that had vanished into the horizon and proceeded towards the direction of the Town's hall, the sooner he was done with this assignment, the better. He could then claim his reward, so he could use the resources gained to push for the rank of Mage.

After all, he was more talented than Silas, he had the potential to become a Rank 6 Mage, maybe higher. He would keep all the injustice he suffered and they would be repaid a hundred times over.

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Andar stood with his eyes closed a thousand miles up in the air. Standing on the body of the Cloud Whale he did not feel that he was in the sky, instead it was almost as if he was on solid ground.

Except for the deep reverberation of the heart of the Cloud Whale underneath his feet, he could pretend he was still standing on the ground. There was no sign that would show he was moving with a distance-devouring pace.

There was also no wind around him except a slight breeze, the intense wind generated by the movement of the beast was blocked by a faint blue corona around the Cloud Whale that kept air and any other obstacles away from it, like a shield.

His brows were furrowed in concentration as he explored the Script that was on his left forearm. He was hoping to create a deeper connection with it, as the makeup of this Script was deeply fascinating.

Something surprising had occurred during the process of imprinting the Scripts in his skin, that had shocked his Master to the core.

Andar frowned when he heard a low rumble and a joyful exclamation from the Cloud Whale but then that frown turned to a smile when he got the feedback of the Cloud Whale's emotions through the Scripts.

The rumble was the sound of the Cloud Whale breaking past the sound barrier, after a decade of sleeping the young Cloud Whale was celebrating the chance to finally roam the skies.

It was a Cloud Whale equal to a Rank 2 Mage, its speed would keep increasing until it would be moving at five times the speed of sound.

Andar was very satisfied with the speed of this beast, which meant he would reach the Location for the Interplanetary Teleportation in seven hours.

There were many challenges to fuse a Script of this level to a Mortal, by general consensus and common sense, everyone else would say it was impossible.

Rowan outdid himself when he remade this body.

There were three problems to solve to fuse the Script with Andar, the first was the Aether requirement, the second was the carrying capacity of Andar's body, and the Third was the mental strain.

Chapter 364: Aegis

When his Master was placing the Script on his skin, he had expected it to draw deeply on Andar's Aether, and he would make up the difference, but he became shocked when he felt the amount of Aether inside his body that seemed limitless.

Andar's physique had always attracted and generated an excessive amount of Aether, but his master knew at most it was at the Limit of a Rank 1 Mage, but this was a Rank 2 Script.

His Master had waited for a while for Andar to feel the strain of his Aether draining away but he gave up after Andar showed no signs at all that he was reaching his limits. He could only suppress the shock and excitement in his heart, the implications of Andar's physique were too terrifying for him to contemplate at this time.

The next was the carrying capacity, this simply meant the ability of the body to withstand any Mystical loads of any sort placed on it, be it Spells, Runes, or Scripts.

A Script was similar to Runes and it was related to the Transcription field in Alchemy, there were different difficulty thresholds when it came to utilizing Scripts but only Diamond Ranked Alchemists and above could fuse Script with living flesh, and Jonathan Melbrook was above that, as he was a Mithril Rank Alchemist.

A mortal could carry one Rank 0 script and an Acolyte from Rank 1 to Rank 3 could carry a total of 10 Rank 0 Scripts and a single Rank 1 Script. Yet that was just in theory, many factors could influence the amounts of Script an Acolyte could carry.

A Mage could carry multiple Rank 1 scripts and upwards the only limitation was that the Mage must have enough Aether to power it, or they would be drained dry.

The Script the Alchemist was using on Andar was very complex, it was a combination of fifteen Rank 1 Scripts and two Rank 2 Scripts that were merged to achieve multiple tasks that needed to function in tandem. The name of this Script was called Aegis.

This sort of complex Script was beyond the Carrying Capacity of most Rank 1 mages and only a Rank 2 mage would be able to use it because of the Aether needed and the elevated Carrying Capacity of their bodies.

Yet Andar had effortlessly crushed the Aether requirement and the Carrying Capacity of his body must be quite substantial for he was not feeling any strain holding this Script.

The Alchemist had learned to hold back his shock, but it was getting harder with every notion he knew being continuously shattered by his Apprentice.

It was like witnessing the birth of a Legend with his own eyes. He knew Andar's name would shake the very foundation of the World of mages, and the idea almost made him tear up.

The last part was what his Master was worried about the most was the Mental Strain or Mental Load. This one depended on the Spirit of the individual, and he could finally breathe a sigh of relief when he saw Andar could not handle the Mental Strain of carrying a Rank 2 Script.

He bolstered the Spirit embedded inside Aegis with his own, and he expected it to last for at least two years before it wore out. He was a Rank 4 Mage and his Spirit was potent.

Andar knew he would be able to hold back the Mental Strain, but he had to pretend and show that he had limits, or else his Master would no longer be in awe, but instead, would become afraid and suspicious, as far as he knew, talent could only go so far, Andar was still a Mortal, with a Mortal Spirit, it would be impossible to have no Mental Load carrying such a Script.

The purpose of Aegis was substantial, and his Master had given him the chart for upgrading it up to Rank 4, anything more than that then Andar would have to find his way forward, for Rank 4 was the limits of his Master's knowledge. Aegis at Rank 4 would be able to hold a Cloud Whale with abilities equal to a Rank 4 Mage.

Aegis would link the life force of the Cloud Whale to his own, this was a life-bound contract that places the life and well-being of the Cloud Whale to his own.

It also served as a shelter for the beast. Andar would easily house the Cloud Whale inside the Rune where it could rest and cultivate its innate abilities in peace.

This shelter would also serve to boost the level of the Cloud Whale using the Aether of its owner, usually, this feature was disabled by most Mages until they were two Ranks higher than their contracted beast, they would never be able to grow as a Mage with the consumption of their Aether being shared by their contracted beast.

Andar was an Anomaly, he was holding a Rank 2 script that was holding a Cloud Whale with abilities similar to a Rank 2 Mage, yet he was still a Mortal.

There were also benefits to this particular Rank 2 Scripts, Andar now had the strength of a Rank 2 beast by his side, and although the Cloud Whale was not known for its offensive capabilities, its unmatched speed and resilience were top-notch.

With Andar unknown reserves of Aether, it was possible that this Cloud Whale would also grow extremely quickly, the only thing that may delay its advancement apart from Aether was Andar's ability to formulate a Rank 3 Aegis and upgrade the one he was currently using.

Presently he was alone, and his Master had remained behind to throw any pursuers off his track. Andar was deeply grateful to his Master, and he was surprised that even in a universe filled with darkness, you could still find light in the most unexpected of places.

He knew his Master could have attempted to take over his body, in fact, Rowan had planned extensively for something like that. Greed was the first thing he expected to be faced with when the true scale of his potential was revealed and there was no way he would leave himself unprotected when he was weak.

Chapter 365: The Alchemist Resolve

The Tome forged from the Empyrean remains of his Ouroboros Serpents was not only used to rebuild his body but there were many mystical traps placed inside it.

Eva had fashioned terrible Spells that Andar would be able to call upon when he was in a bind, and until now he had no chance to use them. The most important of them was a Teleportation Spell and a Combustion Spell that would reduce his body to atoms if he had no way out.

These spells were scattered all over his cells in little pieces and it was quite impossible to detect until he pulled them together using a configuration that only he knew about.

Far behind him, there was a dull rumble carried by Aether that swept past him, there was a battle happening.

Andar looked back, and he could see far in the distance, he saw the edges of the horizon lit up with a purple glow as massive lightning bolts accompanied by dark clouds clashed against something.

Andar squeezed his fist tight and he turned away, looking ahead, his eyes were cold. Through the Script he urged the Cloud Whale to move faster, with a joyful bellow the beast agreed and the speed of the beast soon reached three times the speed of sound and it was still rising.

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Silas held up a smoking skull that soon crumbled to ashes in his palm, he was careful to isolate the ash from reaching him, and after making sure it was not the Alchemist he flung it away with anger.

This was the third time he was clashing with the 'Alchemist' and as always he discovered that it was just a doppelganger. The problems of dealing with wily old foxes like the Alchemist was not their power but their cunning that had been honed for centuries.

The Glass Hound created by the Archmage was a marvelous Spell, but if you realize that she had so little to work with when making the Spell, it was incredible enough she could create them at all and they could function at such a level. Without their guidance, Silas would have been left with no method to track the Alchemist.

The Archmage had used only a tiny bit of power in his Communication Device paired with her voice to create the Glass Hounds, the Mayor's body was also not the best material, but it served its purpose. However, the Alchemist was still evading their pursuit.

The cunning Alchemist had buried several failsafes and traps along different routes and created many doppelgangers of himself using Transmutation and on such a deep level that it was fooling the hounds and dragging their attention in different directions.

The first time Silas attempted to separate the Glass Hounds to chase after the scent, the hidden Alchemist had struck, killing two of the hounds and now Silas decided to individually check out each of the leads and keep all the hounds with him.

The first doppelganger he saw was so life-like that after he took it down, he did not shield himself enough from the explosion that followed. Whatever methods the Alchemist used to create them, the resulting explosion created a potent flame that burned incredibly hot and was even harder to put out, worse yet the flames were filled with a peculiar poison that led to necrosis of the flesh.

Silas was burned beyond recognition, only his tenacious life force as a Rank 3 mage and the desperation in his heart kept him on his feet, but he lost an eye, and he was now bald, his skin was red and burnt, filled with pus as his body struggled to heal and fight off the toxins also present in the flames.

Silas had stopped holding back on the growing wave of fury and cruelty in his heart. He wanted blood. This day was turning into one of the worst days in his entire life.

He began to methodically take down all the doppelgangers he was tracking and when there were only two more left, he paused and analyzed the data he was left with. One should be pointed in the right direction, while the other would be a diversion.

He did not particularly care for which was the correct route, he would be finding the son of a diseased swine anytime now. He increased the speed of his flight and the Glass Hounds below cracked the earth with their heavy treads as they kept up with him.

In a short while, he caught sight of a figure on a hill, holding a purple staff, and the wind whipping his cloak about. He was hooded and by his posture, he seemed to be resting. Apparently, he must have been waiting for a while now.

The relaxed posture of the Alchemist created a flame of hate inside Silas heart and he manifested his fury.

Silas opened his palm and a green fireball swirled into existence, the fireball had a noxious stench, for Silas had been actively pushing all the toxins from his body into his hand, and when he saw his target he marked his location with his Spirit and he sent the fireball flying towards him.

The figure with the purple staff nonchalantly slapped the fireball aside, his actions pushed his hood and revealed Jonathan Melbrooks the Alchemist, Andar's Master.

Silas grinned and stepped back while still in the air, "It's really you this time. Then..."

He looked in the other direction where the Hounds were picking up a signal, "...that must be your apprentice."

Looking down at the hounds he commanded, "Fetch!" The remaining three Glass Hounds made a weird metallic noise from their throat and began to bound away in pursuit, surprisingly the Alchemist let them pursue with no sign of intervening.

"Why did you escape?" Silas asked, "I had nothing but goodwill for your Apprentice."

"Don't play your childish mind games with me Silas, your goodwill is at the end of a leash. My Apprentice is magnificent and even if it is the last thing I do, I will give him the chance to become great. I am useless because of my lack of strength and I cannot properly defend him, but I will never allow him to become your master's puppet."

With those words Jonathan Melbrooks attacked, a large lightning bolt erupting from his Mage Staff. As a Rank 4 Mage, he was way more powerful than Silas, but he knew the battle would not be easy.

Chapter 366: The Broken Tile

The battle began in a blink of an eye, but as if he was expecting it, Silas laughed, pieces of his flaking skin falling from his face as his laughter stretched the healing scars, "My master always said the best defense is a good offense. Don't die, Jonathan, before I have my fun!"

Silas brought out a cracked pink crystal that was as small as an apple and he pointed it at the incoming lightning. A shard of crystal shaped like a spear surged from the pink

crystal he was holding and struck the incoming lightning bolt scattering the energy without losing any momentum and jetted towards the Alchemist.

The Alchemist pointed with his left finger and Scripts began appearing in mid-air, in the blink of an eye he had already assembled hundreds of Rank 1 and Rank 2 Scripts. He had already prepared them before and was just releasing them from his sleeves.

The crystal spear impacted against the gathered scripts with a loud booming sound that sent shockwaves that destroyed the hill the Alchemist stood upon, he grunted and retreated, before his Robe seemed to develop a mind of its own and dragged the Alchemist to the left.

That move happened just in the nick of time for the crystal spear silently passed by the Alchemist, almost brushing his shoulders. When the spear penetrated the ground, the earth groaned, and for thousands of feet everything below turned to a pink crystal that resembled fine glass.

The crustal suddenly contacted itself with a loud crash and the affected area that was thousands of feet in size was squeezed into a crystal the size of a bean before it vanished leaving a massive crater behind with depths that were impossible to easily fathom.

If the Alchemist was panicking at such a devastating power he did not show it, he only pointed again, and a massive formation lit up below Silas and another simultaneously lit up above him and they began to rotate, forming a vortex of lightning that trapped Silas inside.

The force generated inside that vortex would grind diamonds to dust in mere moments, as numerous Spatial cracks began to appear inside the vortex.

Silas became serious, as all the defenses he placed on his body were being used up faster than he had anticipated, dozens of charms and amulets were turning to dust, and he shouted in anger and pointed the pink crystal above him and pushed a third of the Aether in his body inside it.

The pink crystal in his hands made a metallic whine and dozens of spears shot out from it that tore the vortex into pieces and impacted the formation above and below him. The formation froze and the purple lightning that the formation was created with began to transform into pink crystals, and they all collapsed into sparkling shards that were lit up by the sunset.

Silas spread his hand wide and began to laugh, he was enjoying himself, all the pressure in his heart was being released, "Do you know what I'm holding in my hands? This is an Artifact from an Archmage! Yet you still stand against me? Stop this pathetic attempt and kneel for mercy."

"Artifact?" The Alchemist sneered, "That is a broken tile that should have been discarded like trash, still you hold it like a treasure. A pitiful dog who has forgotten the meaning of being a Mage."

Silas' face changed and blood rushed up into his head, he looked at the crystal in his hand and indeed it looked like a broken tile, in fact, he could even smell the faint scent of floral soap.

He recalled how he had suffered for close to three decades and paid thousands of Origin Crystal in bribes and payments before his master had agreed to grant him an Archmage Artifact he no longer needed.

Silas recollected that the other personal disciples of the Archmage had been laughing when he had left with his prize, his eyes were star-struck and his body shaking in excitement, but he did not care about their mockery, for he was holding a Divine Artifact that would protect him for centuries.

For a moment he began to wonder if he was a dog with bad eyesight, the truth about his "treasure" was before him all this while, yet he was now just opening himself to it.

"I will pull out your eyes!" Silas screamed in rage.

"If you can, then it will serve you a thousand times better than yours ever did. Be quiet and fight little dog, for before your ancestors had life, I was already roaming the world."

The Alchemist pointed his staff to the skies, and he began to write. The four flowers on top of the staff began releasing lightning that began to etch itself in the air, as he began making Scripts with the lightning element.

In a dexterous manner beyond any mortal, he was controlling the four flowers to write four different complex Rank 4 Scripts at the same time.

Such a shocking display began to attract all the Aether for miles, as formation after formation began to appear around the Alchemist. From Mind Whip Formation, Wind chasing Formation, Divine Strength, to Quick Mind and Many other Complex Script until the Alchemist surroundings began to shine as bright as the sun.

Silas' features went solemn, and he stopped looking down at the Alchemist, this display of power was shocking in the sheer complexity of the Scripts that the Alchemist was weaving so effortlessly.

Silas had tried his hands at learning how to create Scripts, but he gave up after a while, this was a discipline that needed many centuries of devotion combined with talent. Silas acknowledged that even a hundred of him was not the Alchemist match, but he had a Divine Artifact damnit.

He pointed the pink crystal towards the Alchemist and imbued it with all the Aether he could spare, harshly rotating his Spirit Matrix to draw any single bit of Aether in his surroundings while drinking several potions to boost his Aether capacity.

The crystal spears that erupted from the crystal shard in his hand were hundreds of feet long and they tore the air with their passage, ripping holes in reality.

Chapter 367: Dragon Immolation

The Alchemist tapped the end of the staff on the air, and the battle began. Knowing he could not clash head-on with the crystal spears he aimed to divert and redirect them, if he could get a single Spell to reach Silas he would win.

He used the Infernal Twister Spell he previously deployed to strip Silas of his protections, so that any random Spell that could touch Silas would be the end of the battle. This was a strategy often used in battles between Mages.

There was a major difference between the power of a Rank 3 Mage and a Rank 4 Mage, that was far wider than between a Rank 2 Mage and a Rank 3 Mage. So he needed only a single opportunity.

The Alchemist was now aware that these crystal spears could destabilize any Aether structure they touched, he became cognizant of that fact after they tore his Infernal Twister Spell to pieces, so he shielded his Scripts with every bit of material he could spare that could block the touch of the crystals even for a single second.

He knew that his plan had a high degree of failure, but he had no choice but to go along with it. He made a thousand calculations in a fraction of a second and his eyes followed the track of the crystal spears heading his way, and he unleashed his might.

The impact of their clash shook the heavens and the earth, and Silas began to laugh in exultation, the explosion had torn apart a section of space, although he could not see the result of the clash, but he knew he was undoubtedly the winner.

The space ahead was twisted by chaos, whatever Magic that clashed against the Crystal Spears were potent as the black clouds covered by streaks of purple lightning bolts shot up for miles, and this fantastical scene could be seen with the naked eyes for hundreds of miles.

For a Rank 4 Mage to battle against the Artifact of an Archmage was beyond stupid, no matter how versatile or powerful he was. He did not need the Mage to survive, he only needed Andar, so Silas did not hold back.

His mind was beginning to contemplate going after the Glass Hounds to ensure the task went smoothly when a purple glint shone in the center of the commotion and a lightning bolt shot towards Silas.

He sneered and sent a crystal spear to scatter the lightning, it would seem the Alchemist still had a bit of fight left in him. About to call up more spears to end it all, he failed to notice that the lightning he scattered with the spear did not disappear.

Unexpectedly the scattered lightning converged and transformed into the Alchemist, he had a gaping hole in his chest and most of his robes had torn off, but he was within a hundred feet of Silas, for Mages of their level, they could as well be holding hands.

Silas's eye widened in panic, as a scream of horror began to rise from his chest, but he was too late.

The staff of the Alchemist lined up with his head and a purple glow began to emanate from it. Despair could be seen inside the eye of Silas as the Alchemist snapped his fingers and he unleashed an Entry Tier 5 Spell— Dragon Immolation.

The lightning bolt that emerged from the staff broke it into pieces, it was a sacrifice necessary to cast a spell higher than his rank, his injury also worsened as he vomited blood and almost fell down from the sky.

The Spell took the shape of a lifelike Dragon that gave out a terrible roar, it was possible to see all its long fangs and the bloody saliva inside the mouth of the Dragon.

With a long sonorous roar the Dragon began to expand as it soared towards Silas until its serpentine body was at least fifty feet long.

Silas closed his single eye expecting his death, the fucking Alchemist had to use a Tier 5 spell against him, how was he expected to respond to that especially when it was too late to make any adjustment to the crystal he was holding.

A deafening sound shook him from his daze, and he opened his eyes to see himself inside the jaws of the dragon, but he was still alive.

Massive booming sound escaped from the mouth of the dragon as lightning hot enough to melt steel and stone surrounded Silas but he was unharmed.

The mental acuity of a Mage was considerable, so it did not take long for him to understand that he was being protected by the Divine Artifact.

Silas did not know it could do that after all these years of using it. In fact it was not supposed to do that. This crystal was only for offense, which his master had repeatedly told him was the best defense.

Never looking a gift horse in the mouth, Silas could not help but grin, as he thought that inside the house of the Divine, even the cats and dogs were mightier than dragons.

The crystal had expanded and covered his body and no matter how much lightning the dragon spewed on him, it did not work, he saw the fangs of the dragon beginning to crack as blood began raining down onto the ground, and Silas could not help but feel a sting of envy as he perused this Tier 5 spell that was almost lifelike.

With a last frustrated roar the dragon exploded, and for a few seconds the only thing Silas could see was an endless wave of purple lightning, he was safe from the heat or reverberations, and he folded his arms as he admired the view.

When the explosion ended, a scene of devastation could be seen for miles. A Tier 5 Spell was beginning to touch the Realm of Laws, and its effect on the environment could not be underestimated.

Silas looked ahead to see the look on the face of the Alchemist expecting his shock, and became a bit annoyed when he did not see any form of panic or despair, just acceptance. His cold gray eyes were still looking at the crystal shield around Silas body as if he was judging for any weakness.

"What do you understand about the Divine ..." Silas felt a stinging pain in his spine, but he ignored it, he wanted to gloat, "What do you..."

This time the pain became too strong for him to ignore and he swept his perception all over his body. He paused and then cried out in shock.

Chapter 368: A Broken Spirit Matrix

Silas' cry of shock was almost comical, his single eye was bugging out of his head, as shock and disbelief clouded his mind.

The red crystals that were the sign of the Archmage's fury on his body, were beginning to grow and supplant his flesh, his cries grew shrill as the crystal devoured his entire legs and he watched in shock as his member fell off before being replaced by smooth red glass.

He tore the remains of his clothes from his body, as he watched the crystal consume his abs and his chest, and quickly surged up his neck.

"Great one, why..."

He was silenced by the crystal shield that once protected him from the Tier 5 spell snapped shut like a vice, covering him up and blocking his voice, the crystal began to transform what was left of his flesh into glass.

The last thing he heard was a cold female voice, "You failed me dog, my hounds found nothing and time has passed, now I take matters into my hands..."

The Alchemist backed away, he was surprised at this turn of events, Jonathan Melbrooks had given it his all, and his old bones could not take any more fighting, he could run, but something told him that for what was coming it would be useless.

