

Reincarnated With A Summoning System

Chapter 651 651 Penny's Advancement

Cain was on his way back to the tent at the end of the day when he finally got the System Notification he was waiting for.

[Quest Complete] 0 Guild wars invoked. 0 Deaths. 0 Damage Dealt.

[Reward Granted: Tome of Mana Transformation]

[Bonus Experience Calculating.]

He was a bit worried since Vala wasn't back at the camp yet, but he could sense that she wasn't in danger and hadn't been captured. Her presence was enough to keep the Cultivator that she was accompanying safe all the way back to her Sect Compound, but for some reason, she didn't come straight back to him.

It might be because he forgot to give a direct order, but she was a Supporter, so direct orders of that nature weren't usually necessary, and she wouldn't have hung around a Sect if she wasn't welcome.

[Vala, what are you up to?] Cain asked, making sure that his perception wasn't mistaken.

[I am teaching a Sword Combat seminar near the Shadowed Blade Sect. We shouldn't be much longer. I only have to defeat two more fighters to win the sword.]

Cain wished he had been paying closer attention, but he could always ask her later what had led to a situation where she got herself involved in a situation that ended in her defeating opponents without dealing any damage.

The system certainly would have counted it as his damage if she had been in actual combat, and it would have been reflected on the quest's completion message.

"Master Cain, do you have a moment? I have an idea for my advancement, and I wonder if you can help me out with it." Penny asked.

"Of course. You mentioned earlier that you had an idea. What are you thinking would be the best tactic for you?"

"There is a skill in the Druid tree that increases damage done while the moon is up. That skill resonates with my Lycan nature, which increases in power when the moon is nearly full. If you can do something that adds to that, I think I can make an excellent combat class out of the transformation skills." She explained.

That didn't sound bad. Transformations for extra damage were a core part of Druid's skills, so following that path to even more power made perfect sense. There should be a basic progression class for that, but they could do much better since that wasn't a proper Second Advancement class.

Cain searched the skills he could find for the word Moon and came up with a rather interesting one among the Dragons. They had a Moonfire Dragon, who actually had primarily shadow skills, but transformed them into light skills when the moon was up. That seemed like a good spot to start since they were Legendary creatures.

Most of the skills were pretty mediocre, but they had one spell that looked promising. [Wrath of the Moon Goddess] was a spell that boosted their combat power in all aspects. That was the sort of thing that Penny was looking for, and it had a relation to the Moon, which fit with her Lycan nature.

Cain summoned one of the Moonfire Dragons at Spirit Rank so that he could make the most of their skills and checked the change in the one he wanted.

It wasn't a primary skill of the class, so it had only evolved to Legendary Quality, but that might be enough to set Penny on the right path, even if it wasn't a super overpowered trump card.

Legendary Skills were much easier to make books from as well since he could use the desk.

"I have found one skill for you. [Wrath of the Moon Goddess] sounds like something you would like, so we will try this first and then give you another skill if it doesn't trigger a hidden class." Cain explained, then began to write.

They were starting in the later afternoon, and the creation took hours, so even Vala was back and waiting by the time he had finished. She had an Immortal Rank sword in her hand, leaned over her shoulder as a prized trophy of her day's accomplishments.

Cain wasn't sure how the Cultivators would perceive her since she was summoned by him, but she was a proper Spirit Rank Demon at the moment, and with all of the bonuses that he gave to his summons, she shouldn't have any trouble using the average Immortal Realm fighter as a training dummy.

If she had challenged a large group of Spirit Realm Cultivators to a match where she wouldn't hurt them, it would have been nothing more than plain and simple bullying of the weak.

With the tome finished, Cain handed it to Penny, who absorbed it instantly. She activated the skill, and Cain could feel her combat power soar, with the Interface showing a 100 percent increase in damage and speed, with a 50 percent damage reduction bonus.

Even for a Legendary skill, that was incredibly overpowered. It had to have been enhanced by her species bonus.

Once she threw a couple of punches at the air to test her new strength, Penny sunk into the Class Change options, standing idly by for ten minutes while she analyzed the options that she was given.

Cain watched as her status changed from [Druid] to [Moonblessed Lycan], and her body quality went from Normal to Spirit Rank in an instant. She wasn't just awakened now. She was a true Spirit Beast of the Lycan Clan, with all of the extra durability and strength that you would expect from the higher quality body.

"What do you think of the new class?" Cain asked once she returned to the waking world.

"It's incredible. Not just the quality increase, I don't even have to change again. It will automatically upgrade me to Immortal and Demigod when my combat power reaches high enough. The number of combat skills is crazy, and I've got a load of points left over since I only went through one hundred for Druid, and I am over level three hundred now.

How long do you think that it will take for me to get to Immortality?" Penny asked.

"If it is automatic, likely by level six hundred unless you are really slacking on the combat power. How powerful is your transformation now?" Cain asked.

Penny smiled and activated both [Wrath of the Moon Goddess] and a new skill [Moonblessed Form] which turned her into a four-meter tall Spirit Lycan with bright white fur all over her humanoid body, Wolf's head and glowing pale blue claws on her hands.

The two bonuses stacked to give her 400 percent additional damage, on top of her already high base damage, and the Claws counted as a Spirit Rank weapon, so they wouldn't have a low base, to begin with.

"Why don't you spar a few rounds with Vala before bed? It will help you get used to your new power." Cain suggested.

"Her? Are you sure it will be a fair fight? I am twice her size." Penny asked.

Vala snorted and activated [Wrath], which doubled her size, putting her on an even footing with Penny, and alarming the entire camp.

A pair of four-meter-tall monsters, one a Lycan and one a Demon, weren't something that normally appeared inside their camp. The two of them walked to the training area, and the Disciples of the Lotus Blossom Sect realized that they were transformed Cultivators, not a threat to the Sect. They all began to gather around to see the fight, so Cain called for a Seraphim Inquisitor in his Merger.

[I need an arena for teammates to train.] Cain requested, unsure what the skill was, but he had seen Seraphim use it before during the trials his friends underwent in their realm.

[No problem. I know the Training Grounds spell] The Inquisitor replied, letting Cain activate the skill.

A large white stone Coliseum appeared around the fighters, and the ground turned to sand, surprising them both and confusing the Disciples of the Lotus Blossom Sect that were standing nearby. They were now in a huge building, larger than their camp, that hadn't been there seconds earlier. It was only when they looked out at the distorted form of the Camp and then back at the fighters that they realized it was a skill that made a space that was larger on the inside.

Most Immortals and all Divine Realm Cultivators could do similar things, and they had seen it before, just not quite so suddenly.

Inside the Training Grounds, no competitor would die. If they were seriously injured, they would be ejected from the ring and into a recovery room under the stands, where they would be isolated from the world until the spell ended or they chose to leave, giving them time to recover.

The faint image of a Seraphim appeared over the ring, dressed in a striped black and white toga and holding up a white flag.

[The match begins when the flag falls.] The ethereal voice announced, then dropped the flag and moved further up in the air.

The two lunged at each other, claws clashing against steel in a blaze of sparks. The two seemed evenly matched, unable to push the other back, but Vala didn't stay engaged long, spreading her wings to flip over Penny and continuing a furious assault.

Cain could tell that she was holding back. Not on the speed, which was oppressing Penny and keeping her attack skills mostly suppressed, but on the force behind the blows and the skill that she could activate to overcome most enemies her level.

They went back and forth for five minutes before Vala decided to play dirty, using her whip-like tail to pull Penny off balance and kicking her clear across the ring and into the barrier, ejecting her from the match.

"That was dirty fighting," Penny complained a few seconds later when she reappeared, glowing with green healing light.

"Winner, Vala." The referee announced, bringing cheers from the crowd.