He searched around his body for his pipe and he could not find it, it must have fallen or was destroyed during the previous confrontation. He wanted to smoke at this time, and he sighed as he guessed his craving would have to go unsatisfied.

The bait he had spread around contained his Aura and Andar's. The Cloud Whale was an unknown factor, not easily found in the Black Federation. As he expected, the Mage went after the bait, and by now Andar should be too far away for them to stop him.

He looked impassively as the body of Silas began to twist and compress, he did not hear the sounds of breaking bones, only a weird shrill noise like fingernails being scratched on a board. If he was not wrong he was about to be visited by an Archmage, but he had no fear or regrets, this was a fitting way to go, considering how he had lived his life.

When the transformation was over, a female form stood before him that resembled a bloody crystal, the eyes of this being were pink and it had no nose or mouth, and that was all he could observe before a formless force dragged him and brought him before the being.

He did not struggle, but he still ended up coughing deeply, and when he spat, it was filled with blood, his lungs had been shredded in the fight.

The force that dragged him to the Archmage was not gentle, and the battle he had just fought had destroyed a significant amount of his body. Only the vitality and tenacity of a rank 4 Mage kept him alive.

"You know who I am, yet you do not bow." A cold female voice that made the Alchemist feel as if a mountain had been placed on his chest entered his mind.

With a force of will that had been honed over many centuries of strife and struggles, the Alchemist whispered, that was all he could do as he barely had the strength to breathe, "I do not bow to enemies."

The figure cocked her head to the side and brought a finger up to the Alchemist's chin, raising his head higher so she could look into his eyes.

"You are an interesting specimen. I can see from the scars you have on your consciousness that you have mutilated your Spirit so I cannot peer into your mind without turning you into a fucking retard."

The voice was calm yet still possessed a shocking coldness and pressure that made the Alchemist struggle to draw breath.

"Jonathan Melbrooks, that is not your name, for it doesn't resonate with your Spirit. You have changed your physique and shattered your Spirit Matrix before. Hmm, fascinating, you were previously a Rank 9 Mage. Someone like you cannot be unknown. Now I'm getting interested."

The figure chuckled, "Your Apprentice would still become mine, with you by my side. That is a foregone conclusion, also your history must be fascinating, a Mage on the cusp of becoming an Archmage yet shattering your own Spirit Matrix, how... tantalizing."

The figure seized the Alchemist by the nape of his neck like a little puppy and the surroundings blurred, and she arrived before the three Glass Hounds, and she absorbed them into her body.

She began constructing a formation in the air with her free hand. Her hands were moving so fast it was almost a blur as she produced countless Rank 9 Scripts, as she was working she shook the Alchemist held in her hand in a distracted manner like he was made of a few pieces of clothes, "Stop trying to kill yourself." She said, "You're annoying me with such stupid actions, I thought you were smarter than this."

The Alchemist began to cough and strained to raise his hand and touched the middle of his forehead with his index finger, and he whispered, "I am."

The world around them was unexpectedly swallowed by an intense bolt of lightning that originated from up ahead. A while later the lady made from crystal appeared unharmed but the Alchemist was gone and she was alone. seeming to be deep in thought, she sighed and finished the Formation she was creating.

An ethereal door appeared before her that seemed to exist in many dimensions at the same time, as it faded in and out of reality.

She stepped through the door and her body began to break apart and it reassembled back into two people, Silas and the Mayor.

The Mayor looked around in shock, touching his naked body. Silas was also whole except he had lost his right eye and left arm.

Silas did not complain even though he knew the Archmage could have easily remade his body without any flaws, he dragged the confused Mayor down and they both bowed.

A fading voice in the breeze echoed, "I have created a gate to the Trial Zone in the Town, use it. Silas when you meet Andar give him this."

A gleaming crystal appeared in front of Silas, and he accepted it with a deep bow, "Extend my goodwill towards him, and don't antagonize the young boy. If he requests for your head in anger, you shall present it to him while smiling."

Silas grimaced, yet he still bowed.

Chapter 369: Rezur City

It was not long before Andar reached his destination which was Rezur City, inside this sprawling metropolis would be the Teleportation Portal that would take him to Trial Grounds.

If it was possible he would have preferred to use other methods to reach the Trial Grounds, but he was left with only this option, he only hoped that his Master would have delayed Silas and the rest long enough to ensure his safe passage.

Rezur was the largest City in Ikaron V. It was the center of commerce and every major guild and organization had branches in this city. He had visited this place a few times with his master and he had never forgotten the experience.

To the young Andar, the city was filled with mysteries and adventure, and every corner that was revealed showed a new story.

He tapped the Cloud Whale twice while communicating with Aegis for it to slow down and land before the opened gate of the Walled City.

Except for Mages of Rank 3 and upwards, certain governmental bodies, and security forces, everyone else was forbidden from flying over the city. To ensure that regulation there was a massive formation shrouding the entire city, and only powers of a certain extent or those that were authorized could use the city's airspace.

Andar landed a few meters from the great gate, his Cloud Whale drawing surprised stares and exclamations, such a rare and powerful beast like the Cloud Whale was rarely seen, and Andar's presence was also shocking.

His silver eyes and inherent air of nobility and grace distinguished him from anyone around, even a pair of passing mages could not help but check him out again, the power of his mount and his appearance gave Andar the distinguished presence of an Archmage Progeny.

Andar with Rowan's memories and bearing was used to power and nobility and he effortlessly exuded that grace that could not be faked.

Andar waved his hand, and the Cloud Whale was covered by a silver film and it shrunk until it disappeared into the Aegis Script with a loud whoosh that stirred up dust and a large burst of wind.

The Cloud Whale appeared inside the Script and looked around in awe with its many large eyes. The inside of the Aegis Script was filled with a silver fog and there was also a small growing pool of silver below.

The Cloud Whale gave a loud bellow of excitement for this was dense and concentrated Aether that was of high quality. It basked inside of it and closed its eyes in pleasure and it began to slowly breathe in the Aether as its cultivation and rest began.

Andar, seeing the comfortable state of the beast, smiled and began entering the city.

People unconsciously steered away from Andar's path as he called up to the open gates and entered the City. The security checkpoint at the gate had already scanned him with their specialized devices and no discernable threat or bounty was assigned to him, so he could easily enter the city with no obstructions.

He knew his way to the Teleportation Portal, and it was in the central part of the city. Andar hailed a passing vehicle and stated his directions. The driver gave him a transportation time of six hours, with the fare being three Origin Chips. This was a bit too expensive, but Andar told him he would pay him double if he could reduce the transportation time by half.

The man grinned exposing brown teeth stained by years of substance abuse, and placed the pedal to the metal. The sudden speed jolted Andar and when he clutched the side of the chair in surprise, his hand depressed the metal.

Andar sighed and took the time to repair the chair bit by bit making sure the driver was not aware of his blunder.

Regarding the issue of money, Andar was surprised that his master was able to give him one hundred Origin Shards. This should be most of the money that he would have gathered over his lifetime. His debt to this man was growing and Andar kept this favor in mind.

To understand what the Alchemist had truly given him, it was necessary to note that, one Origin Shard could be broken down into One thousand Origin Marks, One Origin Mark was a thousand Origin Bale, and One Origin Bale was a thousand Origin chips.

In other words, the currency distribution was from the lowest to the highest, Origin Chip, Origin Bale, Origin Mark, and finally Origin Shard.

Most people would never come across a single Origin Shard in their entire lives, and it was the exclusive currency of Mages, for only they could live for that long and earn such an amount of money in their lifetime.

A single Origin Shard was enough for an average family of five to live comfortably until the end of their life, and still leave enough for descendants, after all, a single Origin Shard equals a billion Origin chips.

So it could be understood that for his master to give him one hundred Origin Shard, it was a serious investment towards Andar future and many things would be easier for him to purchase. If not for his haste to reach the Trial Grounds, then he would have taken his time to shop around the City, he may have come across something surprising along the way.

Andar's eyes were open as he watched the city going by, the driver moving at breakneck speed was meandering through traffic, drawing curses and outrage from his fellow motorists. Andar noticed that even with this speed, the man was very much in control, most likely because he was a Rank 2 Acolyte, and the risk of an accident was minimal with his enhanced Spirit.

Speaking of the Ranking in the Worlds of Mages, Andar had been able to gather some preliminary findings, and the division of power was very clear almost simplistic at first glance, but he understood that there must be a deep undercurrent beneath its simple surface, after all this was the power system of a Supreme World.

You begin as a Mortal, and then you proceed to unlock your Spirit Matrix, after that is to become an Acolyte using a specified Training Manual. From there you had to transcend three ranks, from Rank 1 Acolyte up to Rank 3 Acolyte, but that was only the start of your journey.

He did not know the intricacies of what came next, but it was pretty simple, there was the elevation to become a Rank 1 Mage after you broke through from the Realm of an Acolyte, and you would need to proceed all the way to a Rank 9 Mage, at that point you would prepare for your elevation to Archmage. A power level that was comparable to a god.

There were various subdivisions within each Ranks that Andar was not too clear about, nevertheless, all this confusion would be solved in time.

Chapter 370: Central Transportation Bureau

With the relatively stable environment, Andar began to ruminate on all the events since he took over this body and awakened his Spirit Matrix, he noticed inconsistencies and subterfuge that he may have missed and he shelved those for later.

The driver began to make small conversations to pass the time while he was hunched over the control of his vehicle, Andar listened with a bit of amusement as time passed.

He suddenly had a thought. He missed his Monster Bike.

More quickly than he imagined he arrived at his destination. Paying the Driver from his own personal money, for he had a healthy stash of 400 Origin Chips and again he was surprised that his master had been able to stash it in his Spatial Ring, he thought he had it hidden well, but now knowing the Perception that would be developed as someone got stronger, he knew he had no secrets that his master did not know about.

His only regret was that he had been unable to retrieve Nivi before leaving. She had a very rudimentary Artificial Intelligence but she had a sassy mouth and was incredibly witty. Andar sometimes wondered how he was able to program someone like her with his Rank 0 Script proficiency, most likely his Master had assisted him from the dark.

Andar crossed the multi-lane roads and looked up to behold a massive skyscraping building that was his destination. This was the Central Transportation Bureau or CTB for short. It controlled the entire teleportation Network within the Black Federation and beyond.

It was a gigantic organization with a long reach to the farthest corners of the universe. It was said the only way to reach the ends of the universe was via the CTB.

There was a constant flow of people entering and exiting the edifice and Andar was soon lost in the crowd. This building did not only serve the population of Ikaron V, but it was also a way station for different travelers.

It was possible to see some of the most fantastical sights and people if you spent a few minutes inside the CTB, if you were lucky or unlucky perhaps you might even see a god passing by. However, they would have to clear the entire building and a greater part of the city if that were to happen.

He found his way to the lobby and went to one of the receptionists. There were hundreds of receptionists stationed on each floor of the building whose height was 250 stories tall, for the number of travelers passing through this building every second was thousands.

The receptionist he approached was a lanky man with a colorful glass perched on his long nose, he had braided hair and his white and black uniform was neat and form-fitting. He must have been standing here for hours but he still smiled wide when Andar approached, "Hello my name is Michel. How can I be of service, sir?"

Andar simply stretched forth his hand and showed him the tattoo of the Revolving cube.

"Oh, you're one of the participants for the Trial Ground. Congratulations by the way. Hold on for a moment while I check your transportation arrangements, are you traveling alone? Of course, you are."

Andar was quiet and watched as the man touched a rotating white orb with his two hands and his eyeball rolled into his head until it was showing only the white of his eyes. He did not answer any questions because he knew the receptionist was on the lookout for rumors and information, it was part of their job.

This receptionist was a Rank 1 Mage and was a direct subordinate of the CTB. The organization would have groomed them from the Acolyte level all the way to becoming a Mage to work for them, it was one of the ways most organizations brought up their internal members.

There were advantages to joining different factions as an Acolyte, and the CTB presented some of the best benefits and the preferred alternatives for young Acolytes who could not reach the talent requirements for the Black Tower.

Eight seconds later the receptionist retracted his hands from the Orb and smiled at Andar, he asked him for his name and Andar gave it to him, and the receptionist slid a metallic card with Andar's name and the logo of the Black Tower affixed on it.

"Please proceed to the 107th floor, you will be directed to Portal 1223-AC. The card given is your ticket and it is for a one-way trip to the Trial Ground. Have a safe trip." He smiled too wide, and Andar nodded at him ignoring that bit of strangeness.

He felt every Mage was slightly mad, something about their techniques and power system always seemed off to him, this was just a feeling however and Andar had no basis for his judgment.

Andar walked across the expansive lobby and took the high-speed elevator to the 107th floor, he was inside with a couple of youths who should be in their twenties, all of them wore outfits of the Black Tower and were all Acolytes, the highest among them being only a Rank 2 Acolyte. There were four men and two women and they peered at him furtively before looking away.

Although he was still a Mortal his physique and his disposition made his presence shine like a bulb, and for those that did not have confidence in their abilities, it would be difficult to even look him in the eye.

Andar stepped out of the elevator to his destination and looked around for a guardian to show him the direction to the Portal of choice, but he soon found that he did not need to.

Attached to large oval doors were descriptions of the Portal Room from 1220-AC, up to 1229-AC, his destination was easy to track and in fifteen seconds he stood before the oval doorway of 1223AC.

The room was empty except for a single wooden door hovering silently in the middle of the room. On the face of the door was a carving of a child. As Andar stepped closer to the door it let out a slight creak and the eyes of the child opened, and inside of it shone with green fire.

Chapter 371: A New Journey

The wooden face of the child seemed to light up and Andar heard a giggle, the mouth of the child opened up and Andar stepped closer to observe it and saw it had just enough space for the card that was given to him.

He took out the Metallic Card and slipped it into the mouth which closed with a snap, but with Andar reflex, he was able to remove his fingers quickly enough. He could not be sure but he thought he heard a faint curse.

The mouth of the boy chewed the metallic card with a loud crunch, before closing its glowing eye. Andar paused and noticing no other movements, he brought his hand to the doorknob which was in the shape of a bony hand.

As he held the hand, it squeezed back a bit and Andar looked at it with a thoughtful expression before turning the knob and opening the door to reveal a room. Andar paused before he crossed through and the door shut behind him and vanished, leaving him inside the room.

Andar suspected that he had just crossed a vast distance and yet he did not feel any fluctuations of Space, or perhaps he was still too weak to notice any faint stirrings of power, but he had to concede that the Mage World had better Teleportation than Trion.

Whatever method was used was not the same as moving through the Shadow Realm, and Andar was very much interested in that wooden door and its seemingly omnipotent ability to cross a large span of space.

The room he found himself in was very simple, it had only a bed and a chair. Andar reached the bed and brought the single pillow to his nose, it smelled fresh and clean. With his enhanced physique came improved sense, and his hearing was especially acute.

It was the reason he could hear the sounds of many people talking outside the room, not far from him but before he opened the door, he went up to the window and looked outside.

He saw clouds.

He looked further into the horizon and he saw massive castles in their hundreds that were floating in the cloud. The clouds were painted with all the colors of the rainbow and the floating castles gave the scene a fantastical appearance.

Andar came closer to the windows and looked up, and even with his temperament he had to pause in shock.

On Ikaron V, Andar was used to the sky. It was a normal sky that had a sun and a moon that rose and set at their allotted time, but the truth was that although the light of the sun still reached the ground and nourished the plants and shone on all living things, and although the light of the moon still caressed the sea and caused tides to form on the surface of the ocean, it was all a mirage.

The Black Federation did not have any moons or stars, and the scene the Mortals saw was only a gigantic Formation created by an Archmage to hide the real truth about reality from mortals, not because of any hidden conspiracy but because the sight of the true nature of the Black Federation and the Black Tower could drive mortals mad.

Millions of years ago, the grand 9th Star Archmage Erick Black transformed a black hole into an Aether Geyser, and although Rowan was aware of that information due to the investigations of Suriel, it was the first time he was seeing it.

The appearance of the Aether Geyser was too far and shrouded in so much Aether that he could not see its true form, but he could see countless tendrils of multicolored light shooting out from a central core that was vast beyond reason.

This light should be massive streams of Aether that escaped the Aether Geyser and were flung into the universe. It was like countless eruptions of titanic proportions were happening on the surface of the Aether Geyser and the smallest fraction of it that escaped was lighting up the entire section of space.

The amount of power escaping from the Aether Geyser was astonishing and Andar wondered if this amount of energy was enough for his Main Body to consume to reach Godhood, or even better, what was the method used to create something like this?

He was sure with that knowledge he could find a black hole somewhere in the universe and replicate this same feat, with the caveat that he must be strong enough.

Witnessing all this grand showing of power was lighting and itch inside the heart of Andar. Unknown to him for a brief moment his eyes turned golden before turning silver.

A presence that was intrinsically part of him, yet he was not aware of seemed to be watching his every action and then it faded away.

Deep in the clouds, thunder rumbled as a violent stream of condensed Aether shot from the Geyser passed through it, and with that opportunity, Andar saw what lay below the cloud, it was a palm that had been severed from the wrist,

From the wrist came clouds that supported all the hundreds of castles floating around.

Andar knew that this palm was not from an Empyrean, but it was from a god, but one of such great power that should be equal to the gods of Trion.

Also whomever god this palm belonged to. He was not yet dead. Andar could sense the faint stirring of a soul within.

Andar moved away from the window and went to the door. If he was correct then he was on one of the floating castles, and he was one of the many participants that would be called upon to participate in the Trial Grounds.

Andar sighed, a new journey was before him, and he was eager to begin. With a click and a push, Andar stepped into a new world.

Many faces of youths of both sexes with different skin tones and physical structures turned to him.

Andar closed the door behind him and walked over, and silence descended on the crowd.

He looked at them all, and he smiled, "Hi, my name is Andar Erickson."

Chapter 372: World Seed Creation

Eva sat beside Rowan, her eyes were set in concentration as new and shocking changes were happening inside the body of Rowan for the past week that excited her.

When Andar awakened and unlocked his Spirit Matrix, he released a wave of pure energy that contained among many things, a surprising amount of Primordial Aether.

The Reflection in Andar's body was not aware that what erupted from the Spirit Gate was Primordial Aether since it was just a Reflection, a pale copy of Rowan. It was unknown if such an event happened for every awakening, but understanding the sort of Spirit Matrix inside his body, it was unlikely, only an unreasonable physique like Andar's coupled with the upgrades of Rowan could lead to such a phenomenon.

This was good news because Andar's body was only able to use a small fraction of that Primordial Aether.

With the channel Rowan had linked with Andar due to building his body with the essence of the Ouroboros Serpent, he was capable of grabbing most of the Primordial Aether and only a small fraction had escaped into space after modifying Andar's body.

The Primordial Aether that he collected surprisingly had no attributes, and it slowly sank into Rowan's Mental Space.

The sight that was revealed was shocking, and if a Mortal was to view his current Mental Space, death was the least of their fears.

Rowan's Mental Space was now incredibly vast. Previously when he was only upgrading the Ouroboros Bloodline and was at the Legendary State, his Mental Space was large enough to be mistaken as a Divine Mental Space.

Now...

The Primordial Aether appeared inside Rowan's Mental Space, and its surroundings were just darkness.

An attractive force began to pull on it and it traveled an unknown length of space, and it should be noted that the Primordial Aether was moving far past the speed of light yet it spent a large amount of time before it reached its destination.

The Primordial Aether was in the shape of a silver stream of water, and it soon reached a section of the Mental Space that was glowing with a bluish-white light. The glow was so bright it was like a star.

The Silver stream of Primordial Aether reached the glowing star and Rowan's Palace of Ice was revealed, its size could not be easily estimated, but it was already three times as large as when he was conscious, surrounding the Palace of Ice was the Soul of Erohim but now it had the appearance of a beehive.

The tough diamond-like shell had millions of holes in it, and it was now thin, maybe two hundred feet along the width. Inside the numerous holes in this soul were millions of Angels of Char!

Their form was terrifying and the little vibrations occurring inside their frozen body seemed to contain endless mysteries. Whatever was in the Soul of Erohim, it was a beneficial boost to the production of Angels of Char, every single moment, hundreds of new angels were being born.

Among their numbers were Angels whose potential rank surpassed Sovereigns. Even when they were just Angels of Char their forms were different, some of them were so horrifying or so beautiful it staggered the imagination.

The Silver Stream of Primordial Aether flowed through the god's soul and the Angels of Char and below it was a tree barely thirty feet tall, and it was flowering, and sitting at the edge of the tree with her head resting on it was a sleeping woman—Eva.

The sleeping form of Eva was ethereal as if it was just a reflection. The Primordial Aether flowed above the tree and reached a portion of the Palace of Ice that contained many golden pillars with carvings of massive Ouroboros Serpents that seemed to be moving and hissing, after selecting one random pillar, the Primordial Aether sank into its foundation.

That event occurred a week ago.

Since that time dull rumbles like earthquakes began to occur in his Mental Space and Eva could feel the shift in Aether as the suction from his body increased dramatically, this was enough Aether to power a hundred planets, and for a short while the entire Divine Palace was in commotion, only the protection of the Angels protected the mortals, else such massive wave of Aether would have turned them all to dust. The breathing of Rowan's body became unsteady, breaking rhythm now and then.

Everything soon settled, but on this particular day, Eva had been feeling an increasing sense of disquiet, so she began to seriously investigate every single thing that entered her awareness.

Then she felt a chill down her spine, and her instinct made her look upwards. Her gaze passed from Rowan's impressive physique which was now well over five hundred feet tall to his face, and she went still.

His lashes were a bit open and a golden glow could be seen, it was his serpent-like eyes and they were looking down at her, for a moment she was like a prey hypnotized by the gaze of a predator before the lashes closed and he went back to sleep.

Before she could form any other thoughts, his right hand began to open. It was a simple gesture but due to his size, it brought about a heavy wind that blew through the entire Divine Palace.