"My tail is as dangerous as a third hand. Not using it was a mercy." Vala replied, unconcerned.

"Let's go again," Penny growled as soon as her health and mana reached full.

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

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The two kept at it until after midnight, finally calling it a day when Penny managed to win her first match. That was enough to convince Vala that she had mastered her new Class skills, despite the fact that the Demon had been holding back to make up for the four hundred level difference in their power levels.

Cain woke up the next morning to see Vala styling Luna's hair into tiny braids, the same style that she herself favored. They looked a bit strange on a human since Luna didn't have horns or wings, but they wouldn't get frizzy or come untied during the day.

Cain saw that the others were up, so he motioned for either Tena or Solara to come over and have their own hair done to get the day started. The girls gave him an eye roll, but they dutifully came over and let him brush and fix their hair before breakfast.

The camp was much louder than usual, almost like a Carnival, and Cain wondered what had happened to make everyone so excited so early in the morning.

The answer was obvious. He had left the Training Arena up, filling the training grounds, and the Disciples were making good use of it this morning to go all out on each other without fear of death or dismemberment.

The recovery room automatically healed participants when they arrived, which was a simple necessity to the Seraphim, but a great luxury to the cultivators of this world.

"Master Cain, what sort of Divine Artifact is this?" Elder Ling asked as the Forbidden Treasure Sect came out to get food.

"It's not an artifact. It is an energy control skill. I created it last night for my Disciples to fight in after Penny learned a new skill." Cain explained.

"Did you get a new one? I don't recall a large demon in your team." The Lotus Blossom Kitchen Elder asked as Vala filled a plate with meat.

"She's a friend, summoned here to help out for training. Not many creatures at her level can defeat her in a sword fight." Cain told the burly woman.

"What about above her level?" One of the Lotus Blossom Elders asked.

She had just reached the Immortal Rank, and the Lotus Blossom Sect wasn't known for their brutal fighting techniques but for their peaceful cultivation style. Vala didn't look the least bit concerned by the aura of Immortality that the woman displayed.

"You can go next if you like. The disciples in the arena seem to be almost done. I am sure that fighting Vala will prove to be a very valuable experience."

Vala looked even more excited about that than the Elder who had challenged her, and the others began to get a bit concerned that this might make the Lotus Blossom Elders look bad in front of their disciples.

"Demons are always stronger than humans at their own level. That is just a given. Even five on one, Spirit Rank Cultivators would be hard-pressed to land a single strike." Vala said simply, having tested that theory yesterday before she returned to the camp.

The Disciples cleared a path for the two of them to head to the arena, where they bypassed the line of Disciples and walked straight into the recently vacated arena floor.

"Vala versus Elder Xiao," The referee announced.

"Hey, aren't you going to invite your neighbors in to watch since you are running your own competition out here in the plains?" An Elder from the Sect next to them asked.

"Yeah, after blocking up the pathways all day yesterday, wouldn't it be only polite to let us spectate your side competition in that lovely arena?" An Elder from the Sect beside them asked.

"Sorry, Gentlemen, the Lotus Blossom Sect rules are strict. This is a training match, not a competition. No outsiders allowed." Elder Ling called back.

Of course, that didn't stop the Elders, who simply flew up high enough that they could look down into the arena and use an energy control technique to look through the distortion caused by the compressed space.

Elder Ling could only sigh and take a seat to watch the match in the arena that was large enough to hold ten thousand Seraphim, not just a few dozen Disciples that were currently there.

The two contestants saluted each other, and Elder Xiao spoke a few words before the referee dropped the flag.

"No need to go easy. I am confident in my skills."

Vala grinned back at her. "If you say so, I won't go easy on you. The arena won't allow any permanent harm to come to contestants either way."

As soon as the referee dropped the flag, an intensely overbearing aura flowed out of the demon, and Pestilence activated as she flapped her wings and raced forward. The pressure was enough to almost force Elder Ling to her knees since she wasn't used to Demonic Oppression, but she recovered quickly, blocking the strike and flowing into a series of beautifully linked attacks.

"That is the core of the Lotus Blossom Style. I didn't expect her to go all out so soon." Elder Ling whispered to Cain.

"If she didn't, she would have already lost. Just watch."

Five attacks into the flow, Vala counterattacked, stopping the Elder's momentum and driving her backward around the ring. The Demon was faster than the Elder by a large margin, and even the graceful and minimalist style of the Lotus Blossom Sect had nothing on the brutal efficiency of Vala's combat technique.

"By the Gods, how many battles do you have to be in to develop a fighting style like that?" One of the Elders flying overhead asked as Vala started to use blade skills against Elder Xiao.

The Elder's defenses were surprisingly solid, a feature of her fighting style, but she wasn't getting a chance to fight back until she used an area skill that slowed Vala and let the Elder get a counterstrike in.

"So, Penny. Tell me, was she this mean to you as well, suppressing you until she had her fun?" Cain asked his Disciple.

"Worse. She just openly bullied me. At least Elder Xiao doesn't have to rely on her choosing not to strike back to survive the first minute. I realized last night after bed that she never used a single skill against me, from the start to the match that she let me win." Penny grumbled.

"Well, that is Vala. It's not surprising."

Vala had retreated from the Elder's skill and was bombarding her with black energy blades, faster and faster until the Elder's blade was barely visible as it knocked the attacks aside or cut them apart and canceled the skill.

Even the spectators outside the arena, hovering in the air, were shocked by that display of speed and skill. The chances were that if that attack were used on them, they would have been diced like stewing meat and ejected from the match.

"Since she can fight on par with an Immortal, I have to ask. How many fighters on that level can you summon?" Elder Ling asked Cain quietly as the match went on at a stalemate.

"Vala is unique in this world. But I can make thirty-six clones of her. It's just a shame she's not at her peak strength, or she could call a large group of Greater Demons to assist her.

When she was freed, she lost the Bonded Force that all Companions got, so in truth, she wasn't at her strongest at the moment.

Elder Ling looked pained at that news. One Greater Demon was a threat that every Sect took very seriously. Over a dozen of them were an unprecedented invasion that this world hadn't seen in ages. The Demons weren't at their strongest here in the Immortal Realm, and the Divine Realm cultivators could easily deal with any that managed to sneak in.

Elder Xiao was visibly tired now and had taken a defensive stance. Vala saw this and didn't want to draw things out any longer, but the Elder wasn't willing to give in easily.

"If you can take this last attack, I will give you the win," Vala announced, and fierce black energy formed around her body.

That should be [Shadow Strike], a skill she had learned when summoned as a Spirit Rank Demon.

Half of the arena vanished in the blackness before an immense blade was formed, crashing down on Elder Xiao faster than thought.

An instant later, only one contestant stood in the arena. Elder Xiao had vanished to the recovery room.

"What sort of skill is that? My Sect practices Shadow Techniques, but I have never seen a Spirit Rank anything use a sword skill that powerful." One of the neighboring Elders declared, ignoring the perimeter of the Lotus Blossom camp to fly into the arena.

"That is the true Shadow Strike, as practiced by Spirit Rank Demons," Cain informed him while Elder Ling glared at the intruder, who clearly didn't mean any harm.

The man shook his head. "I know Shadow Strike, and it is powerful, but not like that. Can she show me [Piercing Darkness] so I can get a baseline on her strength?"

Vala shook her head. "I am not a Shadow Cultivator, but a Demon. I don't know all of the pathetic beginner skills that you gathered."

The man didn't even look offended at that one. He only hopped down to the sand and drew his blade.

"Is this the skill you used?"

Darkness gathered around him, and a black blade flashed out, crashing into the sand in a much less impressive showing than what Vala had put on, but still an incredibly powerful show of Shadow Energy.

"Clearly, it is. But I suggest you maybe practice it a little before you show things like that in public."

Now the man looked thoroughly embarrassed, as his skill was near the pinnacle of Spirit Rank power, and it was dwarfed by the version that the Demon had used.

"My apologies. I got ahead of myself. I will work on perfecting the skill before I try to use it in combat." He replied with a salute of his sword.

He then flew back up out of the ring, thoroughly chastised. In truth, that skill was completely mastered. He simply lacked the power to activate it at the level that she did. It had taken most of his natural life to make it to the late stages of the Spirit Realm. He had neither the talent nor the potential to compete.

"Let's get back to the Disciples. No slacking on your combat practice just because the Forbidden Treasure Sect Master made you a fancy arena to practice in today." Elder Ling called to the Lotus Blossom members gathered in the front row of the bleachers.

"Referee, split the arena into four pieces so the Disciples can practice in larger numbers," Cain instructed, then got to his feet, intent on getting to breakfast before it was all gone.

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 653 653 Lady Ling

The next morning, the new statue for testing potential was introduced to the public and placed in a spot of honor near the center of the city, in the grandest public park. You could see its location from the inner portion of any quadrant of the city and make your way through a winding path of enchanted shrubs and flowers, all of which were early-grade cultivation materials.

The sight was incredible, and the City Lord had clearly gone all out to make it an attractive landmark for visitors to the city.

The materials that were planted there meant less than nothing to the powerful cultivators in the city. They were only placed there as a form of secondary test for unskilled applicants, a test of character.

The plants could help them awaken and begin the earlier stages of improving their body so they could begin cultivation, but all theft was illegal in the city, and that included public resources. You couldn't take them without permission.

The signs were clearly marked at the entrance to the park already, as it had a number of other low-grade materials that were given out to children who were planning to apply for the local Sects, but now and then, someone with big dreams would try to sneak a treasure out, or some inattentive parent would let a toddler nom on a Mystic herb, which the Cultivators found hilarious.

The line to test themselves stretched all through the winding maze of the shrubbery and out of the park, causing a great spectacle in the city. It wasn't restricted to the young, either. Since the device was new, and many did not know their own fates and potential, despite training in various sects for decades, they all wanted a chance to see for themselves if their Cultivation Speed matched their potential.

A mismatch between potential and speed would often indicate that the technique or method that they were using wasn't well suited to themselves, but if it was the only one that a small Sect taught, it could lead the Disciples to a dead end.

Most would filter out such unsuited applicants in advance and either send them away or refer them to a better-suited Sect, but there were always the unscrupulous and desperate who would take any Disciple they could get, even if it would hinder the child's advancement.

The Statue caused so much chaos in the city that the outside world, where Cain was teaching his Disciples new combat techniques with the help of Vala, was incredibly peaceful. Not even the continued presence of the Training Arena was enough to distract the other Sects anymore.

The others weren't getting any new ideas for advancements, though, and they didn't want to just blindly take one of the basic offerings that they had seen already, so Cain decided that they had learned all they could from the valley.

If they wanted new inspiration for their Class Advancement, they would need to see new things. Otherwise, they would only be picking the Classes that Cain thought of since he was the only one among them that had great familiarity with all the options in his old world.

Luna had seen a lot of them, hanging around the Farm, but there was a lot she hadn't had time to see and even more that she hadn't had a chance to fully understand. She was just too young.

"Elder Ling, I think we will be heading out in the next few days. I want to take my Disciples to Dragon Mountain to seek the Elder and see if we can impress him with the new and unique things we have found along the way." Cain explained to the Lotus Blossom's local leader.

"I suppose that means that we are losing our Training Arena, doesn't it?" Elder Ling sighed, seeing the long lines of Disciples waiting their turn. Since they didn't need to spend resources on healing and wouldn't die, the site had become their sacred place for combat training over the last few days.

"How skilled are you with Light Element Skills? I can teach you the skill if you want, and then you can recreate it for your Disciples whenever they need it." Cain offered.

"You would leave the Sect with such an extreme gift after only a few weeks staying in our camp? Even after all you have done for us?" She asked in shock.

"I would leave YOU with such an extreme gift, even after all I have done. You are a Pillar of your Sect and an honorable person, so I will grant this gift to you before we go." Cain agreed, emphasizing that it was a personal gift to Elder Ling.

The blush she showed him when he said it was totally worth the effort he was going to have to put in to make that skill book. She could use arrays of Inscriptions to condense space and even alter time a little to give Disciples more cultivation time, but for the moment, nobody in the Lotus Blossom Sect had mastered all of the necessary skills to make a Training Arena of their own.

If they had, they would be a much more respected Sect, even high enough to be counted as among the influential Sects of the region. That was how much of a difference Training Resources meant to the development of Cultivators.

Cain returned to the tent and opened the side flaps to let a nice breeze through as he worked, spending most of the day creating the Mythic Tome necessary to create a Training Arena.

He had thought that it was just a Legendary skill, but the Seraphim Arena, as the Lotus Blossom Sect affectionately knew it thanks to the incorporeal referee, was much more intricate than Cain had realized.

"Elder, I am finished. Please, use this skill if you can, and if not, please study hard so that your Disciples don't miss out on too much time that they could be training."

Cain handed her the book, and it almost immediately vanished in her hands.

Cain smiled as she gasped in shock, and the System activated.

[Name] Ling Yue

[Species] Human

[Level] 650

[Class] Holy Cleric

[Elder of the Lotus Blossom Sect]

"I see you got an extra gift from it. Congratulations, the Gods favor you." Cain told her with a smile on his face.

"You know what this is? What did you do? It has to be you? Who else knows about this power?" She whispered back.

"All of my Disciples, Elder Dragon Fang, and now you. I think that's it in this world. This is the special technique that I teach. What do you think of the inheritance? Take some time to look over and memorize your new class skills. Don't forget to spend the points to learn them all. They will feel as natural as breathing once you learn them and memorize the activation." Cain explained.

A Holy Cleric could gain experience just by using their Holy Skills. They didn't need to kill anything to advance, though it would be faster if they did.

"What God am I supposed to be worshipping anyhow? It says I am a Holy Cleric." Ling asked hesitantly.

"I guess the Seraphim? It is their skill that I gave you. Or you could just pick one that uses Holy skills, maybe? The Seraphim would probably appreciate it more. They love when people worship and adulate them."

That didn't sound like the noble and mighty Seraphim that Elder Ling had heard of in Legends, but she wasn't going to question Cain on it right now. She had more important things to do, like selecting her skills.

Once she was finished, the Elder looked around the Sect camp with a worried look. "Won't they notice that I am not following the Sect Technique anymore?"

"Likely not. You can still use all the skills you knew before. You just won't gain much from meditation anymore. No, wait, I still have a thing. Give me a second. I just have to find it." Cain muttered.

Cain looked through the multitude of skills he had learned and finally found [Mana Transformation], the quest reward skill that would let the user convert mana from gems and monster cores into experience. That was perfect for a Cultivation Sect since they used mana stones to cultivate anyhow.

Cain sat down again and made a copy of the book for Elder Ling, then handed it over. Again it vanished in her hands and brought a shocked look to her face.

"This is incredible. If you taught this to a new Disciple, you could bring them up to the Awakened Realm in only a few seconds with an Immortal Beast Core."

Cain considered whether to warn her about the side effects of rapidly leveling rookies with Systems but decided against it. Chances are that it wouldn't be a concern unless Elder Ling made true Skill Books and gave them to Disciples, which would unwittingly spread the System through the Lotus Blossom Sect.

On second thought, he needed to warn her about both of those things.

"If you make true Skill Books and give them to Disciples, there is a chance that they will inherit the legacy from you and gain a Class and System Interface, as well as the Inventory. You should check that as well, it's like a storage ring, but nobody can take it from you or detect it. Very convenient.