Eva flew up and moved to the center of his palm where a tiny Ouroboros Serpent was folded on itself with its head resting on its coiled body, it was slowly growing larger.

A burst of information entered her mind and she realized what she was looking at was a World Seed. Her mouth went dry as on the open palm more World Seeds began to appear and grow, and in a short time more than a hundred World Seeds had been created.

Her breathing began to come faster. He would soon wake up.

The Creator.

Her eyes shone with a peculiar white glow and she shivered, something more had been added to her body. She sat in the air and waited for the World seeds to fully mature, and in that time she began calling all the forces of Angels available.

The time for bringing worlds under the Creator had begun.

Chapter 373: Splitting Time

Due to Andar's Awakening, and the Primordial Aether he collected it was just enough to wake Rowan up for a brief moment, only for ten seconds, but in that short span of time, he was able to understand and formulate the plans he needed using all the information he understood at a single glance when he peered at Eva.

He did not need to ask her for any details, he simply stripped all the memories in her head and assimilated them.

The first thing he did was to call upon his Knowledge Well, he had made this unique chamber to analyze every portion of his life, deciphering spells and techniques and finding new unique methods of countering or even utilizing them, and his persistence and forethought were not in vain, as he saw a great use for it.

It came from the memory of when it sliced off a portion of an entire timeline and placed it inside a page. Such acts of reality-warping powers were especially high on his list of investigations and he wanted to understand how those abilities worked, so if possible he could counter them or even control them.

Of course, Rowan was far away from any such powerful workings, but Knowledge Well had learned a lot about utilizing time from observing and learning from that scene. He was able to duplicate a minor fragment of the ability he witnessed, perhaps not even a fragment, it just served as a source of inspiration, and calling in the time-based abilities hidden deep inside his Ouroboros Bloodline with the knowledge he gained from Ohrox, The Demon Prince of Destruction's Origin Treasure—Tower of Greed.

Knowledge Well made it possible for him to collect such diverse knowledge and use them for his benefit.

Using an enormous amount of Aether and Essence, he took that ten seconds that was granted to him and shredded it into ten portions, and he extended one portion into ten seconds while saving the remaining nine portions.

He would be using the remaining nine portions of these ten seconds and rousing himself every month or if any uncalled emergency was to come up. He had effectively stretched ten seconds of consciousness into one hundred seconds, and for the present Rowan, ten seconds was a lot of time.

Such as Upgrading his Ouroboros Bloodline.

He understood that what was placing him in a state of lethargy was his physical body's inability to process the soul of a god that was merged with billions of souls.

During his time devouring Erohim's soul, he came across countless memories, and some of them pointed out some crucial clues he was able to piece together.

Erohim was not just used as a stable source of Battle Stimulants at first, that ended up being the only thing he could be used for when the main purpose of his capture had failed.

At first, Erohim was to be used to create an Aura Field. This was a new concept that he came across and he searched through all the memories he had gathered and he was able to understand its uses and purpose.

An Aura Field was a necessary ingredient for any second Circle Dominator to Ascend to the Third Great Circle. It was controlled by the current ruling Royal Family and every god of Trion was looking for methods to create Aura Fields outside the bounds of the Empire.

An Aura Field had begun to touch the realms of the Soul. Yet the gods had only a rudimentary control of it. They were all aware of souls and their mystical powers, but they could not control it. Somehow a special location in Trion allowed them to gather an enormous amount of Souls, and for a Dominator to reach the Third Great Circle it involved using the vast energies produced by those souls.

The gods were lucky to find such a powerful tool to gather souls, else the bloodline civilization of the gods of Trion would not have been possible, and the God King would never have been able to create Dominators.

Yet Rowan knew this was most likely a hidden gift from his father, for as far as he could tell, his father was the only one who had a piece of more in-depth knowledge and an elementary control over souls in the entire galaxy as far as Rowan knew, maybe the Supreme Worlds had methods to control souls, but he could not tell yet.

The gods searched for various methods to stimulate the process of gathering souls and creating their own Aura Fields, because this was one of the methods the God King used in controlling them, and gaining control of an Aura Field was effectively gaining independence.

Boreas came up with an idea to use the immortal soul of a god as a sort of glue to catch the souls of the mortals who worshiped that god.

It was an imaginative approach, but he failed. The immortal soul was able to trap the souls of the mortals but it failed to produce the unique energies of an Aura Field. The

only benefit he gained was Erohim's peculiar essence that had mutated due to billions of mortal souls stuck inside, making it easier to create Blue Iron, the Battle Stimulant.

This mutated soul was also the reason Rowan fell into slumber for an extended period of time, as digesting the soul proved to be more problematic than he could have ever anticipated.

Yet he knew that his bloodlines could enhance the capabilities of each other, an example was his Ouroboros Bloodline that had been mixed with his Consciousness Pillars generated from his Avatar of Eve Bloodline, strengthening them.

He could strengthen his Pillars and also drastically increase his Attributes by seeding worlds, thereby reducing his time in slumber by a considerable amount.

With the few seconds he had, Rowan gave an order to his body and his World Engine Bloodline Talent began to slowly hum into life.

As of this moment he had monumental amounts of essence he was not using, and he could begin creating World Seeds even when he was unconscious. For the delivery, he left it to Eva.

Chapter 374: Encounters In A Diner

With the state of his present bloodline, Rowan should be able to manufacture a hundred World Seeds per month, and this was while he was still slumbering, by the time he woke up, he would be able to increase its production to a much higher number.

What he needed most of all were all the Attributes he would be able to collect from seeding these worlds.

The last thing he did was free up more authority of his Astrolabe for Eva, it would be needed to deliver his World Seeds to the selected worlds. He had already reviewed the details of the determined worlds in the new galaxy, and he agreed that they were all great choices.

They had sufficient indigenous life and they were not being controlled by any of the local gods, if he could seed enough worlds, by the time he awakened, he would crush all the local gods. With his bloodline, he had no particular need for subordinates, and except he would find a unique god with interesting abilities, he considered every god as fair game and his prey.

As immortal beings every god had lived for an extremely long time, he would be doing the universe a favor by trimming out the excess fat from her body, except for specific

situations, he deemed most gods to be useless, and their effects on the universe as a whole had never been positive.

Also, after tasting all the benefits he could collect from the death of a single god, he no longer cared for the souls of mortal beings.

He could feel an intense amount of power growing inside his body with every single moment, collecting Primordial Aether was still a surprise and Rowan kept a small part of it.

The unique power that the Mage World offered interested him a lot, as he felt it would serve his Knowledge Well chambers in unique ways.

Before he slumbered once more, he sent a burst of orders to his Reflection to try all it could to collect as many of those so-called Training Manuals, as he would be analyzing all of them.

He analyzed and made all his decisions in under ten seconds.

Rowan fell into slumber once more.

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Augustus Tiberius sat in a bustling Diner of a world he no longer bothered trying to remember its name. It would just be a variation of the word—dirt. Well with trillions of worlds in the universe, one was bound to run out of good names soon enough.

Still, he knew they were still in Empire-controlled Space. He would have said the fucking Abomination had a death wish, but till this moment, the retaliation of the gods was nowhere in sight.

Augustus was now a shadow of his previous self. His hair was white and patchy, and his face was gaunt, his cheekbone was prominent, and he appeared haggard, and he had aged, deep lines of worry and pain were etched on his face as if it was carved with a knife.

He watched the people around him eating and laughing, their voices carried in the air, and their tiny problems the only headache in their tiny minds.

"Can you believe Carlos is going to be marrying another wife, by the words! This will be his eighty-fifth wife!"

"Yeah... yeah, he is."

"Why do you have a distant look in your eyes, my dear husband, do you envy him?"

"Of course not dear, you are the only woman for me."

"I don't believe you. You do know I had many suitors who wanted my hand in marriage but I chose you."

"Jana, where is this coming from, let me eat in peace woman."

"Oh, I am now just a woman to you..."

For a moment here, Augustus began to envy the Mortals. Was it so bad to live a life as brief as a mayfly yet filled with the bliss of ignorance?

Yet the thought of him envying the mortals caused great rage to form in his chest and he almost choked.

No! They shall all die like ants, their bodies shall be consumed and their marrows sucked clean from their bleached bones, their screams shall reach the heavens, and...

"Here you go sir, please eat while it's still warm."

Augustus stopped his internal rant and his eyes turned to see a smiling girl of maybe fifteen, she had warm bread and broth with a cup of beer on a tray.

"I did not order for that, I have no money with me."

"It's on the house, sir. You looked like you needed a pick-me-up. As my grandma says, a full belly and a calm mind would solve any problem." the girl cheerily replied.

Augustus frowned and then slapped the tray away. "I don't need your fucking pity."

The diner went silent before a couple of burly men stood up, and one of them walked up to Augustus.

"Apologize to the little missus this instant fella and git... Bad-mannered folks like you are not welcomed." One of the big men yelled.

"Fuck off maggots," Augustus growled his temper beginning to rise. His brief moment of jealousy was all but forgotten, he stood up and his height towered over everyone here, the pressure from his body silenced the entire diner and even a child held in the arms of the mother peed his pants and began crying.

Augustus left his table with a growl and walked out of the Diner but he did not go far, he only stayed outside and rested by the wall, as he waited, anytime now the bells of hell would ring and this world would fall.

Why were the gods allowing this monster to consume worlds with no repercussions? Even though he knew the lives of mortals were meaningless to the gods, the Abomination had already encroached far past their bottom line.

He feared that if Lamia fully consumed this world then she would have enough power to no longer hide from the gods and instead, she might settle down. There were already signs of it. After all, her champion already had powers that could stand against a god, and not just any god, but a god of Trion.

That crazy bastard kept Augustus alive, and in every world they consumed he would gather children's books, and he would give them to Augustus to read for him.

It was a unique torture to be reading to an Abomination Champion about rainbows and unicorns and have it giggling and clapping like a child while absently eating an unlucky bastard.

This is all so fucked.

Chapter 375: Akhuril

Augustus heard hesitant footsteps walk close to him, and the breeze brought the smell of smoke and beer. It was the girl who gave him food.

"um, I apologize if I was um, a bit... presumptuous? Is that the right word? Yes! Sir, I apologize if I was a bit presumptuous in bringing food to you without your request. I just..."

Watching the young mortal girl fumbling to speak, Augustus' mind went back three hundred years ago when he was at the Incarnation State, and the whole world was nothing but an adventure.

Trion was vast, and now and then you would be able to see marvelous people and locations.

A wrong teleportation sent him to a secluded location where a rash of attacks by beasts had killed all the men leaving thousands of women and children behind.

Augustus had lived with them for weeks and watched as they were all slaughtered, he had enjoyed every bit of such prime entertainment, their cries of help were met with mockery, for if there had been any other adventurous people among them, they would have discovered that a few hundred miles away was a vast city that would solve their problems. Why did they not run? Why stay behind and defend a useless dirt mound?

Was it because of ignorance? Or some pathetic attempt to hold on to their meaningless culture?

These people had been content to live inside their tiny valley in a world as prosperous as Trion, where mighty gods roamed, their death was the inevitable consequence of being small-minded.

He looked at this shy yet smart child and he could no longer call up any argument in condemnation of them. If he told them the truth what could they do? They cannot run, it was impossible for mortals to travel in the void. They could not hide from what was to come, they could only die.

Just like me, I'm already on my road to death, and I cannot run, I cannot hide, I can only wait to die.

Augustus growled, "Fuck off!"

Ignoring the look of confusion and pain on her face he began to walk away, his head bowed in frustration. He did not know when he found himself behind an alley and then he heard the hurried footsteps and breathing of four men.

When he felt the hit on the back of his head, Augustus smiled just before his face was smashed into the ground, flattening his nose.

Unlike any normal man who would cover his head and fold himself to reduce the area of impact on his body, Augustus turned around and opened his arms as if he wanted his attackers to have easy access to all his vital organs.

His assaulters stopped their actions at his weird behavior but after looking at each other, they shrugged and the four men began stomping on him while cursing and berating him in turn. Augustus was a bit disappointed, for he noticed there was no intent to kill, only cause pain, this realization struck him as incredibly funny.

Augustus began to grin, as he spat blood and broken teeth, and that grin soon turned into a full-blown manic laughter

"You like it, don't you? Keep laughing, I'm gonna kick all your teeth in." one of the men spat in his bloody face and they all pulled back.

These were all hard men, but there was something deeply disturbing about someone who seemed to have no self-preservation instinct.

As they turned to leave, Augustus called out, "Hey!"

They all turned to look at the madman who seemed to be craving pain.

"What? You want more pain, freak?"

"No, no, no, you guys are too weak to cause me any pain. Look at this..."

Augustus tore open his shirt to reveal his chest, all the men gasped as their faces went pale like they all saw a ghost, the youngest among them took another look and bent down to vomit explosively.

The sight of Augustus' torso was nightmare-inducing. His chest and stomach had been flayed, so there was no skin and his beating heart could be easily seen. Nestled between his lungs and intestines was a small creature with the resemblance of a baby, except it had black needle-sharp teeth that were stuck around his heart, and from the slurping sounds escaping from its mouth and the swallowing motion in its throat, it was busy feeding.

"You see this?" Augustus pointed out, "That is what is about to happen to you all, except unlike me, you are mortals, and so your pain shall be brief. So if you want any advice from me... not that you should ever listen to a fool like me. Go home to your families, hold your wives, hug your children tight, and ask for your last blessings from your parents, before the end of this day, you shall all be food."

Suddenly the ground shook, and Augustus sighed, it was too late. Lamia was here.

Another loud thump sounded and a house not far from them collapsed. The mentality of these men was in chaos as they fled. Augustus covered his chest and walked outside the alley.

His eyesight was able to see a gigantic figure far on the horizon that resembled a giant spider. It stood beside a mountain, and the sheer size of it made the mountain resemble a small footstool.

It shifted its enormous bulk on its twelve legs, each movement causing heavy thumps like an earthquake.

This was one of the interplanetary creatures created by Lamia called Akhuril. She already had three of those. Two would be in orbit and it would appear she believed only one of these monsters was enough.

She was right, an Akhuril could battle gods.

Yet their dreadfulness did not lie only in its combat power, but in what else it was capable of, which was harvesting a planet of its entire biomass, both plants, sentient and nonsentient lives would be collected. It could drain the life force from a planet leaving it on the edge of death.

Once again another world was going to end.

A crowd of people came to the streets from their homes and workplaces as they all watched in horror at the gigantic figure of the beast.

Chapter 376: You'll Only Die Tired.

Nothing could ever prepare the mind of a mortal to see something that fundamentally broke their idea of reality. Something that was this massive should not even exist!

How powerful would their frame have to be to support a weight over tens of thousands of tons and beyond, the hundreds of tiny red eyes on the face of the Akhuril seemed to be looking at every single direction with a depraved lust.

The body of the great beast began to undulate, as ripples like waves began spreading on its red armored shell that seemed impossible given the solid armor-like nature of its shell, but Augustus knew that the armor of the Akhuril was made up of trillions of six-foot chitinous plates that were as hard as Davross.

His eyes could see many tiny pores beginning to sprout on the back of the creature in their thousands and he knew what was coming next. From those pores tens of thousands of tiny critters that resembled the unholy combination of spider, scorpion, and a crab would appear.

The Akhuril would launch them from those pores and it would fall like rain on the ground, and there the infestation would begin, as the creatures would begin their hunt.

They would find a breathing host and using their long scorpion-like tails, they would sting and deposit three eggs inside the bodies of their target. These Abominations were called Kushi, and they were the size of a fully grown wolf.

Their carapace was black as ink, with only the tip of their scorpion tail that was red and yellow.

In less than twelve seconds, three holes would burst open from their target bodies and three growing Kushi would burst out. In less than a minute they would be fully grown and the cycle would continue.

They were incredibly hard to kill, as their bodies were as tough as a Dominator at the Rift State who was focused on physique. They had few weak points and crushing their heads was useless as they had no brain, all of them were directly controlled by the Akhuril.

That would be the first wave. The Kushi were made to kill and multiply, and their numbers grew exponentially. Another horrifying trait of the Kushi was adapting their sizes to their target bodies.

So if a Kushi were to implant its egg in a beast the size of an elephant, the Kushi that would be born from the beast would be bigger, drawing traits and vitality from the bodies of their dead host, this also applies to larger creatures.

A Kushi the size of a wolf would implant three of its larvae inside the body of a beast hundreds of feet tall, and the three Kushi that would erupt from the body of the dying least would be at least twenty feet tall.

A Kushi would be able to implant different hosts ten times at most before it would return to the Akhuril where it would be devoured. Yet that single Kushi in less than a minute would have created more than thirty Kushi and this trend would continue until they wiped out all life on the planet.

Then would come the Harvesters, Scryers, Desecrators, ...

Wave after wave of monsters until this planet was tucked dry of everything and Lamia would move on.

Augustus' eyes touched the kind young girl who gave him a meal. Soon she would be meat on the chopping block.

A loud droning sound emanating from the Akhuril was a sign it was about to commence the end of this world. That sound was like a Death knell, and the mortals began to panic, as the sudden onset of their demise could be felt deep in their souls.

A madness descended on the crowd and they began to run, they had no destination in mind, only to get as far as they could from their unavoidable death.

The kind girl bumped into him and fell, her eyes filled with fear and panic, she looked up at him and saw his steady gaze that had no fear only tiredness, and Augustus saw a dawn of hope in her eyes, and he wondered why what was left of his heart skipped a beat in pain.

"Help me," she said.

He stretched his hand and she took it, he brought her back to her feet, "Don't run." He said, "You'll only die tired... just treasure your last moments."

She was horrified and wanted to pull back, but Augustus held her tight to his body, she wanted to squirm but she felt movements below his clothes, as if he was carrying snakes wrapped around his body, and she was repulsed, and this close to him she could smell the faint smell of decay.

Her horror began to mount until she felt she was about to faint when through the space between his buttons she saw a yellow eye that was peering at her. The eye blinked and she heard a chuckle.

Fear held her captive and she could not even scream.

The feeling of jumping from a frying pan into the fire overwhelmed her senses, and that enormous monster far on the horizon became less threatening than the one who was holding her.

"Don't struggle," Augustus comforted her, he began to stroke her head, "it would be quick."

He was lying, ten seconds was a long time when you were dying to an Abomination like a Kushi. Your last moments would be pure agony as three growing Kushi feasted on your flesh and blood, crushing your internal organs as they explosively matured, such agony was beyond what most mortals could bear.

The girl to her credit was brave and she recovered faster than he thought possible, she did not fight and she turned around to look at the beast who gave another roar that sounded like a foghorn magnified a thousand times.

"What is that..." She cried out, her fear once more nearly overtaking her and she wanted to run, but Augustus held her tight.

"The end," he whispered

Suddenly there was a blinding flash like a sun covered the horizon, and a thunderous cry of pain echoed.

The girl screamed and covered her eyes as tears streamed from it, partially blind because of the bright light.

A tremendous detonation happened and a mushroom cloud so large it reached twenty thousand feet in the air appeared. The Akhuril was buried thousands of feet in the ground, as an enormous shockwave carrying heat and force began to destroy all on its path as it swept towards the town.

"Finally." Augustus sighed.

The heavens split apart, and a figure from his nightmare tore her way through the darkness outside reality.

"BITCHES!!!!"

Absomet was here.

The terrifying wave of force reached Augustus and he held the weeping girl closer.

Chapter 377: Opening The Trial Grounds.

Nezrakim and Dora had separated from the Dominator they came with on the battlefield months ago after crossing no man's land and entering the continent where the Great War was being fought for a million years, they were now alone not because of any choice on their part but because their other companions had either been killed or acquired enough benefits and then they left.

They could have waited for fresh blood, but their mission was time-sensitive and they had spent too long as it was.

This was their seventh month on the battlefield, and they had escaped death countless times, only their mystical abilities had saved them from death. Each of them brings various abilities to the table to aid each other, and they have slayed Mages and Demons in their thousands.

They were getting closer to their target with each day, and with their current pace, in a fortnight they would reach her. Yet they could not help but pause when they looked at their target's location ahead.

Three hundred miles ahead was a field of entrenched missile batteries that could shoot seventy-foot-long Davross alloy-tipped slabs of iron, more than fifty tons in weight.

Each of them was being shot at Mach 8 and could be delivered to their targets with pinpoint accuracy.

The area these missile batteries covered was more than three thousand miles in length and they could shoot more than 800,000 missiles every hour. This entire section was called the Tiberius family Lance of Destruction.

It was created with the assistance of both the Volgim Family and the Boreas Family recently, which was three hundred years ago and a suitable counter had not yet been found for them due to various reasons. There were fifty of such Lances of Destruction spread across the battlefield and with this new push in the war effort, there were plans to create another fifty more of these.

To understand the full power of this Lances of Destruction, a single volley from it was enough to tear a Minor World to pieces. Only a Peak Major World like Trion could handle weapons of such caliber to be used on its surface with no restrictions.

"How can we find her across this entire section?" Nezrakim frowned, his eagle-like eyes sweeping across the distance, he watched as the skies vibrated and thousands of missiles flew from the ground leaving air shattering shockwaves behind them.

Three thousand miles was not a great distance for an Angel, but this stretch of the region was incredibly perilous, and it was very possible for them to fail their mission if they were killed halfway. Countless Demons and Mages attacked this location to destroy these Missile Batteries, for they had reaped a frightening toll of death since their operation began.

"There would be traces," Dora replied, both of them were in the bodies of Tiberius family Dominators at the Incarnation State.

The region they were in, it was rare to find Dominators at such a low level of power, this area was strictly for powers at the second great circle and beyond.

They looked at each other, ahead of them the battle raged white-hot. They nodded to each other and entered battle, they needed to find Maeve, for according to the creator, she was an important piece of the puzzle to unlock his past.

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Andar had been sleeping for the past eight hours. He did not necessarily need this amount of rest, but he noticed that his body had not yet finished its upgrade.

There were many minor kinks to iron out, and in order to increase the speed of completion, he rested and allowed his cells and physique to go to town. Frankly he enjoyed the chance to sleep, what his main body experienced could not necessarily be called sleep, his condition was rather hard to describe.

He opened his eyes and felt a sense of fullness as if his cells were satiated and filled with unlimited energy. The silver veins that shone through his skin were especially bright, it would appear as if it was not blood that flowed within his veins but pure energy.

He sat up and brought his right hand to his face, there he saw tiny silver grains swirling around like a mini tornado. It would seem that finally his body could no longer contain his Aether and now it was beginning to manifest outwardly.

He sighed and pushed the excess Aether into the Aegis Script. The Cloud Whale gave a pained roar that was filled with both happiness and despair. This beast needed a lot of Aether to grow, but still, too much of everything was bad. It was beginning to drown in Aether, as the fog of Aether inside the Aegis Script had turned to a lake.

He would just have to bear with it, Andar thought. Even though it was hurting the beast, it would be good for it in the long run.

He found out that this Cloud Whale was a male, and the Aether was not just nourishing it, for it had grown to nearly two extra feet for the past seven days it was inside, which according to the growth rate of Cloud Whale this was a ridiculous number, but also it was beginning to change.

The deep blue color of its skin was slowly transforming into a lighter blue, and there was a budding growth just below its fin.

A soft knock interrupted his musing, and before he could ask who it was, although he already knew, the door was pushed open and a girl entered followed by two other people.

The girl who entered had piercing blue eyes framed by dark hair. Her face was almost childlike but her body was especially voluptuous.

Her name was Mira and among many things, she was the daughter of an Archmage, and the two who followed behind her were her two minders.

She sat beside him without any invitation, Andar had become used to her domineering ways and he adjusted so he could fully place her within his sights.

"So, the castle gates would open in the next hour, and the Trial Ground would be unlocked. Let's go over our strategy once more, as we would have competition for the best spots." She said and brought out a glowing map that spread to cover the room with two taps from her fingers.

Chapter 378: Meditation Arts.

"Nice to see you too Mira," Andar said sarcastically while pushing the glowing map aside.

It would be foolish to regard this girl as someone who was just pretty without any depth. Anyone who had that assumption would be very wrong, Andar had never seen anyone who was more driven at this age.

He could not help but tease her. The reason she barged into his room and went straight to the point was that she did not want to waste any single time on extraneous affairs and Andar was the only one she deemed worthy enough to collaborate with and take the time to get to know him better.

Like Andar, she was also born with great talent and a Spirit Body, but her grade of talent and Spirit Body could never be as ridiculous as his own. She had a grade six White Rank talent, and a grade five Purple Spirit Body, and in comparison, Andar had an unranked grade talent that surpassed the Supreme grade which was colored black, and also an unranked grade Spirit Body.

Talents like Mira were supposed to be closer to the peak of the Mage World, with all the top geniuses having similar ranked talent. Of course, Andar did not tell her his true rank

he only gave his rank as something beyond her own, her curiosity about his true rank however made her closer to him.

Andar did not much if she got close, this was the sort of companionship he hoped to build and gather to his side. Unlike his main body whose path was isolated, being so far above every known creation, he had to use a different path to achieve his goals here.

They had been inside this Castle for a week, and as Andar would soon learn, there were a total of 107 castles, each of them holding 330 candidates for the Trials. So every given year, there would always be 35,310 candidates for the Trials.

Andar had used this time here to forge closer relationships with all the candidates, most of them were not much older than fourteen, and although he knew in this world, age was not the main factor for maturity, he still managed to bring everyone as close to him as possible, he and Mira becoming a sort of leader to the group.

All of this was necessary in order to achieve the best results in the Trial Grounds.

To understand how the Trials worked it is necessary to know about Training Manuals which was also called Meditation Arts.

The gigantic hand Andar had seen below was not just for special effect to awe the candidate, it served a much more crucial purpose for it was a library, and the clouds that spewed from the severed wrist were the books containing the Meditation Arts they needed.

The clouds they rested upon had various levels, and the composition of the cloud kept changing the closer you got to the hand.

When the castle gates were opened and all 35,310 candidates were released, most would settle on top of the clouds and pick their Training Manuals, which Andar came to learn was also called Meditation Art.

Engraved in every inch of the clouds were thousands of Meditation Arts, but this was just the first level of the library. You could choose to push deeper into the cloud to find more elaborate Meditation Art, but there were three problems you would encounter when attempting to do so.

The first was that the cloud grew denser as you got lower, with the clouds nearer to the head being denser than metal, penetrating it came with the risk of death, as many candidates overestimated their abilities and grew tired only to be crushed to mush by the increased weight.

With its increased density came a more reduced area of coverage, which led to the second concern.

If the top of the cloud spread for thousands of miles, as you go lower, the range would continue to shrink until it was less than fifty feet across at the wrist, so if you wanted elaborate Meditation Arts you had to be quick, else there would be no more space.

Once a candidate began accepting a Meditation Art, that area would be closed off, and the opportunity lost for any other candidate, so it was a matter of speed, getting a choice position earlier was the only option, as you would not be able to interfere once the impaction process has begun.

Generally, it was known that the best Meditation Art got more intricate and if you were not talented enough, it would be a waste to learn it, as you would be stuck as an Acolyte even if you collected a Legacy Grade Meditation technique and you had poor talents.

Yet this fact did not dissuade many candidates from fighting for more intricate Meditation Art, not just because of the increased powers it would bring and other special effects, but it was also the only method to climb to the supreme height of the Mage World and become an Archmage.

The third reason was inevitable human interference. Everyone wanted the best for themselves, and every candidate gathered here was a talent in their own right, most had been selected from a pool of thousands, and among that large population, they were the only ones talented enough to be chosen. This would inevitably lead to a feeling of elitism.

No candidate here wanted to select the lowest form of Meditation Art, all of them would want to go deeper into the clouds until they reached their limits, and so they would try to muscle their way through the clouds, and with the time constraint in place to get the best positions, the struggle could devolve to a bloody affair.

Most castles come together to fight against other candidates from other castles and secure more beneficial positions, these battles could be bloodless, but not every time, because the nature of men was treacherous and some candidates had heavy hands with loose morals.

Andar would be able to sway the rest of the candidates in his castle under his banner using his charisma and talent, but he did not, for it would serve no purpose to him, it would only delay his advancement.

He could also deceive the candidates and use them as cannon fodder to advance deeper into the cloud, but the qualities of the candidates were too poor, as they were still mortals, even if some of them had high talents.

Yet he still drew them close to him, as he wanted them to succeed, and if he could achieve that with little pain on his part, he would do so, and if they owed him a favor for giving them this opportunity, all the better.

Chapter 379: Limit Breakers

The only redeeming candidate in his castle was Mira, the daughter of a 4th Star Archmage. She had twin elder siblings who were both Rank 9 mages.

She was the best among all the candidates here and that was the reason he befriended her and drew her closer to his side. Both of them became the de facto leaders of the castle, and she was responsible for the overall organization, with Andar giving directions from the background.

As the daughter of an Archmage, she needed to be seen as a leader and Andar had no problem with making her his partner, with her talents, she could go far as a Mage.

"The target this time is the Heavenly Fate Meditation Arts which can only be collected at the wrist of the Chained god. There are only twelve spots available. This map is the shortcut through the clouds, are you sure you have memorized them?" Mira queried; she refused to be baited by Andar, for she had come to realize that beneath his silliness was a biting cold intellect that reminded her a bit of her father, who was an Archmage.

Andar sighed, "This map holds less than a thousand points of interest. For people like you and me, placing all this in mind is not an issue. So the real question you want to ask is if I'm prepared."

Andar stood up and cracked his neck, and Mira followed, "We would face steep competition from those that want a Heavenly Fate Meditation Art, so I need to know your head is in the game."

"I am, was that in any doubt? Yet I still find that I am still dissatisfied with this plan."

Mira frowned, "We have gone over it dozens of times, it is as foolproof as any. We both have Spirit Bodies that make our physique stronger than anyone else and unlike others, we can manipulate Aether even without any Meditation Art, we would crush the opposition. The plan would work."

"Oh, there is nothing wrong with the direction of the plan, it is a fantastic one, I only care about the destination. I have been thinking, why don't we go for the greatest prize of all?"

Mira paused in shock before she burst into laughter, "Hahaha... Do you want a Supreme Meditation Art? That is impossible." She stood up from the bed and began walking towards the door, Andar walked beside her and her two minders followed.

They were sixteen-year-old boys, but they had the bodies of a warrior in their prime, their leonine movement holding shocking power and flexibility, although they were for all intent, mortals.

They had been specially trained from birth to be the protectors of Mira, and they would give up their lives without a thought if they considered it necessary.

"Tell me again why it's impossible." Andar countered.

Mira sighed, "Notwithstanding the fact that reaching the wrist of the Chained god would be a monumental feat, that would even stump a mage! Yet we as mortals are planning to do so, you would have to go beyond that and get on the hand of the god! It is quite impossible for any mortal to touch a god, you would have to be maybe a Rank 6 Mage, also the Chained god is not just any other god. He is THE GOD! The first god birthed by the universe."

Andar smiled, "Yet, with all that, what if we made it."

She frowned, "I have heard of foolish arguments and beliefs in my life Andar, and here I was thinking you were a smart boy. No one has mastered a Supreme Meditation Art. It is purely a theoretical concept created by the Mage Supreme after he became a Mage Supreme! It is the absolute peak in all of creation. It was meant to be an unreachable goal, Andar. My father told me it was just a joke being played by the Mage Supreme. It would be like expecting an ant to lift a damn mountain."

Andar smirked and whispered in her ears as he hurried past her, "But, what if..."

They reached the other candidates and Andar began to mingle with them, a smile here and a laugh there, he quickly gathered the crowd around him, and the tension began to break away, as Andar's shining presence seemed to break apart the weight in their chest.

Before long there was laughter in the crowd, and Andar headed to the front and stood before the door and all eyes followed him, it was almost impossible to look away. He turned and looked at the rest of the candidates, Mira looked at him with arms folded, his antics always served as a surprise to her, and his showmanship antics were a bit frustrating, but she could not deny their effectiveness.

"In the upcoming moments, these doors would be open," Andar began speaking and the crowd went silent,

"For all of us here this is the start of our dreams, and it is a glorious one. Yet, not all of us will make it," he smiled, "I know I will make it, but I don't know about the rest of you."

Someone shouted from the crowd, "Keep dreaming Andar!" the crowd erupted in laughter.

Andar nodded at them, "We are all in this together, and all of us here... we don't stop until we reach our limits... I don't care who we were before we got here, but after living with you guys for this entire week, I've not seen a group of people driven to do hard things like you all. We are now family, our drive and our ambition hold us together. With that in mind, I dub the candidate of this Castle, Limit Breaker, let it signify to all our resolve!"

A whisper went through the crowd and it was carried up by all, "Limit! Breaker! Limit! Breaker!..."

There was a rumble behind Andar and the gate began to slowly open. Mira walked up and stood beside him. After eyeing him with annoyance, she turned to the riled-up crowd, "Silence."

The crowd went still, she had imbued Aether in her words, Andar also did the same, it had become an unconscious action from both of them, and everyone else could not help but follow them, their presence blinding.

"You know the plan, follow it. Formations, everyone."

The 330 candidates arranged themselves in rows of ten, making each row hold 33 people.

Chapter 380: Race To The Top

Mira turned around and stood with him watching the opening doors that were slowly moving to the side, "Nice speech, a bit on the nose though."

Andar smirked, "Well, my mother is a politician, so don't expect anything better."

"you gave the group a name, we did not plan on that, another one of your tactics?" Mira smirked.

"Nah, It seemed right at the time, and I went with my guts."

"Right..." she looked at him disbelieving

Andar bumped her shoulder, "Imagine their faces, when our castle takes all the top spots!"

"Hold your leash tiger, other castles would also form their plans for winning."

"yes they would have, but they don't have you,"

"oh..." her cheeks became stained with a bit of pink.

"Or me... or the LIMIT BREAKERS!!"

The last part, he shouted, and his cries were echoed by the candidates behind him in their neat formation.

Mira rolled her eyes, and Andar smiled at her, "We go fast, and crush everyone in our way."

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There were six Archmages in the Black Federation apart from their leader Erick Black, but the powerful 9th Star Archmage now dwelled permanently in the Magus Supreme World and rarely returned to the federation.

At that level, the material universe had few things that could interest powers like that, they all strive for something greater. Their immortal lives are devoted to answering the hardest questions in existence and chasing the elusive position of the Supreme.

At this time all the Archmages were in an urgent gathering. This meeting was being held with all the Archmages from the seven Great Towers under the Supreme Mage World in attendance, nevertheless, they still sent a projection to oversee this current crop of candidates.

Their figures were just shadows and they watched with mild amusement as the castle gates were opened and the candidates flooded onto the clouds.

Because of how long the Trial Ground had been in existence, there were many rumors and strategies on how to gain the most benefit from it.

So even though largely half of the candidates that came out from their castles were disorganized, the rest clearly had plans on how to maximize their time here.

However, all of these were strategies they had seen a thousand times before, and they would only really start to pay attention when the candidates could reach the area where Legacy Grade Meditation Arts could be found.

So they settled with infinite patience as they watched the Trial Ground open up.

Yet three figures were central to their attention, they were Andar, Mira, and another youth whose head was bald.

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Thousands of candidates streaming into the clouds was a glorious sight, as few of them took the time to steady themselves after all there was a visual dissonance between seeing fluffy clouds and being able to walk on them, even if they knew these clouds were supporting hundreds of castles that were millions of tons in weight.

In addition, the Trial Ground was out in space, and the very skies were being shredded apart with energies that could light up a galaxy. They could not truly appreciate the grand scenery they found while inside the castle and looking through a small window, but now as they stood outside the full weight of their surroundings hit them like a lightning bolt.

Mira had anticipated something like this and the instruction she gave was simple: follow our lead.

When others were disorganized and trying to find their footing, they would be on the move. They would take the first position and they would hold it until they reached their destination.

The Limit Breakers only had to look at their partners in front of them disregarding everything around them, while those in front only had to look at the figures of Andar and Mira.

They went at a steady jogging pace, their destination was at the center of the clouds, for the 107 castles were arranged in a circular formation, and the spots for impaction of Meditation Arts were closer to the center of the clouds.

Their organized movements were enough to push them to the lead, and if one was to look from above, among the countless candidates streaming out from the castles, Andar's group had the clear lead.

Their movements soon began to draw attention from the shocked crowd who slowly began to rally themselves, as the candidates in the various castles tried to make themselves organized when a clear example of the power of unity was before them.

Mira could not help but grin, if the plan was for them to collect the Ordinary Meditation Arts, they could easily succeed but they wanted a greater prize for their entire team.

Andar took the chance to look up at the skies, which was just open space and the hundreds of multicolored Aether streams jetting above and lighting up the surroundings, his eyes began to track the path of the shooting streams of Aether down to its source, and he was nearly entranced.

By the gods, it was so beautiful.

"Focus Andar, three thousand meters ahead is the sweet spot." Mira bumped him with her shoulders.

"Let's go a bit further, push for another five hundred meters."

"Five hundred? Don't tell me you still want to pursue the Supreme Meditation Art. That is madness Andar."

Andar laughed, "I never did tell you my talent grade, did I?"

Mira's eyes became focused on him, "Don't tell me your talent is Supreme grade, even if it was, it is still useless. You are not the first Supreme grade talent that has tried to reach the hand of the Chained god."

"You're still looking down on my talents again." Andar laughed, "C'mon let's move faster, they are now used to this pace, and even if we are going for the extra five hundred meters we still need to keep to time."

Mira muttered, "Already made the decision, why bother even telling me, don't tell me that your Spirit Body is also at the Supreme Grade as well."

Andar did not reply, and he increased his pace to a flat-out run, Mira matching him and the rest followed. Although they were still mortal, the Awakening of their Spirit matrix had boosted their physique to an extent that made them top athletes.

Chapter 381: Collective Effort

A whistle came from behind and Mira turned her head, it came from one of her minders who pointed to their left.

A single youth was gaining on their group, he had left the other members of his castle behind and was going solo. Judging from his movement, this must be a genius with a Spirit Body.

It was impressive enough in this batch that there were three candidates with Spirit Bodies, and it was an especially great stroke of luck that Andar and Mira found themselves in the same castle.

The youth did not push the extra distance that Andar and the team were going for, instead having reached the minimum distance to reach the Heavenly Fate Meditation Art, he began tearing his way through the cloud and he disappeared from sight.

Mira looked at Andar with a frown and he smiled, "If you want to go fast, act alone, if you would like to go far..."

"Zip it, crow mouth, your words of wisdom are getting on my nerves." Mira shot back and increased her pace once more, and the rest of the team struggled to catch up.

You could picture this cloud to be in the shape of a funnel, it was broader on top, but as you get lower to the base, it begins to reduce until it falls to a single point.

Andar's goal was to get as close to the middle as possible, so they could penetrate straight down to the base of the cloud in one go, in that manner he would reach the hand of the Chained god.

It was not just because of the Supreme Meditation Art, which his main body would find very valuable and may be able to use in a way that may defy all understanding, his main body was also interested in this hand, for there was a soul inside it.

Reaching their destination, Mira and Andar stopped and the rest of the team passed them by and gathered in a circle, with Andar and Mira at the center, Andar looked at Mira and as one they nodded, Mira's piercing blue eyes shined as she raised her right fist upwards, giving the signal to begin.

The clouds could hold a lot of weight, but there was a trick to getting through each layer, especially the topmost layers that held the Ordinary and Outstanding Meditation Arts.

Half of the candidates jumped, and while they were in the air, the other half also jumped. The moment the first candidates landed the clouds began to vibrate, before it could settle the other candidates also landed, and the grounds caved beneath them, bringing all 300 candidates to the next layer. The cloud above them zipped close with a resounding snap, like an elastic band that was retracted after being pulled.

Mira breathed a sigh of relief, she was happy they were able to organize their castle's candidates to become the best at tackling the Trial ground, she knew it was the presence of her and Andar, two great Spirit Bodies working together in cooperation that led to such an occurrence.

She had no idea she could meet someone like this on the Trial Ground, and she began to wonder, what if both of them were capable of reaching the Supreme Meditation Art? Blowing away those silly thoughts from her head, she focused on the team, making sure everyone was in sync.

They reached the next layer and they repeated the same maneuver, with the only difference being that they had to do a three-pronged jump.

This trend continued until they had broken through seven layers of clouds, and by then all the candidates were exhausted. After the third layer, the clouds became increasingly harder, and every jump would bring a large wave of pain to their bodies.

They looked around them and saw the layer of cloud they were in was brown, and that meant the Meditation Arts that could be found here were at least at the Superb Grade.

Most of them collapsed in sheer exhaustion, but their immediate surroundings brought them incredible joy, and they all laughed in celebration.

There were seven levels to Meditation Arts, which were Ordinary, Outstanding, Superb, Legacy, Mythical, Heavenly Fate, and Supreme.

For candidates of their talents, it was almost certain they would have to pick an Ordinary Meditation Art, with the lucky few getting an Outstanding Meditation Art, and rarely would there be any case of them getting a Superb Meditation Art.

To push to this level, required both speed and power, and more importantly knowledge and cooperation. The combination of Andar and Mira gave them all these properties and now, each of them was like a leopard that had been given wings.

The knowledge of their incredible fortune made them all out in shock and happiness, although the charisma of Andar and Mira were high, some of them still thought that their plan would fail, but the results proved them wrong. "Limit! Breakers!..." Their cries were piercing, cutting away the pain and tiredness in their limbs.

Andar and Mira smiled, they had been able to save a bit of energy, reaching this place, as every single scrap of energy they could save along the way was essential, and now their true journey began.

Mira began rolling up her sleeves when they were interrupted by the candidates around them, who stood up and began to circle them.

They all had looks of resolve in their eyes as they picked themselves from the ground and surrounded Andar and Mira. "Limit! Breakers!.... Limit! Breakers!..."

With each loud cry they jumped, but the clouds below them were like hardwood and each collision brought them pain, but they continued. Mira's eyes were wide open in astonishment, with all the plans and projections she had placed down, none of them could account for what was happening now.

She had allocated every single bit of energy their bodies should be able to give without burning them out, and yet, they were all surprising her, they had all broken their limits.

With one last cry, a small circle broke beneath their feet and Andar and Mira slipped into it before it snapped shut.

They landed in the layer below, and the cloud now felt like concrete. Mira looked up a trace of astonishment still left in her eyes. She sighed and began to fold up her sleeves once more, "Were you aware that giving them a name would bring about such a performance?"

Chapter 382: Rank 0 Berserker Script- Smash

Andar corrected, "Giving us a name. We are all one and all, Limit Breakers!."

Mira looked at him deeply, the thoughts in her mind were chaotic before they settled and then she nodded. "Tell me about such strategies before you implement them next time."

Andar distractedly replied while looking to his left, "Er, it's nothing that profound, it is a common technique to bring a sense of loyalty and shared interest into a group, your superb organizational abilities certainly helped create this dynamic. Hey, Mira, look what we have here."

She had finished rolling up both sleeves and looked towards Andar's gaze, a few hundred feet away she could see a panting youth. He should be the Spirit Body that went ahead of his group and began penetrating through the cloud first.

He barely managed to break through the cloud below and he looked at them with surprise in his eyes before the cloud closed up behind his descending figure.

"Good, we have caught up." Mira rubbed her palms together in glee. With a lovely cry, she clenched her right hand, and the reason for folding her sleeves was revealed. She had dozens of Rank 0 Scripts on both arms!

This was where the great distinctions between Spirit Bodies and anyone else lay. Even as mortals without any Meditation Arts, Spirit Bodies were strong and had Aether flowing through their veins.