But back on topic, if you activate a System for them, they will have to fight and kill beasts or other Cultivators to advance unless you teach them the Mana Transformation Skill as well.

You also get a set of notifications from the interface when you level up. At your level, they will be rare, but if you fed a beginner an Immortal Beast Core after activating the System, they would get so many all at once that they would pass out, and it would take them days to clear them enough that they could function or even see the outside world again."

Elder Ling gave Cain a suspicious look as he finished his speech, then asked: "You were seriously considering not telling me and just letting me find out the hard way, weren't you?"

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Cain looked away from Elder Ling and declined to answer her question about whether he intended to hide the relevant information about awakening and advancing Disciples. That wasn't going to be enough to convince Elder Ling that he thought it was beneath him, but it would at least stop him from having to confirm it outright.

Instead of answering, Cain deflected. "Who would have thought that you were so devoted to healing and helping others that you would get a Class like Holy Cleric, though? It's one of the few classes that can gain experience by using their class skills which isn't a trade skills class."

Elder Ling looked even more shocked now than when she had received her own System Interface. "So, you're saying that you could teach skills to a weapon smith or an Inscriptionist, and they could advance through to Immortality simply by crafting items?"

"Of course. Little Solara is an Alchemist, and she will begin to level up as she starts to work. As you get further along, it will require you to make more complex and powerful items, though, but the Class advancements will usually give you at least a few basic recipes to work with, so you don't end up at a dead end.

Don't give me that look. If I activate Systems for your Disciples, the System might count them as my own Disciples and require me to bring them with me on my adventures. I would hate to be stealing the futures of the Lotus Blossom Sect, and I plan on leaving quite soon."

Once he was done speaking, Cain sat down and began writing more copies of [Mana Transformation] so that he could give them to his disciples. That would help them blend in here, and it would also speed up their rate of progress, making each monster that they killed in the wilderness contain a ball of bonus experience that they could consume.

That made it even more worthwhile to take them all on an adventure, but before they left, he was going to have to obtain a Monster Core so that he could increase Solara's level somewhat. Having started over at level 1, she would be in incredible danger the moment that they were in the wilderness, and her physical skills would be far below the others, so Cain would have to carry her. That wasn't likely to go over well with the proud former Elder, and Luna would get jealous, so Cain would end up having to carry them both for the entire trip.

The area around the city was wiped entirely clear of all forms of beast due to the number of Mortal Realm Cultivators present, so they would have to go further out to start hunting, but Cain was certain that someone had Mana Stones still. They were a staple of most forms of Cultivation.

That was it. The girls had gotten them for winning the Outer Sect Disciple fighting competition. They hadn't had any use for them until now, so they should still have them, and even Solara might still have her own supply in her storage ring. She had lost her levels but not her resources.

Cain went to find the girls, who had all retreated to the arena with a platter full of snacks so that he could give them the new skill books.

"Ladies, I have a good thing for you all. Mana Transformation, so that you can advance your levels with only mana stones and monster cores. Once you have the skill, you can just directly absorb them for the experience." Cain explained as he sat down beside them to watch the Lotus Blossom Disciples fight.

Four matches at once were about the limits of the arena for the stronger Disciples, but the Outer Sect disciples could have split those four into four times as many arenas and still had room to fight. They didn't need much more than a boxing ring to fight comfortably, while the movement skills and energy attacks of those with more cultivation meant that they needed a much larger arena so that they could actually put their skills to good use and not just clash auras.

Cain gave his Disciples the books and watched as they marveled over the new skill. He was beginning to see where the Laughing God found entertainment in the System. The joy and expectation every time they got a new thing to play with was highly entertaining to Cain. It didn't even have to be a big thing. Little ones like the cookbook were enough to keep them energized.

"Solara, before you start gobbling down Mana stones, I should warn you that every level will bring you a bunch of notifications. They can be pretty intense in the lower levels if you advance too fast, so don't worry about rushing things. You can take your time and advance slowly over the next few weeks as we travel." Cain explained.

"Thank you for the warning. I learned about them this morning when I went from level one to twenty after making a Celestial Mind Pill to see if we could make Luna less scatterbrained." Solara laughed.

"Did it work?"

"Not in the least. Improving the clarity and acuity of her thoughts only made her more hyper, with even more questions, which made her even more distracted than she was before. The problem is, pills are intended to permanently improve your mind, so we will have to teach her to focus all over again." Solara joked while Luna looked offended.

"Hey, I'm not that bad. It just let me think of so many good ideas that I had been working on that I had to get them out all at once. It's all sorted out now that we have discussed them."

Penny brightened up at that explanation. "So, like an epiphany. The Pill let you break through a bottleneck in your understanding of the topics at hand, and now you can work on more complex ones."

"Exactly. Now I know exactly the cream-to-puff ratio for the perfect chocolate éclair. That pill saved me so much trial and error." Luna informed her proudly.

Well, Cain should have expected that the problem was going to be something like that and not some deeply intense metaphysical conundrum. Luna was a straightforward person with simple desires. Food and War were all that was on her mind most of the time.

Each of the girls took a handful of small mana stones out of their inventories, a collection of cultivation resources that would normally last an Outer Disciple for months since they could only absorb one a day, even with focused effort.

Most of them seemed to assume it would be the same way with this new skill and that they would need to focus for an extended period of time to get any results, but the moment the first one disappeared in an instant, they realized that this method was far superior to the one that they had been practicing.

Once she realized how they worked, Luna picked a round Mana Stone the size of a fingertip out of her palm and looked at it with great interest.

"They look so much like rock candy. I wonder what they taste like?"

With that, she popped the stone in her mouth and gave a small grimace.

"So, what do they taste like?" Penny asked, genuinely curious.

"They taste like I should have washed my hands before my snack. They disappear the moment that they touch your tongue if you want to absorb them, which leaves behind everything that was on the surface of the Mana Stone. Two out of Ten, I do not recommend them as a snack."

Penny shook her head at Luna's antics, then looked at where Solara was sitting to find her zoned out and staring at nothing. She must have triggered a wave of notifications.

Her hands were empty, so Cain couldn't tell if she had used a different size or quality of the item for her first absorption, but it really did seem to be helping her out. Her level had gone from twenty to eighty in an instant.

Of course, the lower levels were much faster, and they had an experience buff active, but Cain didn't have many summons out right now, so it shouldn't be too bad.

"Did you know I have an incredible skill for leveling up? It's called [Battlefield], and it's like this arena, only without the safeguards. I just make a little pocket dimension where people can fight to the death." Luna informed her father.

"How is that a great skill for leveling up?" Tena asked.

"Well, they still count as within the range of my experience buff, so I filled it with Pixie Druids, who could summon living flowers and swarms of bees. There's like a thousand of them in there right now." Luna replied with great pride.

She opened a small portal in front of herself, and Cain was treated to the view of an immense battlefield filled with flowers and Pixies, most of whom were busy making honey and sweets created from honey.

"So, you opened it to increase the speed of your advancement, did you?" He asked her skeptically.

"Well, sort of. The rest is just a bonus, right?"

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

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"I will let this one slide, but if you get too hyper to sleep, I will confiscate all of the sweets that they make," Cain informed Luna, whose crestfallen look was almost enough to make him reconsider his words.

"Sleep is important to your health. You might be able to heal your teeth from all of the sugar damage, but you still need lots of rest if you are going to be productive the next day and not feel sick." Penny lectured her.

"Okay, fine. I will go easy on the sweets. The Pixies like them too, so they're not going to go to waste."

That little pocket dimension was unlike anything that Cain had seen before. Luna's class, the Princess of War, was one that he had never seen before either, so there might be other unique techniques that Cain had simply overlooked because he had never thought to try something like that.

The fact that she was using it to create snacks and not as a battlefield, as the name of the skill suggested it should be, was very Luna of her, but Cain couldn't really fault her

for keeping the skill active all the time so that she could have a mobile source of huge experience gains when she didn't need to use her Summons for combat.

As he looked inside, Cain realized that she hadn't even used most of her summon spells for the purpose and had called for three dozen Pixie Queens as Supporters, who summoned all of the other Pixies on their own. Like the Spider Queen, creating their own force was an innate skill of their class, or maybe their species, since the System counted them as separate from their kinfolk.

"That would explain why Solara is advancing so quickly. Boosting your rewards to hundreds of times the baseline is practically cheating, even if it does save you so much on resources. I mean, we could even use the cheapest of the cheap and still get good gains." Tena suggested, with her eyes glittering.

"Have you thought about your next Class advancement? You have been a Dragon Monk since you began, and you should have completed the skill tree some time ago." Cain asked the curly-haired monk.

"I thought about it, but I don't see anything cool. Usually, Monks just use the same skills, but stronger as they advance, so I never really thought about expanding my repertoire." Tena shrugged.

"Well, you certainly could stay the same as long as you wanted, but if you find a skill that you would like to have but that isn't in your abilities, let me know, and it might open up a whole new path for you." Cain offered.

Dragon Monk was a decently powerful advanced class, and Tena was still young. Not as young as he had transformed her to look, but she wasn't an adult by much, even before she met him. She had plenty of time to make up her mind.

"What about you, Sabbath? Got any grand ideas?" Cain asked the last of his team, who hadn't advanced yet from the first class she had when he awakened the System for her.

Sabbath was a Change Mage, a First Advancement Class similar to Misha's, but without the clerical overtones, so there were plenty of ways that she could advance, even if she moved away from the Demonic influence that the Change Mage had over their skills.

"I don't know. I have mastered most of the spells that I have, and I'm getting pretty good at using them in combat, but I am still so squishy that even my shields can't take a decent hit. They are based on my own durability and mana, and with only a strong mana pool to rely on, the barrier isn't hard to break." Sabbath explained.

"So, you want more durability and a stronger barrier spell? I know how to make both of those." Cain agreed.

Evangeline was incredible with barrier spells, and Mythryll had a [Demonic Transformation] spell that could make even the most fragile of casters a force to be reckoned with in close combat. It had manifested more like a Dryad for the Elf, who was a nature mage to start with, but it would likely be something psychedelic or flaming when Sabbath used it since her class was based around the arcane flames of the God of Magic.

[Layered Barrier] and [Demonic Transformation] were both relatively easy skills for Cain to write out, despite their higher quality, so he set to work right away, letting the girls watch the matches while he worked.

After most of an hour, Luna was called down to the ring, where a group of Disciples wanted to challenge her Demons, to test their skills after their leader made a breakthrough during afternoon meditations.

That distracted everyone long enough for Cain to finish the books, and he was ready to hand them over as soon as Sabbath finished cheering for the Demons to win.

It was a lopsided victory, as Luna had summoned Carnage so that the Disciples could have a decent fight without getting ambushed or set on fire. The fight was mostly blade-on-blade, with many of the team members attacking at range, but the problem was that Carnage had no qualms about throwing his weapons since he could summon them back to his hands.

Being hit in the face with a hundred-kilo axe was a very fast way to be eliminated.

"You've got to dodge that. That girl must not have been watching the last time Carnage was out, or she would have known that the weapons he throws bypass most barriers without even slowing down." Sabbath sighed, having hoped for the team to do better against the overjoyed Demon.

Carnage was way too happy to have a chance to "educate" Disciples on the ways of combat. Like with the Blood Dancer girls, any class lesson that involved bloodshed was one he was eager to teach.

"I swear that Demon is still holding back. Every time I think we are winning, he breaks out a new technique and just crushes us into the dirt." One of the team members complained.

"If you could defeat me in a sword fight, you wouldn't still be Outer Disciples. Now that you're healed let's go again." Carnage suggested.

"Master Cain, can we have the full arena? I think we need more room if we are going to fight him properly." One of the girls called up to where Cain was watching their match.

"Of course. Pay attention to his words. Carnage is an incredible combat instructor whom even the Demon Realms highly respect. It is an honor to learn to fight from him." Cain replied.

Cain rearranged the arena into one large space as soon as the last of the other fights was over, and Carnage moved to stand in the very center of the arena.

"Bring your very best. I will teach you the proper way to overcome a superior force with numbers today." The big red demon laughed.

They couldn't even argue with that. Despite fighting him five-on-one, he was the superior force. He didn't even have much of a level advantage on them, as they were all Awakened fighters already, just not strong enough to make the Inner Sect.

The arena began to fill with onlookers, as any combat lesson was one worth watching. They could learn more from the Demon in a single fight than they could from each other in weeks of practice, and fighting multiple opponents was a lecture that they all had difficulty learning from the Sect's Elders.

"Learn these books while you watch. If they don't give you a class that you like, we can try something else to see if it will awaken what you are looking for." Cain whispered to Sabbat so that he didn't interrupt the others who were watching the match.

Cain looked up when he heard laughing, only to realize that someone had gotten too close to the back of Carnage, forgetting that he had a tail and had been swatted across the arena. Not hard enough to eliminate them but hard enough that they bounced off the barrier and collapsed on the ground while Carnage lectured the team about the importance of spatial perception.

Sabbat was so engrossed in the match that she didn't even use the books right away, only held them while she stared at the bloodshed on the arena sands. Carnage had chosen to allow them to rejoin the fight when they were healed, so he wasn't holding back on beating the unfortunate challengers to his heart's content.

Of course, the thought that Carnage could find a level of carnage that would satisfy him was ridiculous, but he certainly was enjoying himself.

[That's not even fair. He can heal faster than they can deal damage. There is no possible way that they could ever defeat him.] Oath Breaker laughed in Cain's mind.

[Maybe he will get tired. But they are getting better pretty quickly. Maybe brute force has some validity as a training method.] Cain replied, then noticed that Sabbat had gone vacant, engrossed in the Class Selection Screen.

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

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It took a full fifteen minutes before Sabbath returned to reality with a huge smile on her face and a whole new class.

[Magus Dominus] wasn't a Class name that Cain had been expecting or that he thought would appeal to the ranged magic-preferring slender brunette. If it had been a class name that Penny or even Tena had picked, Cain might not have been as startled, but the System's naming sense usually assigned words like Dominus to violent melee classes.

"I have picked all my skills now, and I think that I have rounded out my skillset well enough that I shouldn't have any more troubles in fights with being attacked," Sabbath whispered to Cain.

"Oh? What did you gain that gives you so much confidence that you aren't squishy anymore?" Cain asked while he recorded her new form so that he could look through the skills she had learned.

"I got a bunch of new barrier skills, but more importantly, it comes with elemental weapon skills that can make up for the defensive shortcomings of most mages. I can actually fight now and not just stand back with my flames.

It's got lots of new area attacks as well, but the ability to fight is the real change. I will have to challenge a match as soon as the lesson is finished."

Cain nodded, then reconsidered. "You might as well spend the night making plans and becoming more familiar with all of your new spells. A bit of time planning how to make them work better together will make it easier to learn your class in the first fight. If you don't have a good enough grasp on your skills and how they work together, it will be impossible to learn."

Sabbath was eager to fight, but Cain had a point. She would just be wasting her own time and skills if she didn't have a plan about how to make her skills work together. Since she had skipped so many levels due to quests, she was overloaded with Skill Points and had started with a full class tree, unlike most advanced fighters who would only get one or two skills from the new class to start and would learn to use the new ones as they become available.