Their bodies were stronger and also had various properties that differentiated them from the rest. A Spirit Body also came with attributes, either elemental or some other more ephemeral concepts like force or even space.

In a manner, their bodies were like mini Spirit Matrixes. This made it possible for them to have an advantage over their peers at every level, and as they got stronger, the advantages a Spirit Body would bring would continuously increase.

A normal Rank 3 Acolyte could only carry ten Rank 0 Scripts and a single Rank 1 Script, yet Mira was still a mortal yet she had more than two dozen Rank 0 Scripts on each of her arms, this alone could show the true distinction between Mages.

Although the reason she was able to carry so many Rank 0 scripts was because they were all one-time use, even if that were to be the case, it was still astonishing.

One-time use Scripts had less of a backlash on the body of the user, and most of the burden of activating it was borne by the Scripts itself, even so, it was not something that any mortal should be able to carry, needless to mention Mira who had filled her arms with as much Rank 0 Scripts as it could hold.

The Rank 0 Script she used was a simple one, and it was one that Andar was intrinsically familiar with—Smash.

The Berserker Aspect Technique, Smash.

She punched the ground and one of the Script on her arm lit up with a bloody red glow. An ephemeral figure appeared behind her and vanished, it was of a warrior holding his bloody arms up to the sky.

There were many bloody scars all over the body of the warrior, but this did not paint a picture of weakness, only of endless ferocity and madness.

Another bloody fist suddenly materialized around her hand that was five times larger than her hand and smashed into the ground, and the cloud vibrated, she punched with her left, another Script lighting up with a bloody glow, and a hole opened up, Andar quickly followed her through it before it closed.

Once again they barely missed the first youth, who had begun to move faster knowing he had competition behind him.

"Your turn," Mira called out.

Andar nodded, "Stand closer to me." he simply stamped his feet and the sound was loud like a bomb detonating.

The ground below them opened for more than twenty feet before it swallowed both of them.

"you...you..." Mira called out in shock, Andar only smiled as he was also a bit shocked, not expecting this much power from his limbs, he had grown even stronger since his awakening, and he had no time to test how much stronger his body had become, "Your turn." he said.

Mira's eyes brightened, remembering what Andar had told her, what if we can get a Supreme Grade Meditation Art?...

"Hey, you guys caught up quickly, I'm... Zaros."

They both turned to see the sweaty youth, his eyes wide as he looked at the hole closing overhead and the two fresh people standing here with no sign of exhaustion as if they were going for a stroll.

He could not help but consider the thought of joining them. Would it be possible for him to stick along with them, surely with his powers he could assist and go through the Trials faster. It would be foolish for them to deny him, after all, no matter how small a mosquito was, it was still meat to someone.

The youth with the black hair and silver eyes who had an air of utter relaxation around him answered,

"Hey Zaros, my name is Andar and this is Mira, it's a pleasure to meet you. Congratulations on getting here so quickly, this Trials is something isn't it?"

If it is something, why does it look like you are just strolling through it? Zaros thought hatefully, but he smiled. It would seem that Andar was an easygoing personality, and it should be straightforward to leech from him.

Zaros scratched his head while laughing self-deprecatingly, "I overestimated my abilities and rushed ahead, can I join..."

"Scram!" Mira growled

Zaros frowned but he quickly washed the look away from his face, "I just need to..."

"I am not fond of repeating myself." Mira brought up her right hand which had begun to glow red like blood as the multiple Rank 0 Scripts lit up, "Scram!"

Zavros's face went pale, if a single one of those touched him, he would be reduced to a stain.

Of course, he had managed to inscribe seven Rank 0 Scripts on his body, but this was all he could contain, and he was leaving it for the final stretch, as he intended to push for a Heavenly Fate Meditation Art.

Knowing he would not be accepted by these two his eyes went cold, and he drew his hand over his bald head, a bodily trait that resulted from his awakening and Spirit Body.

- Chapter 383: Halfway Through The Clouds

Chapter 383: Halfway Through The Clouds

For a moment he nearly wanted to attack both of them, they did not seem so tough, and he could counter the girl's Script and attack her smiling companion, if he could get a hold of him, he would use him as a shield, and...

Zavros paused, he did not know about the hidden abilities of Andar, he had only seen Mira's Scripts, and he had no idea what Andar may be hiding. This was not the best time to fight.

He sighed in regret and replied, "If that is the case good luck, but please keep in mind that..." He choked in anger when he saw that Mira had ignored him and punched the ground, and three red flashes followed as the cloud collapsed bringing her and her companion to the next level.

Andar looked at him with an apologetic gaze and waved as the cloud sealed up behind them.

Zavros licked his lips, a feverish anger taking over him, with a roar he unleashed his Rank 0 Script. A blue man with a fishtail appeared behind him holding a pitchfork.

With a grunt, Zavros attacked the cloud beneath him, and his anger and desperation soared when he saw he would need another attack with his Scripts to penetrate the ground, but he had only six of them left.

Pushing aside his anger, he realized he was being foolish, and so he began to slowly hammer at the ground using his fist. His spirit body had an affinity to water, he would quickly recover from damages, and he would just have to slowly push his way through.

When this Trial was over and they all received their Meditation Art, that was the time for the true battle between Mages would begin, at that time he would suppress those two beneath his feet.

If they expended too much of their energy, he would be the last one smiling, as his Spirit Body aided his recovery ability.

Zavros smiled through the pain and continued digging through the clouds, inch by inch.

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"You are too lenient when it comes to accepting hogwash. That fool wanted to play us. He is lucky I did not decide to kill him" Mira called out angrily, as she used five stacks of her Rank 0 Script to blow her way to the next level.

Andar shrugged, "It was my turn to attack just now."

"I know." Mira pointed out, "But if we are going to be making it to the Supreme Meditation Art, then we will need you to be in the best shape."

She stopped and placed her hands on Andar's arm, a slight blush covering her cheeks, "If those of our team above can break through their limits, so can we."

Andar snickered, "Say it with me, you know you want to. Limit..."

"Don't you dare." Mira shouted and with a growl, she punched the ground and six Rank 0 Smash Scripts erupted.

He did not attack the youth with the bald head even though he detected the hint of malice coming from him because he did not need to do so. Before he gets his hands on a Meditation Art and begins growing his power, it would be foolish to antagonize someone with an unknown background.

He wanted to quickly grow powerful so he could be of assistance to his main body, and fighting every foolish youth and whatever background they may have would be an utter waste of his time and resources.

Andar knew he was on a ticking clock as always, and with his main body creating World Seeds, his time in slumber would become drastically reduced. He needed to be at least a Rank 6 Mage in a very short amount of time if he was ever going to be of any use.

Shifting his mind from future matters to the present moments, he considered his partner and the Scripts she was using.

Andar knew that Mira had a lot of Rank 0 Scripts on her body, and he also figured out his master would have given him more if he had the time. He did not know his body limit at this moment, but that was not the source of his greatest surprise.

The Rank 0 Script she was using was incredibly familiar, as this was the Berserker Aspect that was his main body favorite battle technique.

There must be a great number of similarities between Aspects and Scripts, and if that was the case, then he could understand the great divide that existed between Trion and the Mage worlds when it came to techniques.

This was not necessarily a sign of weakness, as Dominators mostly depended on abilities they unlocked from their bloodline and not necessarily comprehending techniques.

The Berserker Aspect was a premier battle technique of the Tiberius Bloodline and the God of War signature battle move, but here Mira could use the Mortal Level of a Berserker technique—Smash, so easily without truly understanding the nature of the technique.

Although he knew the Berserker Aspect still held far more complexities than what Mira had access to, that was just at the beginning levels of the Scripts, what would Mages be able to do with a Rank 5 Berserker Script or even 6 or 7?

Besides they had access to thousands of Scripts of various types and affinities and the threshold for learning them was far lower than acquiring an Aspect.

The Berserker Aspect was only available to the Tiberius family because of the incredible strain it places on the body of the user, but that requirement was far more reduced or even nonexistent when it was in the form of a Script.

Mira went on a rampage as the clouds began to flash red with each level she broke through, and now it was possible to see she had made it halfway through the clouds.

There were only seven more levels to go through before they could reach the bottom of the cloud.

Mira checked her arm, she had enough for two more levels, and then everything was up to Andar. Not one to reevaluate after making a decision, she unleashed the Rank 0 Scripts in multiple bursts and finally tore her way through two layers.

This area of the cloud they found themselves in was gray like metal, Mira tapped the cloud beneath her feet and it let out metallic sounds like a gong.

Chapter 384: Growing Challenges.

Mira's eyes became set in intense concentration. At this level, you could begin finding Mythical Grade Meditation Art and if she was not wrong, there should also be a single Heavenly Fate Meditation Art here, but she did not care for that one, her father had already given her the list of all the Heavenly Fate Meditation Art that could be found here and the one most suitable for her was on the last level before you could get to the hand of the Chained god.

The Heavenly Fate Meditation Art to be found here was called the Revolving Core Meditation Art, and it was the most common Heavenly Fate Meditation Art that could be found, as 99 out of every 100 candidates who collected Heavenly Fate Meditation Art would select this one.

Among the many reasons why it was chosen was because it was very powerful even though it was the one that was relatively easier to reach, it was still beyond what most candidates would ever attain.

Although it appeared relatively simple for Andar and Mira to reach this area, not every mortal could have the capacity to carry dozens of Rank 0 Scripts and the ability to use them in the best manner to enhance their effects.

What Mira did might seem easy but it was anything but. If someone else were in her shoes and tried to do the same thing, they would have to expend five times the amount of rank 0 Script before they could reach this place.

Mira had to practice a lot on how to use the Scripts properly, and she did that hundreds of times every week until she perfected the right force to use to achieve the best resonance and force to push through the clouds.

To reach her true goals; however, they would have to dig deeper and she was counting on Andar to achieve that. She had seen the complex Script on his arm, and it amazed her that he was able to utilize a Script of that level. This Script should be at least Rank 1.

He had already proved his dominance by using just his body to blast his way through a level, she had utter faith that he might succeed, even if they failed to reach the Supreme Grade Meditation Art, at least they might be able to get to the Heaven Fate Meditation Art.

At that last level, there were only two spots, and they held the highest grade Heavenly Fate Meditation Art in the entirety of the Black Tower. This was the Meditation Art that had been fought for by the founder of the Black Tower, Erick Black, and it was to be the foundation of his Great Tower.

They were the Star Odyssey Meditation Art and the Dark Fate Meditation Art. These were two Meditation Techniques that were enough to look down on the entire universe and in the entire history of the Black Tower, only eleven people had been able to master these Meditation Techniques. Nine of those became Archmage.

Another important reason to fight for that top spot was that whoever used those two Meditation Arts was guaranteed a spot in the Supreme Tower of Endirius.

This was a chance to study and grow in a Supreme World!

Andar nodded at her, a sign that he was ready. He went on one knee, raised his fist, and carelessly punched the ground. The loud thump was like the footstep of a giant, Mira had to widen her legs to steady herself.

What sort of Spirit Body did Andar have? She thought in astonishment, this sort of body strength was as great as Rank 1 mages who focused on Body Modification, and he was just a Mortal.

The second blow caused the ground to begin vibrating and the third blow tore a wide hole through the cloud. The hole was at least ten feet wide and Andar frowned a bit, as both of them descended, something was wrong, the force from his blows seemed to linger on his body long after it should have dissipated.

They were now on the fourth level, and Andar did not rush to break through to the next floor, he kept his hands on the clouds below their feet and he seemed to be in deep thought.

Then he suddenly strikes like a viper, the sounds strangely soft and the hole that was made was barely five feet across, and he nodded in satisfaction.

Mira rolled her eyes in equal amounts of astonishment and annoyance, it was clear that pushing through the clouds even at this level was no challenge to Andar, instead, he was taking the time to refine his body and understand his strength.

She was right, even now Andar did not understand the true strength his body was capable of unleashing after his long rest. He found out that his awakening also took a bit of time to be completed and now he could review his full capabilities.

He did not use any battle technique for this last blow, he simply used his strength ingeniously, so he did not waste any single bit of it.

Except for those freaks in the Bodily Modification Sector, most Mages did not see the need to have powerful bodies, instead, they wanted bodies that were sufficiently attuned to Aether. Andar also had no wish to go towards the route of body strengthening. That would be a useless effort, for there was no way this body could ever become as strong as his main body, what he needed to do was pursue in the opposite direction. Creating a body of energy.

Bracing himself for the next attack, he poured his will into his fist and punched. The sound was like hitting a bell, Andar felt a blinding pain rush up from his arm into his spine. The hardness from the clouds had suddenly multiplied by a factor of ten!

If the previous level could be likened to being made of soft foam, this level was made from hardwood, yet he still noticed another discrepancy, the pain from his blows lingered.

The pain seemed excessive as if the cloud was multiplying his sensation of touch. Andar gritted his teeth so hard it began emitting a loud grinding sound and he began to whale on the ground, one, two, ten, fifteen punches before the ground began to vibrate.

The last punch opened the way and both of them fell through it. Rowan allowed the normal responses of child-like Andar to take over, and his body began to shiver as tears began to roll from his eyes.

Chapter 385: Adapting To Pain

Andar discovered a horrific fact about the clouds at this level, every punch he made brought him pain, and the pain did not cease, it only compounded.

Every hit he made increased the pain he felt until it was as if everything he knew was pain. His stubbornness was what made him attack in a frenzy because he was afraid that if he stopped the pain would freeze him in place.

This was the first time in his entire life to experience something like this. This was the sort of pain that would kill an average mortal man ten times over, and only his strong constitution was holding him in place.

Andar collapses as the pain overwhelms his senses.

Mira's eyes were wide, she knew of this peculiar nature of the clouds when you began to approach the base, it was the reason why she had Rank 0 Scripts. Usually, to push through the clouds to reach the bottom layers, you had to slowly claw your way through it. Yet they could not be too slow, because there was a time limit on the trial grounds.

It was the reason after millions of years, barely eleven people had made it to the last levels, as you did not just require strength, luck, and perseverance, you also needed the capacity to bear untold amounts of pain.

Andar was very powerful and talented, perhaps the most talented person she would ever meet, but it seemed as if he had not gone through any specific training to master pain. It was admirable he was able to push through to this level.

Who was responsible for training him?

Mira did not know that before now, it was generally acknowledged that Andar would never awaken his Spirit Matrix, and so he was not taught the process and what he should expect during awakening.

Also, every Great Tower had different Trial Grounds, and his master had no way of knowing the sorts of challenges to be faced in the Black Tower. Nevertheless, having seen the scope of Andar's talent, he had faith that he would be able to succeed.

If Andar's target was a Heavenly Fate Meditation Art, he would have been correct, because, at this level, you could find three powerful Arts that level, he wanted something more, or perhaps it should be said that Rowan wanted more.

Andar would have been delighted with a Heaven Fate Meditation Art, but for Rowan that was nothing. Anything short of a Supreme level of power was meaningless to him.

Mira hurriedly knelt by his side and cradled his sweating head that had begun to heat up, his veins threatened to burst out of his skin, as he groaned, the expression of pain on his face was so gut-wrenching she forgot herself and went to help.

She even forgot that Andar's body was so powerful, that he could seriously hurt or kill her if he was not paying attention.

"Stay with me Andar, listen to the sound of my voice."

"It hurts...it hurts. So bad... master, help me... it hurts..."

"I know, I know Andar, it is painful, but you have to push it aside, you are going to be a talented Mage and this sort of pain is nothing. Push through Andar."

He gasped, "Mira? I don't know how..."

She smiled in relief, finally happy she was getting through to him, "You are already on the path.... Listen to the sound of my voice. Make it everything you should think of. The pain is silence and darkness, while my voice is relief and light. Follow my voice to the light and leave the darkness. The pain has no hold over you.... The darkness has no hold over you... the pain has no hold over you... the darkness has..."

Andar began to slowly chant with her, "The pain has no hold over me... the darkness has no hold over me... the pain has..."

Slowly as he spoke, his voice began gaining in strength and volume, his eyes began to focus and he slowly stood up while chanting.

His adaptability and inner strength made Rowan smile in surprise.

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The actions of Andar and Mira were being watched and assessed by all four projections of the Archmages.

Each of them was silent when they saw the organizational capacities of the Limit Breakers, there was nothing unique about that. Countless candidates had now formed teams and were beginning to push through the clouds.

What made them begin to focus on Andar and Mira was the moment Andar began to stand back on his feet after Mira brought him back from the edge of pain and madness.

That was something rare, most candidates would never recover when they receive pain at that level, and most would be begging for death at this time.

For it was important to note that when Andar returned to his feet, the pain did not reduce, he was just learning how to manage and function even through the pain.

As the two most promising candidates, their backgrounds were now placed under scrutiny, and Andar's were revealed.

Nothing from the boy's history would show any training in meditation or other esoteric arts to control pain. Outside his obvious talent, there was no indication of his talent grade or the grade of his Spirit Body.

What most Archmages craved was willpower, without it, no matter how talented he was, he would be nothing but a pig with a golden nose ring.

The pain the child was feeling at this time must have been like he was being doused in acid while being injected with a substantial dose of adrenaline. Every nerve would be on fire, and if he wanted to get to the best Heavenly Fate Meditation Art, he would have to be smart with his choices and request the aid of his partner.

Of course, they all heard of his outlandish claims to reach the Supreme Meditation Art, but children knew nothing of the world, and flight of fancy was their right.

A central figure among the Archmages began to speak. This figure had two heads, and his shoulders were broad, almost three times the size of an average man.

"The child has talent, but he is foolish and whoever prepared him for the Trials should be punished. His Constitution is ridiculous, why was he not properly fortified with Scripts before he came for this? Oracle, under which jurisdiction was this candidate selected? What is the grade of his talent and his Spirit Body?"

Chapter 386: Archmages Of The Black Tower.

A genderless voice that Rowan would have found familiar as it was the same as the voice of the Oracle from Covenant sounded, "The candidate Andar Erickson came under no agency, and he applied in person for transportation from Rezur City at Ikaron V."

"Interesting, was that not your Jurisdiction Shemira? You have always been tracking down candidates for your crystal legion. I'm surprised you would let such a great seed leave your domain." The two-headed figure turned to the shadow sitting beside it.

Like the Covenant, these four shadowy figures were seated in a circular array, and a hologram of the activities in the Trial Ground was being broadcasted in their center.

The female figure Shemira the Archmage who was hunting Andar sighed, "Khasos, my disciple allocated these duties to his servant, and the man he gave this essential task to was foolish, he allowed his ego and small-mindedness as the reason for this talent to slip through my grasp, but as the Prime Jurisdiction Officer over Ikaron V, I expect that his discipleship would be placed under me. The child has promise and needs a steady head, I will not be using him as a soldier in my Crystal Legion, he is to be my Legacy Disciple."

There was a snort from another shadowy figure, "Shemira wishes to return the air she had breathed away back to her lungs. He is now in the Trial Grounds, and he is no longer your concern, what is left for him to do is to choose his future or for you to entice him to yours, I also want a Legacy Disciple and he is a suitable prospect."

The shadow of Shemira glowed in anger but she answered with slight laughter in her voice, "That is the plan Lucius, let us see how far these children can reach. For three Spirit Bodies to be present here in our Trial Ground is unprecedented. You must be very proud Hashim of your daughter's accomplishment."

The last shadow figure laughed, "The silly girl. Wasting all her riches on the first boy who catches her eye. She would need to be reprimanded after this is all over. She is letting her heart lead instead of her head."

These were the four Archmages of the Black Tower, 2 Star Archmage Hashim Prizahl Watcher of Blades, 3 Star Archmage Shemira Myrcelo Circle Of The Crystal Rose, 2 Star Archmage Lucius Gyfron The Pioneer of Treasure, and 5 Star Archmage Khasos Mylos The Golem King.

The figures soon began discussing other matters, including a Talent found in the Mist Tower who had both a Supreme grade talent and a Supreme grade Spirit Body. This news was enough to shock them as they argued furiously about how such a talent would be able to utilize his full potential.

Shemira Myrcelo did not divulge that the monster they were witnessing had surpassed whatever supreme-grade talent in the Mist Tower, and she was determined to make Andar her disciple.

She was also the only one who had a sneaking suspicion that Andar might succeed in his ambition to reach a Supreme Meditation Art, it was so unlikely that this would ever happen but she always liked to bet against the odds. This boy who came from nowhere, might just be able to shock the entire Mage World.

Her breath imperceptibly quickened and anticipation began to brew in her heart. This child might be the key to unlocking the treasures of the Supreme world, and bring her before the gates of Endirius.

It was a good thing that she had leverage over him.

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Rowan's consciousness had reached a level where he could accurately simulate and process massive amounts of data even when he was currently restricted to possessing just a mortal body.

He understood Andar's entire life, and he was able to wear the shell of Andar as he pleased, it was as if he was a computer and Andar was an application he was running. This was important in order to fool the defenses of a Supreme World.

He could do this possession so well, that he became the 'Application,' yet his intellect remained in the background as he supervised every action being taken.

This was a unique talent of his that was born as a result of his bloodline and the fact that he no longer had a Soul, he could become anything and anyone he wished to a degree, that it would be nigh impossible to tell the fake from the original.

He was a perfect imposter.

Sometimes this was a good thing, but it came with drawbacks, such as the situation Andar was currently facing.

Compared to the pain he received when he was evolving into an Ouroboros Serpent, or when he received his Spatial Sight, or the many times his body had to liquefy itself as he evolved, this amount of pain he was currently feeling was nothing, and he would have to deliberately struggle for this sort of pain to even affect him, and recently it was becoming difficult for him to even notice pain.

But for the program he was running—Andar, this pain was everything, but he had to give kudos to where it was due. The child struggled through the pain without his assistance, but for how long he wondered.

Mira's words served as an Anchor and her voice was like a beacon in a stormy sea. Andar swam towards it, and Rowan became surprised at the stubbornness of his Spirit.

He had barely recovered when he roused himself and with a yell, Andar began to attack the cloud to get to the next level.