"You know, I hate it when you're right," Sabbath muttered, then closed her eyes to plan how she would fight her first match.

After seeing Carnage in combat, she had learned a lot about how to defend against multiple attackers, and with the addition of her flames and new skills, she thought that she could do the same thing, at least to some degree.

That should be a shock to anyone who was expecting to fight a mage, but the most important part of her new skillset was the skill that gave the class its name.

[Energy Domination] would let her devote a portion of her mana to lock down the energy in the area, with a two-to-one rate of returns. Fighting opponents on her level, she could lock them out of their energy skills with half of her own mana, making them fight with blades, while Sabbath could still use flames and the rest of her skills.

Stronger opponents could break the effect of the debuff, but against opponents who weren't expecting it, those few seconds before they resisted the skill would be enough to totally overwhelm them.

As she had learned from watching Carnage, it wasn't enough to simply have skills. You needed to control the battlefield so that you were always at the advantage by default. Carnage did it with pure skill and experience, but Sabbath was certain that she could mimic a fraction of that power on her own right now, and it would only get more powerful as she advanced.

After another hour, the Disciples admitted defeat, and Luna dismissed Carnage so that the referee would announce that the fight was over without waiting for them all to individually admit that they had lost.

[Winner Carnage] The ethereal Seraphim announced, bringing a chuckle from the crowd. Even if he was dismissed first and forfeited, the Arena still knew that he had crushed that fight.

Everyone was waiting to see who was next when a group of young men in Golden Robes with bright orange trim flew over to the edge of the camp and called out to those inside.

"The Enlightened Blade Disciples respectfully challenge the Forbidden Treasures Disciples to a match." Their leader called.

That was fairly normal. Even outside the competition, the cultivators loved to fight challenges. This one was at least polite, so they wouldn't start a big issue between the two Sects.

Cain could also see that similarly dressed Disciples were challenging dozens of other Sects in the area, so this must be a newly arrived Sect who had missed the early competitions and wanted to make a name for themselves.

"The Forbidden Treasure Sect accepts your challenge. Please enter the Arena. It is protected by the Seraphim. There will be no death inside, so you may fight with your full strength." Cain replied on behalf of his girls.

"Tena still needs inspiration, so don't hold back. If they are confident enough to challenge, they should be good enough to give you girls a workout. Just don't call too many demons against them, Luna. It wouldn't be sporting." Cain instructed.

Instead of summoning anything new, Luna took a pair of Pixie warriors out of her battlefield and gave them instructions to help out in the battle. Luna was a skilled fighter even without her summons, and a pair of tiny assassins would be a nightmare for most Sects to deal with, so she was confident that it would be enough to ensure their victory, even if Sabbat had issues getting her new class to work correctly.

"So much for waiting until she knows what she is doing." Solara laughed from her spot beside Cain as she watched the others head to the arena.

"Are you not sending them all?" One of the ten men who had come to challenge them asked, looking at Solara, who didn't look any younger than Luna or Tena.

"This one specializes in Alchemy, not fighting. The others are skilled at fighting superior numbers, though, and I am certain that they will give you a good workout." Cain replied sedately, not at all concerned about the chances of his Disciples losing.

Ten young men faced off against five young women and two pixies. The cultivators thought it was a bit odd to see the small creatures, but they were familiar enough with skills that could create helpers out of energy, so they assumed that the Pixies were a form of talisman that would help in some way, either giving a buff or causing a distraction.

"Alright, we each take two, and the last one to clear their attackers has to fetch dinner for everyone else tonight," Penny suggested.

Her thoughts said that she was encouraging Tena to find a way toward more power, thinking that as long as Sabbat did well that the Monk would be the last to finish her targets. The Enlightened Blade team didn't see it quite that way and believed that the victory in the Outer Sect competition had made these girls overconfident.

Unlike their opponents, their team had plenty of time to work out how to deal with the tricks that the girls had shown during their matches, and they were sure that they could deal with even the insane attack speeds that Luna had shown.

The referee appeared overhead and announced the start of the match, giving only three seconds' warning before calling for the fight to begin.

The girls spread out so that they had more room to fight, and a pair of big men charged Sabbat the instant the announcement was made. She had shown vulnerability to close combat before, but this time she simply conjured a halberd into her hand and swung it in a full circle, creating a dome of flames around herself to block the first attacks.

Four blades rushed out of the fire, all made of glowing pink energy, catching the pair off guard and dealing damage before they could react and fight them off.

Sabbat wasn't holding back, though. She had no intention of carrying meals for the entire Sect tonight, so she decided to start the match with her new Ultimate Move.

[Energy Domination] locked down the area around her, and the two men fell from the air, unable to continue channeling energy to fly.

The blades didn't let up, and a tornado of flames suddenly formed over the pair before slamming into the ground around them and contracting, throwing them into the air and lighting them on fire.

Without the ability to exert external energy, they couldn't fly away or even put up a barrier to protect themselves from the flames, and the two were quickly ejected from the fight to sit in the waiting area and heal.

"Wow, she has no pity left in her, does she? That was savage." Solara laughed, while Sabbat was looking extremely proud of herself as the first to eliminate her targets.

Luna was only a few seconds behind her, though, using her speed to put the fighters on the defense while the Pixies concealed themselves with magic and snuck around to assassinate them with a single strike to the neck.

Penny's targets didn't last much longer than Luna's did, but both Tena and Jen were stuck in a hard battle. Jen had gotten two highly aggressive fighters who were trying to break her defenses, while Tena got a pair that had much better energy control than she did, and were able to fend off all her attacks, keeping the fight at a stalemate.

It would be rude to draw out the fight and just watch the others fight, so the three victorious Disciples rejoined the battle, instantly crushing the Enlightened Blade fighters and sending them to the recovery room.

"When you are healed and refilled with energy, you can just request for the room to return you to either the arena or the area around it." Cain informed the defeated team, who were busy marveling at the effects of the recovery room.

"Thank you for the Enlightenment, Elder Cain. We have learned many new things today." The leader of the team responded politely.

He seemed to be the only one that wasn't either immersed in self-pity or awe of the healing effect of the recovery room, but he had attacked Sabbath, and his Sect Robes were mere rags of charred cloth at the moment.

"You might want to change as well. This is an all-female camp, excluding myself, and the other Elders might not take it well if you came back out half naked."

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

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"I wonder what they will tell their Sect about the battle. It didn't really go well for them, and it might be a bit embarrassing to learn that they lost ten on five against the ladies of the Forbidden Treasure Sect." Elder Ling asked softly.

"Well, my Disciples were the Outer Sect champions, so it's not unexpected to lose to them. They might not mention that they sent the whole team at once, but their loss should be no surprise." Cain shrugged.

The Disciples in question had already left the ring and were returning to Cain's side, where Luna directly picked the seat in his lap so that he could not ignore her or delay her customary celebratory affection. Nobody was surprised by it anymore. Luna's quirks were common knowledge not only among her companions but among the Lotus Blossom Sect and their Disciples as well.

"How are the other challengers doing? You should be able to sense the battles from here, right?" Luna asked as she relaxed into Cain's hand, which was gently stroking her head.

"They seem to be much more evenly matched. We might not have gotten the strongest of their Outer Sect Disciples, but it looks like most of the teams are on similar levels, so they might have balanced them for a better demonstration of their average strength." Elder Ling explained.

"Oh, that's good. It would have been sad if we got the only team that couldn't take their assigned targets." Luna replied.

That would have been a hit to the pride if the boys could hear that, but they had no room to complain. Their fight didn't even last a single round, and they were solidly trounced. After a fight like that, the best thing they could do was fly away.