Each punch was almost like he was driving his fist through dozens of blades, and the pain kept increasing, but he kept muttering, "Follow the light... leave the darkness... follow the light..."

With a last mighty punch, he collapsed the cloud and reached the next level, but the strain of holding so much pain nearly drove him to unconsciousness and for the next few minutes, Andar battled to reorganize his mind.

He was failing. The pain came in endless waves that began to tear his sanity apart.

Chapter 387: Fighting To Stay Alive.

Rowan watched him for a while, Andar was not at his limits yet, but he was fast approaching, he would give him a few moments before he decided to intervene.

The girl Mira had a great technique for handling pain, but with Rowan's experience, it was not enough. The pain Andar was going through was on a scale of magnitude higher than what the technique she was impacting could handle.

Rowan was also partly at fault for this because Andar's physique was made to be very sensitive to all sorts of energy, everything that passed through his body would be felt far more deeply than everyone else.

For Rowan this would not be a problem, he craved such a thing, it would make his goal of understanding all forms of energies straightforward, but for the fragile mind of Andar, it may be too much.

What Mira was teaching Andar was to detach himself from the pain, and leave it behind while preserving his mind and mental faculties, this would not work for someone like Andar whose body was tens of times more sensitive than normal.

Also, Rowan did not believe in this approach to handling pain, his character had always been one that was intensely adamant and with his Empyrean bloodlines, his stubbornness had slowly been transformed into an unshakable faith in himself, that at the least could be judged as arrogance and at the most as fanaticism.

Rowan believed nothing could break him. Not pain, not despair, not loneliness, not failure, not loss...

Everything would come and it would pass, he would not back down from the fight.

Let the waves come, let them crash and churn, he would always remain, as unshakable as a Divine Mountain. He wanted to impact this character to Andar yet he wanted to be subtle, drastic changes would not work.

Rowan knew that they were most likely being monitored and he could not make extreme changes to Andar's character without inviting suspicion. What he could do however was to direct Andar's awareness about how to cope with the pain.

This situation was the best opportunity for Andar to change his mindset and grow. Finally deciding it was time, Rowan released a single spark inside Andar's mind — Rage!

It was just a spark, but that spark should carry enough power to light up a forest.

Then something happened that made Rowan astonished and even his main body far away stirred a little.

Andar's total life experience was short, and although it could not compare to the suffering and the harshness of Rowan's own, there were still lessons to learn, and sometimes children were the best receivers of experience, for their minds were still malleable and prone to change when stimulated.

This boy had been rejected by his mother on her path to find power, and although the Alchemist his master tried to hide the truth from him, Andar was not deceived for long. For all he knew his mother left him, because he was a failure, and her future was better off without him in it.

He understood then that in this universe, the only bargaining chip you had to play with was your personal strength. His mother understood it, and she left him behind, his Main body understood it. It was the reason he was fleeing to another galaxy as he grew his powers.

It was the reason his master had concealed him and paid the costly price to bring him the opportunity to come to the Trial Zone, it was all to give him the opportunity to stand on his own two feet and grow his personal power.

His Limit Breakers pushed beyond their limits to bring him here.

Mira used all her Scripts and followed his directions, just to bring him here.

Everyone had paid and contributed so much, just for him to be here.

Was he willing to fail just like that?

Experience was the best teacher and what was a better experience than death and suffering? When Rowan died his response to death and setbacks was to grow stronger, it was to make himself a fort against every pain and trial to come his way.

Andar's mindset was different from Rowan's, and even if he was a program, in a manner of speaking, he was possessing Rowan and he was his person, with his thoughts and feelings.

He was Andar with all the experience of Rowan, but he was free to choose if he would utilize that experience or fight against his setbacks by himself.

Rowan had given this new incarnation of his, this choice, and Andar began to feel sorrow, for even with this choice, he was still too weak to succeed on his own, after all the advantages he had been given.

Rowan's action of adding Rage to the mental struggles in his mind did not lead to the outcome he expected.

Andar's rage was no longer just directed at the pain but at himself!

It was important to note that when Rowan awakened Andar's Spirit Matrix, he did it almost instantly after he possessed his body. He could do this because of his power and experience but this action also revealed the truth to Andar.

It would have been extremely difficult for Andar to awaken by himself but it was not impossible. He had always blamed his impossible talent when all along, he was the reason for his failure. He was too weak-minded.

He let his failures drive him to give up, it even led to his shameful death. Andar did not believe in himself and he lacked the resolve to push through suffering and setbacks.

He had to be rescued from death and become someone else. His master may have died and sacrificed just for him to have this opportunity, and now when he faced new challenges, he had failed and help was coming once more...

He refused to accept...

How many times do I have to be rescued even with all my gifts?

This is the start of his journey to power, what right would he have to stand before the universe and proclaim his strength if he could not go through this tribulation?

It was just pain, even if it was so much pain it could kill him... it was still pain and he needed to fight it, using the talents he had.

In that short period when Andar wallowed in suffering, he went through the details of his life, and he came across the one thing that might save him and he seized it.

Because he knew that when Rowan brought his body back to life, he gave him a precious choice and another chance at life, and if he could not stand on his feet he would soon perish and what was left would only be Rowan.

Rowan had made a perfect copy. Perhaps too perfect.

Andar in his own way was still alive, and he was fighting.

Chapter 388: Grey Will.

The four Archmages' eyes were now fully focused on Andar and Mira, for them to make it to this stage, even given their talent was rare.

2-Star Archmage Lucius Gryfron sighed, "The talent of this child is superb, if he can hold back the pain for a little while longer and use the Cloud Whale in his Rank 2 Aegis

Script he will be able to reach the final layer. Congratulations... your daughter made a wise decision by allying with him."

"Hahaha, it's her fortune, the plan was for her to get the Revolving Core Meditation Art, and I gave her just enough resources to reach that level." Hashim Prizahl laughed, "To be on the cusp of reaching the final level is due to her ingenuity and wisdom. Though I have an itch in my teeth about how the physique of a mortal is able to carry a combination Rank 2 Script"

The two-headed 5-Star Archmage Khasos Mylos snapped his fingers in surprise, "Interesting, he is getting up already. The pain of that level should have broken his threshold. This child is getting more interesting with every moment. It would seem the batch of candidates in my Black Tower are full of surprises."

The Archmages watched as Andar began to rise, but they quickly noticed that something had changed. The way he stood up was disconcerting and unnatural. His feet seemed to find purchase in the cloud and he rose from his back without pushing with his arms.

Andar joints were making dull cracking sounds and his head fell on his chest as if he was asleep before his head shot up, his neck bone making intense cracking sounds, he seemed not to be able to control his movements, each motion was either too short or too long, but every movement he made was abrupt.

Mira began to step back in shock, as a weird feeling seized her chest, almost as if she could not breathe, the feeling that Andar was giving off was making her heart shake in fear and horror, as she looked at his face trying to find the familiar boy that she knew.

The Archmages all focused on Andar's face, and in particular, it was his eyes.

They appeared dead as a milky glaze covered them.

They all leaned forward in interest, as Archmage Shemira Myrcelo could not help but gasp out loud, "Is that Frozen Mind?"

Khasos Mylos grinned, "No, it's not... There are similarities there but it's different. This is Grey Will. It seems this child has a destiny with me."

"Congratulations Golem King, after all this time you now have a worthy disciple with the embers of your Domain." Hashim Prizahl laughed aloud.

The two-headed Archmage sat up, his agitation evident, and for the first time, his other head spoke, "How very interesting for a mortal to awaken Grey will. If he does not die, then he shall become my final disciple."

Shemira Myrcelo's hands squeezed in anger.

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Andar movements resembled that of a puppet. He turned to Mira and he smiled, but it was a ghastly impression.

The edges of his mouth grew wide and there was no light or amusement in his dead eyes, his head turned left and right and he brought his arms forward and back as if he was getting used to his body.

But his movements were too disjointed and swift before they became slow and with no indication he would become swift again.

Mira found herself moving backward, the chill growing in her chest. She found herself following her advice to Andar and began reciting the chants to ward away fear.

"Don't... be... afraid...it's...me" Andar's broken voice came out of his throat as if the words were escaping from a broken radio.

Mira paused, although his words were disjointed and lacked any emotion as if he was an elementary Artificial Intelligence Artifact, it was still his voice, "Andar, what's happening to you? Are you okay?"

Again he made that ghastly smile, "Fine... just... handling...things."

He abruptly slammed his two knees to the floor, and he began to punch the ground, each blow sounded like metal colliding, and if he was feeling any pain, his face did not show it.

After punching the ground for thirty seconds with mechanical precision, he paused and cocked his head to the side as if he was thinking, and then he resumed but this time he was using both fists.

Each blow was directed at the floor with two punches for every second that passed, the increasing frequency of his blows made the ground begin to slowly vibrate.

"Maybe you should try using your Scripts Andar," Mira called out weakly, she saw he was beginning to bleed, his knuckles were tearing open as the punishment being inflicted on his hands was growing past his incredible endurance.

But her attention was caught by something else, as the ground continued to increase its vibration, she noticed something horrifying.

The cloud had begun releasing a red gas that was circling Andar's body, and like snakes, they began to crawl over his body, even with the mechanical movements of his body, she still detected that his body was twitching and shaking when that red gas touched him.

She was so focused on it that when the ground gave way below Andar she was surprised and then she quickly ran after him, diving into the closing gap and barely missed her hand getting caught in the closing.

Mira breathed a sigh of relief and her eyes went wide as she looked all around her. They were on the final level, the place where the two best Heavenly Fate Meditation Arts could be found. The clouds here were different because they resembled flesh.

It was possible to see lines in the walls that should be veins and arteries, and if she listened closely enough, she was sure she could hear breathing.

The floors were sticky and when she placed her hands on them, they were warm, and they trembled.

She pulled her hands away, and she looked around, feeling for the first time as if she was in the stomach of a beast.

Chapter 389: Changes In The Spirit Matrix

This place was not somewhere they should stay for long. Suddenly she had no desire to reach for the Supreme Meditation Art. To be able to reach this point was good enough, anything more almost felt... heretical.

Mira quickly realized that without the assistance of Andar and the Limit Breakers, it would have been impossible for her to reach this point, and she would have had to settle for the most basic Heavenly Fate Meditation Art, Revolving Core.

The Rank 0 Scripts she had with her would have never been enough for her to reach this place, even if she carried ten times more on her body. No wonder her old man had been smiling at her request to reach this level, well she made it, but she was lucky, and she did not want to ask for more, all she wanted was for Andar to be alright, whatever happened to him, was not good... she felt scared of him and for him.

The final blows Andar made were around peak Rank 1 offensive Scripts in strength, and he had to launch blows of that level dozens of times.

Andar stood with his head bowed, and she came closer, when Mira attempted to touch him, she recoiled with a heart-wrenching scream and fell to the floor where she nearly peed on herself as she rolled around on the floor in pain.

Mira had touched a bit of the red gas surrounding his body and she discovered that the gas was nothing but pure pain given form.

Decency was soon relinquished as her mind went blank, her eyes rolled into her head and she became lost in the most horrific experience of her life. She felt as if her body were being pulled apart, piece by piece, and the pain from the experience was magnified until it was everything that she could feel.

If someone had offered her death at this moment, she would have gladly accepted.

The chanting in her mind that was unconsciously being recited inside her head was the only thing that kept her sanity, also the understanding that whatever she was feeling, Andar must be experiencing it a hundred times worse than her.

How was he still sane and functioning? How was he even alive?

A continuous loud bang drew her from her mind, 'surely he could not be attempting to still reach the next level.' Mira's battered mind could hardly grasp that concept.

Mira peered through eyes that were filled with tears, she could hardly open them because the pain with every tiny motion she made was excruciating, even her hair strands were feeling pain!

Yet the thought of what Andar might be doing made her look.

She saw Andar's back.

For a fourteen-year-old, he was taller than average but his shoulders were not broad, but it did not stop the feeling of strength and sheer madness that he was emanating.

She was right. He was hitting the ground to get to the hand of the Chained god. This Mad Lad was going for the Supreme Meditation Art against all odds.

If the red gas that surrounded him before was a small trickle, now he was surrounded by a screaming flood of red.

The red tornado formed around him, and with each punch he made, the tornado grew bigger until he was covered by it, yet the sound of his blows never ceased.

"By the Everlasting Light, Andar..." Mira called out, the sight she was seeing was so astonishing she knew she would never forget it in her life. Her pain seemed meaningless before what was before her, and she struggled to sit up.

She had to witness this. Someone did.

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Andar had looked through the memories of himself and Rowan, and from it, he picked the ideals that resonated with him.

From his master the Alchemist, he chooses the Analytical method of thinking and solving problems. This was a skill his master always tried to teach him, he wished he paid more attention to it sooner.

From Rowan, he took his coldness. When he grew angered or faced challenges, he did not get flustered, instead, he went cold and calculating, every bit a warrior and an apex predator.

He merged those lessons and the character traits and he made them his own.

As the pain grew deeper, Andar pushed his mind into that state of thinking. He no longer fled from it, from the pain he sought to find its roots, he pushed his mind not to run from it, but to embrace it and he took it apart and watched as it acted on his body.

It was not just acceptance of the pain, it was a weird form of understanding.

Something shifted inside his Mental Space and Andar looked inside himself to his Spirit Matrix and saw a cool wind that was hazy, like dust, began to gather at the edges of the Spirit Matrix, and with every moment they began to increase in volume.

In a few seconds, his entire Spirit Matrix was shielded by a Storm of billowing dust, and Andar discovered his mind had gone cold before it shattered into a million pieces and was put together, each piece embedded into his flesh.

It was a strange existence that he could not wrap his mind around, but if he were to define it, he would see it as the way Artificial Intelligence operated.

His existence was reduced to a series of white and black, yes and no, positive and negative. Moving his hand required him to send a yes and no message to his arm, telling his elbow 'no' for movement and his wrist 'yes' to shift to the right.

His fingers had to be instructed individually and when he smiled at Mira, he had to make three thousand commands for his mouth to move in the facsimile of a smile.

Andar did not know why he could access this state of being. It was as if he reduced his nervous system into its basic state and he was able to command each of his nerves to accomplish their task.

Even Rowan was confused, the only thing he understood was that this change came from the Spirit Matrix, and was most likely a unique change that could only be derived from it.

Chapter 390: Reaching The Hand

This new state of being was fascinating, it was similar to the Icy Soul talent that his main body unlocked, but there were differences. For one this did not affect his emotions, just the way he interacted with his body.

The pain was there, unceasing and growing ever higher, but he could now move, no matter how much his body protested, his mind was in millions of pieces and they could no longer be shut down, not by pain or madness.

In fact, it was difficult for him to even process the feeling of pain because it was so scattered all over his consciousness, that each part of him could not understand the sensation it was feeling unless he chose to merge all the million pieces of his mind and interpret the pain ravaging it.

Without his intervention, Andar could only control all the joints in his body, and because he was not used to doing something like that, his movements were stiff and robotic.

However, what was important to him was that he could move, he could figure out how to control this power at a later time.

This event had taught Rowan a lesson; it was better he did not interfere much with the 'Andar Program.' There might be many surprises and mysteries that could be unearthed.

This was the power system of a Supreme World, and they must have countless years of history and innovation that the bloodline system of the gods of Trion would not have.

So he decided to watch as everything went by, leaving the director's seat to Andar, while he was deep in thought.

However much this new power was helping Andar, it was also a double-edged sword that he should not use for long because as Rowan came to find out, it was feeding on his life force to maintain its potency.

Andar's constitution was durable enough for him to use for a few minutes, any more than that, and it would start to kill him, and if Rowan's conjecture was right, he would slowly turn to stone.

This ability was born from the Spirit Matrix and it should not be very rare, yet If a normal mortal had unlocked this ability, he would be nothing but dust in less than a second.

Andar having solidified the control of his body, began attacking the final barrier to reach the hand of the Chained god. If it was Rowan, he would have used the Cloud Whale, but Andar's character was different.

The child wanted... needed to make a difference. He needed to prove himself.

'This was all well and good as a source of motivation, but it was a flaw in his character,' Rowan thought. Tools were made to be used.

Soon Rowan disregarded this thought process and began focusing on the fragments of the soul covering his body.

Mira had thought it was red gas that contained nothing but pain, but Rowan understood that these were tiny fragments of a god's soul.

It was in pain.

The pain was of a sort, he could not understand.

This pain was so old it was now muddled. The god had forgotten the reason for its pain, and pain had become all it ever was, there could be no communication with such a being, for its mind was gone.

Rowan did not attempt to collect the soul, it would be too suspicious, the only thing he tried to do was to go deeper into the pain and madness, surely if he went deep enough, he might find something.

Rowan heard a crack, and a fragment of memory entered his mind, but it was meaningless. The memory only showed him a night sky.

As more cracks resounded, that same memory fragment began to play out, with little variation.

A mighty crash sounded and although Rowan knew Andar had succeeded in breaking through the barrier, his mind was focused on the full memory that he had just read from the soul.

It was still that of a night sky, but now he could see it much more clearly. He saw five bright stars, and although they were extremely far away, something was pouring from the stars like a flood.

He forced himself to get closer as he wanted to see what was pouring out from the stars, but he was denied.

The memory ended and he was left puzzled.

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When Andar shattered the last barrier between him and the hand, the red fog around him ceased and revealed his body.

He was a mess.

The fog acted like an acid, and even with the unreasonable durability of Andar, his body resembled bloody dough.

His left eye was melted off, and his nose and lips were gone, leaving a gaping hole in the center of his face, and his lower jaw was being held by pieces of gristles and melting flesh.

His two arms were left with nothing but bleeding stubs, and only a thin sheet of flesh held his internal organs in their place. His beating heart labored to keep what was left of his life force, as blood began to seep from every inch of his body.

His last silver eye looked at his battered form, and Mira thought she saw a hint of sadness before it was all swept away by fierce happiness.

'He had succeeded,' Mira thought, 'He deserves this happiness, yet why do I feel like crying?'

Mira watched in horror as Andar's broken body seemed to shake and steadied itself. She swallowed in astonishment when he looked up at the sky and roared.

In her short life, it was the most powerful sound she had ever heard.

It was hard for her to understand all the emotions that were inside that sound, but it was etched in her heart.

Andar took a step and he fell through the hole he made.

It was at least a three hundred feet fall before he could reach the hand of the Chained god, yet he landed with a grace his body should not be capable of.

Mira could not tear her eyes away, she was witnessing history unfolding and her heart was beating a thousand beats per minute as her soul quaked.

Chapter 391: Cry of Anger and Despair

Andar was at the edge of his endurance, unlike his main body, the recovery capability of this body was abysmal and he could only maintain his life, although he would heal in time, if he did not receive proper magical assistance, he would be maimed.

He was at the limit that his new Mental state could bear and with reluctance, he released the hold of the mystical swirling dust that covered his Spirit Matrix, and it settled into a triangular-shaped clump of dust that was smaller than his fist.

The pain that came was welcomed. As this was just a normal sensation from his body, the screaming soul of the god was now silent, and this pain he was feeling was now his own.

It turned out to be far less painful than he imagined it to be.

After going through all the pain he just felt, Andar knew his endurance for discomfort had increased drastically, his body was in such bad shape that he feared that he had lost most of his skin and nerve centers, and he needed to hurry up and finish his mission because he was dying.

But the grin on his face showed nothing but happiness.

With his one single eye, he looked around him. The fingers of the god were like five mountains, and as he was this close, he discovered that the color of the hand was red, not because that was its skin color, but because it had been flayed.

The feeling of the flesh below him was warm, and it was almost weird how perfect the temperature was, as it was incredibly soothing to his bleeding flesh, he almost wanted to lie down on it and sleep.

'Either men or gods, the fate of the defeated is never their own.' Andar mused, this god had suffered a tragic fate, he shook his head, pushing exhaustion aside, he shall not fail again on this pivotal moment.

There were enough instructions going around on how to access the training manual and Engrave your Meditation Art on your Spirit Matrix.

You simply opened up your Spirit Matrix and connected with the Chained god using a medium, most preferably, you used your blood.

Andar was already bleeding well enough that a small pool of it had gathered around his leg, remembering his experience from so long ago when he accessed the Records for the first time, he sat cross-legged on the palm, grunting a bit about the pain when the skin on his calf and knees tore open.

He would not fall and break his skull open due to carelessness again.

Andar opened up his Spirit Matrix and sent a wave of Silver Aether downwards like tendrils and touched the flesh of the Chained god.

His vision changed and he saw a new sky. He heard a sigh and saw a world of the distant past.

There was a god on his knees, and his blood washed all the stars around him until an entire galaxy was red. His skin had been peeled away and it was used to make a foundation for a world that was as massive as Trion.

A man with white and black hair walked up to the kneeling god and as he did his size began to grow until an entire star could fit on one of his fingernails.

He stopped before the god stretched forth his hand and placed it on the head of the god, he muttered an old phrase that Rowan was able to understand, "SUNDER!"

The god's body was torn into six pieces, his four limbs and torso were pinned to five bright stars, and his head was taken away by the man with white and black hair.

As the gigantic man walked away, the eyes of the god slowly closed, but a message was left behind,

"Cleave my bones... Eat my heart... My Will shall ever remain. The stain that shall stay."

The vision passed and Rowan saw the Meditation Art, and the name of it was strange, it was called Frostmourne.

A growing pressure began to erupt in his Spirit Matrix, as nine hundred and ninety-nine icy slabs that were attached into a single whole appeared inside his Spirit Matrix.

For him to begin his journey as a mage, he would need to engrave each of those 999 icy slabs or 999 Engraving Sockets into his Spirit Matrix, the silver Aether inside his Spirit Matrix was fuel to begin engraving the Supreme Meditation Art inside his mind.

He did not know how many Engraving Sockets an Ordinary or Heavenly Fate Meditation Art would require, but he should have more than enough Aether to begin building it.