And that was exactly what they did. They asked the room to eject them into the air above the arena a few minutes later, and after looking at the distorted view of the compressed space, they bowed to the Disciples and flew away without a word.

"I like those ones. They asked nicely, and they didn't brag or talk trash at all." Penny stated, tilting her chin to indicate the disciples who were flying away.

"Not all Sects are obnoxious and aggressive, no matter how prideful the younger generation might be. I am glad you managed to meet some nice people while you were here." Elder Ling replied.

Luna looked at the Elder with a hint of pity in her eyes. "It will be a shame to have to let you stay behind while we go traveling. But we are running low on shiny things, and we were promised that there would be an Ancient Dragon at the other end. I haven't seen one of those since we got to this world, and I am looking forward to it."

"You know Ancient Dragons are easily angered and incredibly dangerous, right?"

Luna shook her head. "You just need to give them a reason not to be in a bad mood. When you get that old, you get bored and don't want to be bothered. But I am prepared. I have collected a huge selection of interesting things so that I will have something that he wants."

Elder Ling smiled at the girl's confidence and joined Cain in petting her head. "As long as you are certain that you have it handled, I will believe you."

"Tena's advancement and everything else can wait until we find a good clue during our travels. You can't rush a future advancement path. But this is the perfect opportunity for you to swap out the arena. Most of the Disciples have left for dinner, and there are no fights going on." Cain told Elder Ling.

"Oh, right. I will clear the area now."

Elder Ling used an energy technique on her voice that made it carry across the Camp, getting everyone's attention in an instant.

[Please clear the area around the Arena. The ability is about to be disabled and reactivated.] She ordered, getting all the lingering Disciples moving.

"We should also get going to dinner as soon as she is finished. I heard that the puppets you left are almost done training the first batch of Disciples in basic cooking." Penny informed the group.

"Since they're just clones of the Kitchen Elder with their ages regressed, I will free them from my influence and leave them here when we go. Watching her get all flustered when someone flirts with the clones or teases them has become a Sect hobby." Cain

whispered to Elder Ling, then disabled the spell and let the Arena vanish, catching the attention of the Sects camped nearby.

The youthful-looking Elder scrunched up her face as she focused, and a few seconds later, a new arena faded into being. This one wasn't quite like the last one, it was far more ornate, with cushions on the seats for the spectators, and the monsters that flanked the entry were replaced by statues of Elder Ling herself.

None of the Lotus Blossom Sect members had realized that the monsters at the door were statues of Cain in his true form, but they would all realize right away that the particularly alluring statues were Elder Ling.

The old entry had given off a vaguely forbidding atmosphere, giving the Disciples that were coming to train a sense of solemn duty to do their best. The new one did not have that feeling. Instead, the entryway gave off a feeling of warmth and motherly compassion, encouraging them to do their best.

"Who would have thought that the Arena would be so different depending on who made it? We totally should have had cushions the first time." Jen commented as she looked around the revamped area.

The space also seemed to be more compressed, possibly due to the fact that Elder Ling was an Immortal, whereas Cain was only Spirit Awakened, despite the fact that he had surpassed all sense of normal power scaling.

With the Arena replaced and Elder Ling's assurance that everything was working as intended and they wouldn't come to any real harm, the Disciples who finished their dinner the fastest joined the battleground, picking sparring partners for their evening training.

"So, are you going to leave an Heir behind before you leave for the mountain? You know, just in case something happens to you?" One of the Lotus Blossom Disciples asked as she followed Cain and the group toward the kitchen.

"Well, Luna is coming with me, and I think that the alternative might not go over well with my wife of my mistress." Cain chuckled, and the girl's face blushed bright crimson.

"A wife and a mistress? I always knew that the normal rules of propriety didn't apply to the powerful. Do you think that I can have a harem, too, if I get as powerful as you?"

Elder Ling thumped the girl on top of her head. "No harem talk in the dining hall. But no, you need to at least reach the level of the Sect Master first. Master Cain is a special case."

"So, it is possible. Don't worry, Elder, I will work hard." The girl laughed, then scurried away into the crowd.

Elder Ling shook her head, blushing at the thought of such indecent things happening inside her Sect, while Penny turned a meaningful look between her and Cain.

[She is the only one that he didn't make too young to be a potential romantic interest. Does that mean that he really might go for it before we leave? Maybe I should convince everyone else to take a late-night stroll.] Her thoughts were saying as Cain listened in.

Cain checked Elder Ling's thoughts, but all he could hear was a focusing Mantra, blocking out all other thoughts which might have been in her mind.

At the same time, in a hidden portion of the Divine Planes, two pairs of eyes, one green, the other entirely black, were watching the scene unfold from above using a remote viewing spell.

"I think that we might have to take direct action soon at this rate. He is too tempting to humans." Nyarla whispered to Misha.

"I have put in a request with the Creators, and they have assured me that once we finally get him here to complete the quest, they have a way to keep him still and entertained for at least a few centuries," Misha assured her, with the hint of a jealous smile on her face.

"Those old gods are going to intervene? That should be enough to keep him in one spot and away from thieving little dolls like that Elder. If I didn't know that she looked like that, to begin with, I would think he was making himself a replacement beauty." Nyarla, the Ancient midwife in charge of Misha's care, complained while using her facial tentacles to feed herself popcorn as they watched the scene unfold.

"Is that the dill pickle popcorn? No hoarding the good stuff. And where is the mint chocolate ice cream?" Misha asked, looking toward the enchanted ice box in the corner over the top of her heavily pregnant belly.

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

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By the time everyone had made it to dinner, the word that Cain and his disciples were leaving soon had already spread through the Lotus Blossom Sect, and everyone was waiting to say goodbye to them or share stories of their time here.

"I think the one with the most stories to tell should be Solara, right? Though she joined late, she is the only additional Disciple that the Sect has taken since they arrived here.

You must have some juicy details that the others won't share." One of the Lotus Blossom disciples pleaded.

"Yeah, Luna tells us all sorts of good things, but she hides random ones that we really want to know about. You will have mercy on us, won't you sister Solara?" An adorable little Ginger girl begged.

If Solara were really the young girl she appeared to be and not an Elder in a new body, it would have likely worked, but Solara had many years to get used to the antics of young Disciples and was mostly immune to persuasion.

"I think if you want the really good stories, you will have to ask Sect Master Cain. They are his secrets to share, just like the secret skills. So, I can't share them with you all, no matter how cute that pouting face is." Solara replied with a smirk.

"Boo. Elder Cain won't tell us anything. He says that he doesn't gossip about anyone." The disciple complained.

"Maybe you should take a lesson from that and resist the urge to gossip?" Elder Ling suggested.

"Elder Ling, we didn't notice you there. Forgive us for our rudeness." The disciples said with a bow and then ran away.

"Oh, that's priceless. You made her so cute that the Disciples forget she's Elder Ling even when she's sitting right there." Solara chuckled, a bit of her original personality bleeding through the mental mask that she had put on to adjust to her new life.

"Elder Ling has it tough for sure. But she will get used to it." Cain shrugged.

"Yeah, when she has started getting old again." One of the Disciples laughed.

"Why would she get old again? She's already in the Immortal Realm. Nobody ages after that transition unless they aren't fully grown yet." Cain asked.

"Wait, seriously? That's just unfair. She gets to look like that forever, and the rest of us will have to search you out in a century when we have reached the same state so we can get regressed back to our peak states." The young woman sighed.

Cain was too nice to mention that he would be gone from this place long before a century had passed, so hunting for him would be pointless. If they searched anyhow, they might find someone with a similar skill that would help them out, or perhaps even a Mystic Pill that would help them.

Cain hadn't been here long, compared to most, but even he had heard of various Divine Pills that could turn a Cultivator into almost anything, even giving them a body as hard

as a Dragon's Scales. How true and how permanent that would be, he didn't know, but he had heard the rumors and gossip going around.