Andar's body shook in excitement, there were countless streams of information waiting for him to devour, but he left all those to his main body, and he began to vibrate his Spirit Matrix, as he began his first engraving of the Frostmourne Meditation Art.

The knowledge of how to do so was instinctive.

The moment the first Engraving Socket was made, a tremendous force blasted out from his body that made the entire hand of the Chain god vibrate, the massive fingers began to contort in different positions, each movement seeming to hold endless mysteries.

For those that were attached to the clouds and accepting their Meditation Art, they were pushed out and the entire Trial Ground began to shake.

It would seem while Andar was receiving his Supreme Meditation Art, no one would be able to do the same, they would all have to wait.

A formless pressure seized every candidate in the Trial Ground, and screams of astonishment erupted from everyone else when they saw the Aether Geyser far in the distance beginning to vibrate and shoot out millions of Aether streams that for a short time, turned all of the surrounding spaces into a world of colors.

The pressure continued to increase, and then it abruptly ceased, and a bitter cry filled with shock and despair resounded.

The cry came from Andar, and it carried a pain that was hard to describe.

Chapter 392: Spear of Flame

The moment Andar broke through the final barrier to reach the palm of the Chained god, all the Archmages of the Black Tower erupted, and the air around their projection began to warp as their supreme will was shattered by incredulity.

Many factors led to this point for Andar to be able to reach this place, and it may not necessarily be able to be repeated. The Tome Rowan used to rebuild Andar's body was from the essence of Six Ouroboros Serpents, and his flesh was remade using his Empyrean shell, he was unique.

He was not an Empyrean, but his potential was equal to one. The new changes inside Andar's Spirit Matrix all combined for him to be able to make it to the hand of the Chained god.

Untold trillions of miles away, the four Archmages of the Black Tower were shaken, and those in their company who were powerful figures noticed the abnormality.

"Is there anything wrong, Khasos." A genderless voice spoke, it was from the Oracle, and now this voice had a face, it was of a beautiful child with pink cheeks and short white hair who looked at least seven years old, but it was impossible to tell the gender.

He was standing before thirty-five powerful Archmages, and they were all in their real bodies.

Such a gathering was rare, and in tens of thousands of years, it would be quite difficult for this to happen. Each Archmage usually stuck to their Tower, and it would be quite impossible to push them away from their experiments and meditation.

They all sat on chairs carved from stone and metal on a floating meteoroid in space. This Meteoroid had a famed history and had existed even before the birth of this universe.

The two-headed Archmage grimaced, "Nothing to draw the attention of the council, we just had a minor matter during the Trials, and everything has been..."

Yet the meeting venue suddenly shook and as one, everyone looked towards the direction of the Black Tower, where the stars had begun to change.

This was a potent of considerable changes and all of them began to divine the direction of fate.

From so far away, a white pulse suddenly erupted from the Trial Ground of the Black Tower, but it could only be seen by those who had a certain level of power, as the light did not travel through real space but in dimensions greater than the present reality.

It spread far faster than light. A storm of such proportion that it would humble gods and Archmages.

It reached the gathering of Archmages and a stir went through their rank. It started as a disbelieving whisper until a storm exploded in their minds and as one they all turned to the Oracle.

"Can this be real?" An amazed voice called out. "Who would do this? Which Archmage tampered with the domain of the Supreme? Do they not fear her retaliation?"

Khasos growled in irritation, "None of us tampered with any candidate to reach the Supreme, after all this time, this is the result of pure talent that was born in my Black Tower."

"Is that the case? Then this is a unique talent that would go against the heavens, it is a shame... she would never allow it."

Another white pulse of potential and power erupted again, and a murmur passed through their ranks, "He already accepts the Legacy?"

To surprise an Archmage was a rare event, and as the white wave grew unceasing, the high heavens opened up and the Supreme Magus World was revealed.

It was a Star, so great in scope that it exceeded the bounds of space and time, even a god could not see its end, and could travel for countless years and never see its beginning or end.

A female voice snorted, and a spear of flames tore reality apart and pierced through the growing storm and it shattered. A scream of pain and rage resounded, it was Andar.

A Supreme power was about to rise, but it would seem it had been denied.

The Oracle went up into the air and called the storm that was unleashed from the Trial Ground, compacting it and gathering it, before the cold voice announced, "There was an attempt to shoulder Endirius Lament, but they failed."

The Oracle turned to Khasos, "See to the young Acolyte, he failed but he has promise, give him a place and a Title, any Archmage here would be lucky to have a disciple like that, if he wants, he can choose any Great Tower of his choice."

Khasos growled, "The Black Tower master would not take this well, he did not fail, he was sabotaged!"

The Oracle answered, "This matter is beyond you Khasos, you have no understanding of events of these magnitudes, leave any grudges you have to your Tower Master." Turning back to the rest the Oracle continued, "Let us resume our discussion, the vote on the Covenant, should they be disbanded in the next century, or should more resources be allocated? The battle on the surface of Trion is heating up and it is crucial that this war should never cease, the Covenant has held the front for a million years, and they need to continue the war for another ten million more, suggestions and..."

The Archmages were all ashen, it was not an easy thing to see the light of a Tower Master, this was a 9 Star Archmage.

They knew a storm was coming, there was no way the Black Tower Master, a powerhouse who could shake the universe, would ever allow such a travesty to happen in his Tower, and this travesty was committed by another Tower Master, and although they all knew who she was, they were quiet.

Soon they returned to their meeting, but there were subtle changes in their ranks. There were six Tower Masters, Archmages with powers only beneath the Supreme.

There was fierce competition between the six of them, and the action of one of the Tower Masters to enter the domain of another and destabilize it was a recipe for conflict.

The vision of the Supreme World began to fade away, but it was possible to hear a cry of anger.

They all shuddered for it was from the Tower Master of the Black Tower

Chapter 393: Alone

Andar woke up to the scent of herbs and dirt. He was confused for a second before a rush of memory slammed into his mind, and he sat up with a gasp while squeezing his head.

He was on the verge of victory before a spear of flame tore his Spirit Matrix in two, he wished it would have hurt because it would have distracted him from the full weight of his failure.

Andar had a painful thought, perhaps if he was as strong as his main body, he would not have failed.

His mind was in chaos, but the first thing he did was check his Spirit Matrix. It was hard to push into his Mental Space as if an invisible film was blocking him, but with a pop, his Spirit Matrix was revealed to him.

He went still, and he remained like that for a while before releasing the breath he was holding, the pain in his eyes was strong and he fought not to enter that Mental State that made him a computer, whatever he was feeling he would not hide from it.

Andar finally took a look at his body. He was wrapped in white strips of cloth like a mummy, and the smell of herbs was emanating from his wrappings, he brought his two wrapped hands to his face and he waved his fingers, all were present and accounted for.

Feeling no aches from his body he stood up and began unwrapping the cloths from his body while looking around.

He was in an enormous room, about 75 feet (22.86 meters) × 80 feet (24.38 meters), and he had been lying on a king-sized bed situated at one end of the room.

The room served as a herbal garden, laboratory, mini library, and various functions. There were connecting doors that should lead to the bathroom and maybe a kitchen. A wardrobe was situated beside his bed, and he saw that it contained black clothes with silver trimmings with different designs.

By now he had finished losing the wrappings from his body and he began checking himself, his body was flawless like before, but there was something off.

His bright silver glow that shone through his veins was diminished, he may know the reason for that because he had no single bit of Aether inside his body, it would seem like his physique was still in recovery.

He looked around for mirrors or a window but he could see none.

Andar sighed in frustration and he hurriedly began wearing the clothes he had selected, his body did not feel weak and he was glad that whatever materials these clothes were made from they appeared to be very sturdy.

He was distracted from his thoughts when a small section of the wall began to glow. Andar watched trying to determine whether this was a threat or not, but he began moving closer to the door, if there were any sign of danger, he would be able to escape in less than a second.

His body was still strong, but without his boundless Aether flowing in his veins, he was like a machine that was running on fumes.

The glow intensified and the bricks that made up the wall began to detach from it and float away before settling on the floor, creating a man-shaped gap.

A figure made of gray dust stepped through with slow calculating movements, and Andar touched the doorknob, ready to flee at a moment's notice, and then the figure gasped and began coughing.

"oh, this spell is so nasty! Why does your wall taste like lime... shit, it's in my eyes...my eyeeee!!"

"Mira?"

"Hold on, where is your bathroom..." Mira looked around with tears streaming from her eyes until she located the bathroom and rushed into it. Andar looked askance before turning around and checking the herbal garden.

There were hundreds of small lights moving through dozens of herbs like fireflies, this was a carefully crafted garden, and the small lights should serve as a source of light and energy for the plants.

He was trying to distract himself from acknowledging the status of his Spirit Matrix, but he swallowed his uneasiness and reflected on what he saw inside his Mental Space, and it was not much really.

Inside his Spirit Matrix, he could only see chaos.

If it was before, his Spirit Matrix would be filled with a Silver Stream where an impressive silver mountain sat in its middle, with a dense fog of silver around it, but now all that was left were disjointed colors and a swirling storm of darkness and frost.

It was as if countless hurricanes were occurring inside his Spirit Matrix, the only familiar thing left was the triangular-shaped dust which remained by the edge of the Spirit Matrix untouched by the storm.

"What is this storm, and how is it going to affect him?" He muttered.

However, greater than his fear of what had happened to his Spirit Matrix was the fact that he could no longer access the Reflection of his main body.

Inside his head, the ever-present figure of the main body that he had always ignored, was gone!

Andar was alone.

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Mira walked out of the bathroom while drying her hair with a white towel and she proceeded to wrap it around her head. She also had a large white towel around her body, and she whistled in appreciation when she reached Andar's wardrobe.

She did not lack luxury, but the sort of clothes in Andar's wardrobe could not be bought with just money.

She selected one and quickly dressed, and eyeing Andar she saw he did not even try to sneak a glimpse, he had a slack look on his face, and the slight naughty thoughts she had in mind were replaced by worry.

"Hey, are you alright?" walking closer to him she shook him a bit, and his silver eyes seemed to light up with a familiar glow he smiled at her, and her heart made a funny motion. She was dumbstruck for a second and returned his smile like a fool before she remembered why she was there,

"I brought you something to eat, you must be famished like a ghost after being in bed for two years."

"What?!" Andar's eyes widened in shock and horror.

Chapter 394: The Body Farm

Mira burst into laughter when she saw his face, "I'm joking, it's been two months, but that is two months too long, the Limit Breakers have all missed you, and it was with careful maneuvering we were able to make this meeting possible. Come let's sit down and I will tell you everything that has happened as far as we know while you slept. I am sure when you pick your master, they will tell you every other thing you need to know."

Without waiting for him she skipped over and jumped on the bed, sighing with pleasure at how comfortable it was.

Andar frowned, "Pick a master? Mira, I failed to Engrave my Meditation Art on my Spirit Matrix!" his voice was forlorn.

Her face went dull and her eyes carried a look of intense pity, but Mira's face then brightened, "I know that, but it seems all hope is not lost because you were given the title of Number One Under Heaven! This title does not only apply to the Black Tower but in every Great Tower, can you imagine that? The entire universe is going crazy!"

"Is that so?" Andar's voice became low, "What sort of title is that?"

Perhaps if he was an ordinary candidate, he might not have known the truth about what happened that day, but he knew he did not make any mistakes or was not capable enough. Andar knew he had been sabotaged, and the thought of them celebrating his genius while stabbing him in the back began to stoke the embers of his fury.

Andar had no quarrels with the World of Mages, and he wanted to become an intrinsic part of their culture, but once again he was reminded of the deep rot that pervaded places of power, and as the weaker party, it was not surprising that he had been run over.

Mira did not detect his thoughts as she excitedly rambled on, "It's a unique title that as far as I know has never been given to anyone, like ever. I mean you failed in Engraving the Supreme Meditation Art but your attempt has been the greatest ever recorded."

Andar sighed, "Huh, I tried and failed, that is nothing to be lauded over. I am surprised I was not given the title of the greatest failure under heaven!"

Mira frowned and tapped his nose with her index finger, "Oh don't be so glum about it, I heard the Archmages of the Black Tower nearly went to war against Archmages from other Great Towers that wanted to poach you for themselves, that is not the attention a failure deserves. I don't think anyone else could have achieved what you were able to do. Information about you is being requested and sold for exorbitant amounts, you are the hottest news in the entire galaxy. I had a hunch that you might be feeling down, so I brought the only thing you would need during this period."

Mira brought out a large tray and placed it on the bed, she began bringing out items from her spatial ring, and this reminded Andar to look for his own.

He did not have to check for long and he saw it at the top of his bed, he scooted over and retrieved it, he looked inside to check its contents and everything was as it should be, except for a blinking communication amulet. He would check that when he was alone, he recognized the flashing symbol, it was from the Alchemist, his master.

He also looked at his left arm to see the condition of the Aegis Script and he was happy to see that it was still in good condition, except it was now dull, it would be necessary to touch up the Script before it malfunctions, thankfully the Cloud Whale was still doing

fine, although it was a little lean, it had consumed all the Aether Andar had given to him, and he was faintly surprised to feel a warm surge of Aether flow out from the Aegis Script into his body.

It would appear that the Cloud Whale had been feeding him Aether while he slept, Andar smiled and urged it to stop. His recovery may have been accelerated because of its actions, and he was grateful.

Smelling something delicious, he followed his nose and turned to locate the items that Mira brought for him and it was all pastries. Pies, tarts, donuts, croissants, Danishes, scones, and more extravagant-looking pastries he did not recognize.

Andar's stomach rumbled but it was overshadowed by the rumbling coming from Mira's own, she looked away while swallowing, "It's all yours, now eat up while I talk. This is my recipe for when things go bad, and a pick me up is needed."

Andar could not help but smile, the depression hanging over him seemed to clear up a bit, he picked one pastry at random and bit into it, a surprising moan of pleasure shot from his mouth, and Andar forgot everything and lost himself in bliss.

Another growl from Mira's stomach made him pause, and he tapped the bed beside him, hinting for her to join him, but she looked away again.

With annoyance, he picked a particularly large pie and stuffed it into her mouth, her eyes went wide in surprise and anger, but it soon devolved into pleasure as she gobbled up the pie, Andar had to quickly retract his hand or she might have bitten him.

As the two gluttons devoured their sugary treats, Mira began to talk, "This section of the Black Tower is called the Body Farm, it's an area where the Aether has been filtered to near zero. Every six months the degree of Aether in the surroundings is drastically elevated, and you would have to quickly elevate your ranking as an Acolyte, else... well there is a reason this is called the Body Farm."

"Oh, then I have four months to become an Acolyte. What would happen to me if I fail?"

"Well, you begin to hallucinate, and your symptoms will slowly grow worse until you devolve into madness as your brain fries like an egg in a hot pan, but I'm sure that would not happen to you, before now, your body contained enough Aether to rival a Mage, and such punishments does not work for Spirit Bodies like us."

Mira sighed, "I don't know what happened to you when you were receiving your Meditation Art, but I can feel it, your Spirit Matrix is in Chaos..."

Chapter 395: Rank 1 Spell— Third Eye

Andar was surprised by her words, "Chaos? Why do you use that word? Do you want to see it? You have been staring daggers into my forehead since you came here, I know your curiosity is killing you."

Mira grinned like a cat, "Are you sure? You are opening your Spirit Matrix to me, it's kinda intimate."

Andar rolled his eyes, "As if that had stopped you before, c'mon, do it. I heard you using spells, are you now an Acolyte?"

"Yeah, I'm now a peak Rank 1 Acolyte, I should be able to break through to Rank 2 next month. A Rank 1 Acolyte is only capable of utilizing five Rank 0 spells, but with my Spirit Body and Meditation Art, I'm able to cast the Rank 1 Spell—Earth Shock." Mira said with a note of pride in her voice.

"Hmm, you are a Rank 1 Acolyte after two months? Is that slow or fast?"

"Of course it is fast, I am using a Heavenly Fate Meditation Art with 299 Engraving Slots, and I have already filled 98 Slots with Aether, that's scary fast. I am already the first among all the candidates in the Body Farm. Yet I'm still very curious, about the Supreme Meditation Art, how many Engraving Slots does it contain? Surely it cannot be higher than 500?"

Andar smiled, "somewhere around that number"

"Damn, you are truly a monster, I was lucky to be able to Engrave the slots for the Dark Fate Meditation Art. My limit was 301 Engraving Slots, and it had 299 Engraving Slots." she pumped her hands in celebration, her joy was infectious and Rowan smiled.

That's a great achievement, Mira, congratulations."

"Okay, let's see what is happening. I'm inside your Spirit Matrix and figuring out how to proceed. I should be able to contact my father once before I leave the Body Farm and I have been saving that opportunity until I'm able to bring your issue to him."

Andar nodded in appreciation and gestured for her to continue.

Mira sat closer to Andar and brought her hands forward until she rested it on his forehead, her eyes closed and she began to mutter the words to a Rank 1 Spell—Third Eye.

The higher a Mage ascends in Rank, the less they would have to depend on tools like chanting to perform spells, as they would all be engraved in their Spirit Matrix.

Mira had a plethora of Rank 1 Spells, most likely all gathered from her father's Arcanum, where he stores his Spell Books. With her ability to wield Rank 1 spells as an Acolyte, it placed her at the top amongst all the Acolytes here.

Following her chanting, Andar watched in fascination as a blue fog began to escape the edges of her closed eyes and gathered on her forehead where it created an eye with piercing blue eyes that resembled Mira's own.

The eye winked at him and felt a slight tingling from her fingers on his face like static electricity. He suddenly had another point of view inside his head. Mira had been able to connect his senses to her spell.

Such quick thinking and consideration from her was the reason Andar chose to be her friend and became close to her.

Through the spell, he saw his face and he appeared listless, his silver eyes no longer glowed, but now resembled dull metal coins, his black hair appeared pale, and Andar feared that he was on the edge of death for a long while after he was sabotaged.

Andar closed his eyes so he could see with the Third eye from Mira and avoid any distractions.

The eye winked at him again, this should be the method Mira was using to communicate with him. He nodded and it quietly zoomed into his forehead and for a moment he saw the inside of his head and his pulsing brain, and the eyes moved towards his central lobe, where it diverted towards the Lateral Sulcus where a gleaming white light was shining.

Andar was speechless, "Is that my..."

"Yeah, that is the gate to your Spirit Matrix. A great portion of the lessons we learn is focused on Anatomy, specifically on Mages, which is essential because our bodies transform as we become Acolytes, and the metamorphosis accelerates when we become Mages. We would need to understand each change or a wrong mutation can place your life in jeopardy. Now let us see what is inside your Spirit Matrix."

The ephemeral eyes zoomed into the white light and a picture of a vast storm presented itself to them before the view of his Spirit Matrix ceased.

He heard a thump and opened his eyes. Mira had collapsed on the bed, and her eyes were bleeding. She groaned and fished a healing potion from her spatial ring, after chugging it down, she took another.

"Aarrhh, how the fuck are you still alive?!"

"Language..." Andar muttered, his mind was far, he noticed something during the short moment he saw his Spirit Matrix through the spell.

"fuck your crow mouth, Andar, what the fuckity fuck happened to you? How can you still be alive and well with this sort of power acting inside you?"

"I have no idea, Mira, whatever is happening inside my Spirit Matrix must be the backlash from failing to Engrave a Supreme Meditation Art. Whatever chaos there might be, I hope it will soon be resolved, as I cannot wait to begin my journey as a Mage. What is more important, however, is where am I currently, and why did you have to break through the walls to reach me? Is the Body Farm inside the Black Tower?"

"Oh, you are going to love this. The Body Farm is built like a pyramid, and your room is the best and it is located at the peak. Your name has attained legendary status below. You will only understand when you leave this place, and you understand your distinction. I mean your fucking wardrobe is bigger than my bed, and I am in the second position inside this pyramid."

"hmm, is that jealousy that I detect?"

"Of course I am jealous, numbnuts."

A wristband she had around her wrist began to vibrate, "Uh oh, company is coming. I thought I would have more time."

She jumped up and ran to the opened wall, then she stopped and ran back, she bent down and kissed him on his forehead, "You will get through this, I know it, the Limit Breakers are all waiting for your return."

She turned and muttered the words to a spell, she entered the walls and it closed up behind her.

Chapter 396: Summoned By The Steward

Andar looked at the walls for a moment, they returned to their previous state without any sign of tampering, then a knock on the door made him turn towards it, the door opened and a man came through it, he was tall and from his disposition, Andar knew he was most likely a Mage.

"Andar Erikson?" The man queried.

Andar stood up straighter, he found that he could not help it, which was strange, "That's me."

The man walked to the center of the room and brought out a six-inch wand, he waved it in the air and a portal was open.

From the portal, a wooden door appeared with the face of a baby on it. It was the same type of door that was used previously in the Central Transportation Bureau, and his interest was piqued. Was this series of doors a living creature or a manufactured puppet?

"Go through the portal and meet the Steward of the Black Tower Archmage Khasos."

Andar mouth fell open, "The Steward of the Black Tower?"

"Please go through. As a warning, the realm you are about to enter is a strange one, guide your mind and stay focused, or else you will be lost. Treasure this opportunity to meet an Archmage of the Black Tower, Andar."

Andar bowed and cupped his fist, "Thank you for your advice, sir."

The man nodded dismissively and gestured for him to proceed.

Andar walked to the grinning door which opened itself without any prompting, he took a deep breath and walked in.

The world shifted with no inclination, and he saw himself inside a library. A piece of soft music that sounded like a piano was playing in the background, and with the spectacular lighting in the library made by dozens of glowing crystals that were floating in the air, it gave the library a sense of ambiance that was incredibly soothing.

Andar felt he could read without any internal distractions in such a place for years. Nevertheless, knowing he was about to meet a powerful Archmage, Andar comported himself and looked around.

The library was expansive and he saw he was on the first floor, which spread out with multiple connecting shelves for hundreds of feet, a series of circular staircases led upwards for dozens of floors until his eyesight could not penetrate further, but he was sure the library went further upwards, it gave it a weird sense of endlessness.

He waited for a short while and after he did not see anyone, Andar could not help himself and went toward the shelf. If he was in such a strange library, it would be a shame not to check out what sort of books could be found here, even if he could not understand them.

He had received the passive language skill from his main body, and he had never really had any opportunity to make this skill shine.

When he came closer to the shelf, he saw that every book seemed to be subtly distorted and it was impossible for him to read the titles on their spine, attempting to collect one book so he could examine it, he was stopped by a blue shield made of light that appeared in midair.

On the shield were countless broken Scripts in their hundreds that furiously rotated around with no visible rhythm, he immediately noted that even though their movements seemed to be chaotic, there was no conflict among the moving pieces, each of them seemed to be able to narrowly escape colliding with their neighbor.

Each individual Script was not bigger than an inch, but they shone with a bright glow that made them seem four times larger.

Andar recognized the Scripts as Higher-Order Scripts that had been broken into pieces but were still functioning as a sort of shielding and bewildering formation.

Andar was only familiar with Rank 0 Scripts, and he did not recognize any of these broken Scripts here, but he could not shake the feeling that there was a pattern in the random movements of the Scripts.

He focused and everything else went away, his worries faded into silence and he devoted himself to following the endless chaotic patterns of the Scripts. The lights from it were enchanting and drew his attention.

He noticed that when he touched the blue light shield, he could actually feel the Scripts and he could easily manipulate it using his fingers, but when he let go, it resumed its chaotic movement.

After a while of observing the movements of the Scripts, his frustration began to grow, there was a pattern at the edge of his consciousness, and every time he wanted to grab it, another broken Script took its place and scattered his attention.

If he wanted to understand he would need to be able to follow the path of each of the Scripts.

Andar carelessly activated the talent he awakened during the Trials, disregarding the fact that his body was devoid of Aether and his condition was severely weakened, he would risk damaging his body for a chance to understand this pattern.

The Triangular-shaped dirt began to break apart and soon scattered, swirling around as if it were a tornado, and Andar felt his mind begin to separate into a million pieces.

At the same time, his skin began to turn gray as if he was suffering from months of malnutrition and he visibly began to lose weight as parts of his black hair turned white, his silver eyes began to develop spots of gray as if it was about to turn into stone.

With a gasp, he stopped the mental technique and shuddered in pain before looking up in excitement, his discomfort forgotten, bringing his hand to touch a particular broken Script with happiness in his heart, this was the central piece.

He began dragging it around until he touched another broken script and it stuck fast before merging with it.

The broken Script shined brightly and it became bigger, and still holding on to the Script he moved it until he merged with another one.

There must be a thousand broken Higher Order Scripts here and Andar's speed increased as he became familiar with manipulating the Script.

Chapter 397: Light Devourer

When Andar activated his Mental technique, his plentiful mind pieces were able to grasp the movements of every single Script, and in that short time, he was able to simulate combining them all until they created a single stable Script that shone with such beauty... he had never seen anything quite like it before.

Andar had always had a love for Inscription, and his awakening had opened a door to delve into this fascinating world of Scripts.

His master along with being an Alchemist was also a Master Inscriber, able to craft Inscriptions up to Rank 4. That was a marvelous achievement because most Inscrivers could only craft an Inscription of Rank 4 when they were at or above Rank 6 as a Mage.

Some of his fondest memories were of watching his master craft thousands of lines of Scripts, as the multicolored light danced around the old man as if they had a life of their own, and he had dreamt of achieving just a fraction of what his master was capable of.

His arm began to throb and his movements caused painful tingles to run down his spine, and he blinked away the sweat that ran into his eyes. Andar ignored his discomfort as he wanted to reveal the Script he saw inside his head.

It may have taken hours or mere moments but Andar did not care, the Script underneath his hand was now as large as a bucket. Every movement he made was an equal part of pain as well as pleasure.

To see a Script of such complexity being gathered by his own mortal hands brought solid waves of pleasure through his mind.

With one last move, he connected the last Script piece and he stepped back, nearly collapsing in exhaustion. The completed Script flashed twice as if giving a warning before it shone so bright it was blinding.

Andar did not care, he was grinning while tears were pouring out of his opened eyes, he was already partially blind, and if he did not treat his sight, he would become permanently disabled, but he knew he could easily treat such injuries with potions so he ignored it.

The Script finished flaring up and disappeared with a faint pop. The title on the Spine of the books was revealed and Andar had to step closer because his eyesight was now subpar, he frowned a bit as he noticed all the books were the same.

There was a single image on the Spine of all the books, Andar noticed it resembled the Higher Order Scripts he had just assembled but it was far more complex, but because he had taken the time to assemble it piece by piece, he could glean part of its meaning, and so he began to trace the symbol slowly with his fingers, "Sun... no, Light taker? Light eater?"

"Close..." A voice spoke beside him, "Its Light Devourer, the Revolving Core Heavenly Fate Meditation Art was created from this."

Andar was startled, a massive figure with two heads suddenly appeared beside him. One of his heads was looking at Andar with a smile while the other seemed to be asleep.

Andar quickly came to his senses and bowed towards the figure while cupping his hands, "Andar greets the Steward of the Black Tower, it is an honor to be in your presence."

The Steward laughed, "Tell me, why did you risk your life to activate Grey Will?"

Andar was a bit confused before he realized that he must be referring to the Mental technique he was using to scatter his mind into many portions.

'So, this mental ability is called Grey Will.' he thought.

He swallowed as he did not want to carelessly answer the question and he took a few moments to organize his thought, the light in the eyes of the Archmage flashed in appreciation, it was not easy for a mortal to be as cool-headed when they were in the presence of an Archmage, even if this was just a projection of himself.

Andar began to speak, "There is a charm inside every Script that I find extremely hard to describe, and before I awakened my Spirit Matrix, I could only look at it from afar while yearning for it. Perhaps what I did was reckless, but at that time, I would have been willing to die just to glimpse that charm again."

The tone of the Steward went grave, "Now that you were able to solve the puzzle, looking back now, do you regret paying the price for your actions? Your lifespan has been reduced and your vitality is weak."

Andar took in a deep breath, he knew he had died before and every moment after that time was a gift, he did not know the future or the moment his Main body may wish to devour him or send him on a mission with no return, for Andar knew that he was expendable.

He remembered the fatal attraction the Reflection of Rowan had to his main body, and to him it was not necessarily a bad thing, it was like a stream returning back to the ocean, he had no hesitation in his heart if he would be swallowed one day or killed in service to his main body.

Andar no longer feared death, he only feared mediocrity. If he could discover more secrets of magic and Scripts, uncover all the great powers he could find, and see the universe in all its true glory, he would be satisfied even if he died on that journey.

Andar smiled, "No, I have no regrets, there is a chance to learn and discover something new, opportunities like this are rare, and I will always seize it."

The Steward was silent for a moment before he began speaking, "You are a Mage at heart. This is a beautiful thing but it is also a terrible choice. This path you choose would be one filled with thorns, your heart is pure and you only seek truth, for I find no lust for power inside you. That is... commendable."

"Whatever this direction shall hold for me," Andar said, "Is one I will follow without any regrets."

The Steward smiled at him, "You failed to engrave your Meditation Art inside your Spirit Matrix, it is good that your mindset is still steady because all hope is not lost. This place is special." He paused and looked at Andar with expectation in his eyes.

Chapter 398: The Roots of Heavenly Fate Arts

Andar suddenly had a thought, and he decided to test the intentions of this figure, "Apologies Steward, I have a burning question in my mind that needs clarification."

"Let me guess." The Steward answers, "You want to know why you failed to Engrave the Meditation Art."

Andar nodded, his eyes were wide open and filled with curiosity, and deeper within were pain, loss, and rage, but those negative emotions did not affect him as much, his heart was ultimately pure and unguarded, after all, Andar had lived a sheltered life.

The Steward sighed, "There are many issues that cannot be revealed to you at this time because knowledge of it would bring harm to you, I mean that quite literally. There are matters I cannot speak to you about, or else you would die before the words leave my mouth. It is the tragedy of weakness."

Andar eyes carried a hint of fright but also stubbornness. The Steward nodded inwardly once again in satisfaction, this child had a great temperament, ultimate talent, and power in the hands of sociopathic individuals was extremely common in the world of mages as that could serve as a factor to push further into the upper ranks as a Mage, and it was always a great thing when he saw people that broke that mold, great talent that was paired with a great heart, he continued speaking,

"Know this Andar, you did not fail because you were incapable of Engraving a Supreme Meditation Art, far from it, you are remarkably talented, you only failed because you were prevented from having it by a Tower Master."

Andar flinched, the figure of a Tower Master was shrouded in mysteries, they were figures so far off in the distance in terms of power, that nearly every living being that ever existed in the universe had no hope of ever reaching that level.

From the rumors he gathered from Rowan's memories that were collected by his Angels, a single Tower Master could crush the entire world of Trion.

Why would someone like that have any interest in him?

But he nearly laughed when he understood that he was just in the way of plans that had been set in motion for millennia. When he attempted to change their laid-out plan, he was shifted to the side, as easily as one brushed away an ant.

"I can see the questions in your heart," The Steward said, "But, it would be wise to leave them there for now. As you may know, there are six Great Towers in existence and each one of them has a mighty Tower Master as their backer and creator."

"What I did," Andar muttered, "Was it forbidden?"

"No, it was not." The Steward replied with a trace of pain in his eyes, "You were just in the way. That Art... It is desired... intensely. The reason the Supreme Meditation Art has not been seized by a Tower Master after all these years is because of the instruction given by the Supreme Magus, that its owner should be left to fate."

"If that is the case, that means a Tower Master broke the rules when they interfered in my Trial."

"Yes they did, and they paid dearly for it, but technically they did not break the rule, else it would be easy for a Tower Master to craft a Living Script and place it on a random mortal, which would give the mortal the strength and fortitude to reach the Meditation

Art and therefore acquire it for themselves. No, they have to follow the rules, and any candidates that received the Meditation Art must do so without their interference. According to the information I gathered, the Tower Master claims ignorance of your plight, they claimed it was a mistake, that they wanted to sightsee and their presence destabilized your Ascension."

"Oh, so I was at the right place at the wrong time?" Andar chuckled sarcastically.

The Steward snorted, "You are a child of the Black Federation, and as a genius of our Black Tower, there is no fault with your actions or your timing, our enemies on the other hand need to pay for their actions against you, or else how would our Black Tower stand in the future? Who else would believe in our power and sovereignty?"

The Steward gestured around, "What do you think about this place?"

Andar smiled self-deprecatingly, "I don't understand anything I'm seeing here, but I would guess it is a realm of a sort."

The Steward nodded, "You are partly correct, and it would be strange if you could understand what this place is. Even I thought that this area was a myth, but as our Tower Master fought for this benefit for you, then it can be considered profiting through a disaster."

The Steward waved his hand and a thick rug appeared, "Come... sit, your education as an Apprentice of the Black Tower begins now. Because of this place and the destiny it carries, it means I can no longer become your Master, or I would have taken you as a disciple, but it does not mean I cannot teach you some specific knowledge."

Andar sat cross-legged, directly opposite the massive figure of the Black Tower Steward, he summarily began speaking with no indication, "I will be giving you a simplistic explanation, because as a Mage, you will need to learn the in-depth rules of the universe by yourself, else my knowledge would corrupt your own, and you will be condemned to imitate my methods. That would be a waste of your talents and you would never surpass me in the future."

Andar nodded in assent and cupped his hands as a sign of thanks, the Steward smiled and continued speaking, "Meditation Art is the foundation of every Mage. It is through it a Mage can understand the true nature of reality, they can process Aether and unleash spells, enhance their knowledge base, and change their fate. As you know there are seven levels to a Meditation Art, from the Ordinary up to the Supreme Grade. The others below the Heavenly Fate can be disregarded because they were all created by Mages, but the Heavenly Fate Meditation Art was created by the heavens, and the Supreme Art was created by powers beyond the heavens."

"That is general knowledge, but the truth runs deeper than that, for not every Heavenly Fate Arts were created by the Heavens, some of them have roots beyond that."

Chapter 399: The Endless Vault

The Black Tower Steward began to draw a massive mysterious shape in the air that resembled a bird with countless tentacles growing on its back,

"There have been twelve Heavenly Fate Meditation Arts which have been gathered slowly by powerful Mages, even before this universe was born. Every universe is filled with mysteries and in every Era countless unique and powerful treasures and creatures are born, in an Era past, one of those unique creatures was called the Light Devourer. This creature ate stars. Its powers are too dreadful for you to imagine, and it took nine Emphyreans from nine different universes to stop its onslaught. Seven of them perished."

The image of the dreadful creature seemed to have a life of its own and began to struggle, but the Steward dismissed it with a harsh wave of his hand.

Seeing the confused look on Andar's face the Steward smiled, "Many of these terms would not be understood by you at this time, but keep them in your heart, and when you become an Archmage, many truths shall be revealed to you."

He continued speaking, "This place is called the Endless Vault, and it is a treasure that was born from the corpse of the Light Devourer, and now it is yours if you can claim it."

Andar's breath quickened, of course, he knew of a good deal of hidden knowledge, he knew about Emphyreans and the fact that other universes existed, but he had never heard of a creature like the Light Devourer that could battle and kill multiple Emphyreans.

Andar knew the true theater for the powerful existed outside the universe. His second bloodline, Avatar of Eve came from that place, his father also came from that place, and who knew what sort of monstrosities existed out there.

Primordial beings like Chaos and the being who destroyed the first Avatar of Eve resided outside the universe, and even the Supreme World of Mages existed outside the Universe.

It was not a mistake that he made this move to become a part of the Magus Civilization, if he wanted to learn what sort of creature his father was, perhaps he could find the answers here.

There was a grand world beyond the material universe, and he desired to understand it. He knew if his main body was to leave this universe, it would be nothing but prey, no matter how much potential he had, this understanding brought about a wave of desire inside Andar's heart.

His eyes hardened, "What is the benefit for me, and how do I claim it?"

The Steward laughed, "We call the first Meditation Art Supreme because it was meant for a Mage, every single part of it was crafted to assist a Mage in their journey, but it does not mean that some of the Heavenly Fate Meditation Art is inferior. It is just really difficult to practice, for it was not meant for mages but Primordial Entities who could battle Heaven. Take for instance this Endless Vault, the mysteries it contains should be equal to that of the Supreme Meditation Art, but it is impossible for a normal Mage to unlock all its mysteries, so parts of it were taken and simplified into a Heavenly Fate Meditation Art—Revolving Core."

Andar looked around him, his eyes going through the many dozens of floors he could see. Was this the real power of Mages? They could possess Arts taken from creatures even stronger than an Empyrean. He suppressed the many questions in his heart and continued listening.

"I practice the Revolving Core Meditation Art, and there is a special feature about this Art. The number of Engraving Slots you can achieve is determined by your talent! Do you have any idea of the amount of Engraving slots every Heavenly Meditation Art contains?"

Andar replied, "I only know about the Supreme Art which contained 999 Engraving Slots and one other Heavenly Fate Art with 299."

"999? That is so ridiculous, but... yes, it makes sense, it's truly the limit!" The Steward's second head which had been sleeping all these while proclaimed in shock. Andar hurried cupped his fist and bowed to the head

The Steward pointed upwards and Andar followed his gesture, "Look up, every floor you see represents an Engraving Slot. Because the Revolving Core Meditation Art is a child of the Endless Vault, every time there is a breakthrough in the amount of Engraving Slot unlocked it is reflected here."

"The Revolving Core has the same feature as the Endless Vault, there is no fixed amount of Engraving Slots that can be unlocked at least until you become an Archmage and you have to melt your Spirit Matrix, but that is an issue that is beyond you for the moment. I'm in the lead in all the practitioners of this Art with 433 Engraving Slots unlocked, but that is my limit. I delayed my advancement to Archmage for thousands of years to unlock as much as I could."

"Every Engraving Slot you unlock, the difficulty increases. The Revolving Core does not give any great abilities apart from the fact that you can keep endlessly creating new Engraving Slots as long as you are capable of it, and you can continuously cultivate each of these slots, which would bring countless benefits for you in the future."

"This is your burden and also your great opportunity, and you have the tools to go far, your talents make you uniquely suitable for this Art, perhaps even more suitable than the Supreme Art you lost. The Tower Master fought for this great opportunity for you,

and if you take advantage of it, you might not be weaker than the holder of the Supreme Art."

Andar clenched his fist, "I will not disappoint the Tower Master's expectation."

The quiet second head called out, "Brat you are lucky that you were pretty decisive and used your Grey Will to unlock the first Engraving Slot, you can become an Acolyte after the chaos in your Spirit Matrix begins to subside."

Andar was quiet and then he looked at books on the first level of the Library. The Higher Order Scripts he assembled, was it an Engraving Slot of the Endless Vault?

The Steward smiled, "Your thoughts are correct, this level represents the first Engraving slot for the Endless Vault, and as of this moment, your success at unlocking the first Engraving Slots means you are destined for this Art."

Chapter 400: Becoming An Acolyte

Andar was becoming excited, but the words from the other head quieted his enthusiasm, "Note little apprentice, each Engraving Slot for the Endless Vault is harder than those of the Revolving Core, for every single Engraving Slot you unlock is as difficult as unlocking ten Engraving Slots for the Revolving Core Art, and for everyone who had ever practiced this Meditation Art, the highest never went beyond the 92nd Engraving Slot."

"This level is very important, because a Meditation Art would only give you a Divine Ability when you unlock its 100th Engraving Slot, so any Meditation Art that has less than a hundred Engraving Slots would never have any chance of having a Divine Ability."

"Does it mean that no one else knows of the Divine Ability of the Endless Vault?" Andar asked.

"Who knows." The Steward responded, "Even if no one has reached that level, it would be incorrect to assume that greater powers may not have deduced the power of the Endless Vault."

Andar nodded, there were many ancient powers in the Magus World, and their knowledge and capabilities could not be easily understood. For the Magus Supreme World to exist outside the universe, its foundations must be beyond what is shown on the surface.

"The Tower Master fought for this treasure for you, but it is not yours, not unless you go beyond the highest recorded holder and reach at least 120 Engraving Slots. If you can

do that, then the Endless Vault would be yours, because you would have mastered its first Divine Ability."

Andar bowed, "I will not fail the Tower Master's expectation."

"Good," The steward said, and he stood up, Andar followed as it would be incredibly rude and stupid to be sitting when a powerful Archmage was standing,

"you shall remain in this place for a week before you leave, this should go a long way to settle the Chaos inside your Spirit Matrix. When you make your first Engraving, you shall become an Acolyte of the Endless Vault. A Chaos Door will be always available in your room to lead you to this place when you need to meditate and unlock the remaining Engraving Slots. There are many classes for you to take, and I advise you to focus on Inscription. Okay, that would be all, do you have a question, I will only entertain one."

Andar thought for a while, and he did not have the right questions to ask to avoid suspicion, and then he remembered the curious teleporting door the Steward just called a Chaos Door, "I am curious about this door that is used for Teleportation, this is the second time I am seeing it, and its powers still amazes me."

The second head of the Steward snorted, "Of course, you would ask that question, you have a good eye. This is beyond your knowledge but whatever, that door is an entity that moves through Universes and accepts contracts from powerful individuals and organizations."

"You may one day reach a stage where you can see creatures like that one day. That would be all I can tell you for now. Pacify your mind and Ascend to an Acolyte, and your failing body will be healed to an extent depending on your talent. Inside here, you will not need food or drink, when I see you again, you should be an Acolyte."

The Steward vanished with no indication, and Andar found himself falling to the floor, his limbs were like noodles and his chest was heaving.

The presence of a powerful Archmage plus his weak body pushed to the edge by his activation of Grey Will had pushed him to the edge.

When he barely recovered it still felt like he was sick, he could barely see, and his throat was inflamed making breathing painful for him, his lungs felt as if they were filled with liquid, and his body was feverishly hot.

He was slowly dying, but he did not care. While Rowan would have been focused on solving the problems stopping him from reaching his goals, Andar was indifferent. Without the invisible presence of Rowan bearing down on him, he only wanted to excavate the potential of his mind and Spirit Matrix.

He did not need food and drink and he sank into his consciousness and delved into his Spirit Matrix, the fact that he had awakened it amazed him, and he watched the chaos ravaging inside it for hours

Even with the sound of crashing thunder and loud winds, to Andar it sounded like music, and he forgot time as he focused on the chaos, his lips held a smile.

Andar was happy.

He knew that the Endless Vault would be a powerful Meditation Art, but at the start, it may be weak because while others unlocked hundreds of Engraving Slots at the beginning, he would only be unlocking one.

It was apparent to him that his starting journey may be a bit rough, but only he understood that he had the ability to go far.

He opened his eyes hours later, and his eyesight was a bit better, focusing on the Script on the spine of the book, he began to memorize every single line, repeating them inside his head until he could see all the thousands of intersecting portions.

When he was done with that exercise, he began once more. Like a machine, Andar practiced for days, making sure he had mastered every single part of it.

On the fourth day, his eyes flew open, and a small portion of his Spirit Matrix was now free of the chaotic storm, he struggled to sit up, and used his arms to fold his legs into a cross-legged position.

Using his consciousness as a brush, Andar began engraving.

On the fifth day, a formless pressure quietly oozed from his body and his eyes opened, they were a bit clearer than before and his skin had recovered a bit.

Without any fanfare, Andar had become an Acolyte. He did not stop to celebrate, instead, he climbed to the next floor, and as his hands attempted to touch the books, a blue shield lit up and Andar's eyes were filled with wonder.

He remained inside the Endless Vault for three months before his mental state could no longer take it, and when he emerged he was already a Rank 3 Acolyte with 99 Engraving Slots unlocked.