"Why are the monsters gone from the front of the Arena?" One of the Disciples asked, interrupting the line of gossip.

"Elder Ling created this one. I taught her the skill so that the Lotus Blossom Sect could have an arena even after you headed home at the end of the season. The statues are a representative of her power, whereas the last ones were a representative of mine." Cain explained.

"I knew it. She is secretly kind and warm under all those layers of Strict Elder Ling." One of the girls joked.

Elder Ling glared at her for a second, and the girl stammered. "Many, many layers of strict Elder Ling."

The Kitchen Elder came around once most of the crowd had died down and returned to their studies for the evening.

"It will be a shame to lose my helpers, but I suppose you needed to get on with your business eventually." She greeted them.

"Actually, they don't need to leave. I can release them from my influence, and they will lose some power, but they will still know all of the kitchen tasks that you have been relying upon." Cain offered.

"A whole kitchen full of weaker clones of me for the Disciples to bully? I am not sure that is a good idea. They are already getting ideas about undermining my authority." The Elder informed Cain.

"Well, I can teach them to fight if you like. Or I can leave just one for you to take care of?"

That seemed to be more suitable, and the Elder looked fondly back at the kitchen area where the clones were cleaning up at the end of the dinner service.

"That would be alright. Like having a daughter. Will they be able to grow after they have been released, or will they be stuck as mortals?" She asked.

"They should be able to do anything that you could do since I cloned your body to make them. At least, that's the theory. I know there are some metaphysical considerations where some researchers have suggested that it is possible that a clone won't be able to gain power because the original used up their potential, but I have never actually tested them to see if it was true." Cain explained.

"There is only one way to find out. I don't want to play favorites, so could you pick a clone and dismiss the others?" The Elder asked.

"Of course. Done. I will call her over here before releasing her from my control so that you can look after her. Do you want me to start her in the body of a new Disciple since she will need to learn the ways of the Lotus Blossom Sect once she is free of my influence?"

The clone smirked and looked at Solara with a wistful smile. "I won't lose any of my essential skills, even if he changes my size, and I will keep most of my powers."

"But if she is small, she can use her appearance to leverage other Disciples into giving her sweets and special treatment. Just like a certain someone in our Sect leverages the power of cuteness." Solara added before sticking her tongue out at the Puppet.

Luna looked directly at Tena as if she was the culprit while everyone else looked at Luna.

"See, you've done it so well that they don't even notice that you're using your powers for evil," Luna told her fellow Disciple.

"I ate the last puff one single time. Once. You need to move on." Tena informed her.

"But that batch turned out absolutely perfect. It looked so good, and you ate it." Luna complained.

"Of course, she ate it if it looked that good and came out perfectly. Puffs are meant to be eaten, and you can always make more. I didn't make an entire skill book in exchange for that cookbook only to have the food go uneaten because it looked good." Cain admonished his daughter.

Luna spent a few seconds trying to come up with a good excuse before giving up. He was right. She was planning to eat it anyhow, and the kitchen puppets made it, not her, so she couldn't even use that excuse.

"Alright, I'm sorry. But I am so eating the last puff the next time I see it sitting there, even if I'm not done cooking." Luna reluctantly agreed.

"We would expect no less. In fact, it is surprising that one of us actually managed to eat the last of anything with this little glutton around. I swear I have never seen a human eat that much, especially one so small." Penny laughed.

"Do we need to get anything else from inside the city before we leave in the morning?" Cain asked his Disciples.

"No, I think we have everything. I made a checklist, and we aren't missing anything important. The only things that we are low on are our cash reserves and meat, but we can acquire both of those easily enough when we reach the next village we stop in." Penny informed him, as the responsible one of the group.

"I stocked up on everything else that we could need the last time you sent us shopping," Jen added.

"I think starting as a new disciple might be too much. She already has most of my memories, so she should be able to recover fairly quickly, and she is part of the kitchen staff, which wouldn't work if she was too small." The Kitchen Elder decided on behalf of her clone.

"Are you good with that?" Cain asked.

The clone shrugged. "It doesn't matter much to me. I am young enough that a few more years would only be a cosmetic change, and in the grand scheme of things, it wouldn't make much difference."

"Your wish is my command," Cain replied, then released the Puppet from his control so that the Kitchen Elder could take care of settling her into proper accommodations and registering her as a proper disciple.

It took Cain and his Disciples longer than expected to make it across the dining hall to their tent next to the kitchens, thanks to all of the Disciples who wanted to see them off, but eventually, they were all settled into bed, with Penny in wolf form so that the others could use her as a combination pillow and space heater to stave off the evening chill.

[I should really tell them that Sabbath can light the braziers and keep them burning all night while she sleeps. It would be easier on Penny than making her sleep in wolf form every time the weather turns cold in the mountains.] Cain thought to himself as he drifted off to sleep.

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 659 659 Into The Mountains

The next morning, Cain got everyone up early so they could get a good start on the day. He intended to have them walk for at least the first half of the day until they were well outside the area where the Sects were camped. That way, they wouldn't attract too

much attention, and they could fly away on their Swords without any idiots trying to rob them.

At least, that was the plan. But by the time they finished breakfast and began heading toward the edge of the Cultivation Sects' camps, it became clear that leaving without attracting attention simply wasn't going to happen.

Every Sect that they passed was familiar with both the Sect's uniforms as well as Cain's reputation as the purveyor of the obscure and prohibited. How he got so many Sects' secret techniques was a matter of great discussion among the assembled Elders, but they all agreed that he seemed to know every secret that they thought they had kept hidden from the world.

He even knew secret techniques that the originating Sects had forgotten.

All of that made them believe that Cain was a Deity Realm Cultivator who had been injured, losing most of his power but not his millennia' worth of knowledge.

Even if he told them, nobody would believe his story about a System giving him the power to read their skills and copy them. The notion was just so ridiculous that only a madman would accept it as truth.

"Elder Cain, won't you stay a while longer? So many Sects would love to have a chance to sit in on your lectures." A young man in vivid green robes asked as the Forbidden Treasures Sect walked past his camp.

"Unfortunately, we must get going. But I will stop in at various Sects along the way. Many of them have been kind to us during our stay here, and if we pick up something good along the way, we might have a reason to trade with them." Cain explained.

"We will look forward to it then. Our Jade Mountain Sect is near the Dragon Peaks. If you are heading that way, feel free to drop in. I am certain that the Elders would give you very good terms if you wanted to trade some of your knowledge with them." The guard informed them.

"We will keep it in mind."

Dozens of similar conversations took place as they left, and Cain managed to fill in quite a bit of his rudimentary map, adding in training grounds and protected areas, as well as dangerous Sects that they might encounter on their journey.

Strangely enough, many of them considered the Shadowed Blade to be one of the unfriendly Sects that was too dangerous to approach, but in Cain's experience, they were really quite friendly.

With the addition of so many Sects and their territories, they now had a clear path to the mountain without worrying about running across an unknown force. Crossing a number of Sects' training territories was unavoidable, as they butted up against each other, but with his newfound familiarity, they shouldn't attack at first sight.

The locals no longer considered him a lone Wandering Cultivator, which was always a threat, and most likely insane. Instead, they were a foreign Sect touring the area in search of adventure and knowledge, much like the group from the Lightning Dance Sect that he met in the valley village where he met most of his Disciples had been.

The level of respect that the two of them got was somewhat different, despite Cain's apparently low cultivation, due to the knowledge that he already possessed, but the concept was the same.

"Be careful out there. I have heard that the monsters in the woods have been increasing in power much faster than usual lately, and they might have exceeded the normal threshold that the Sects keep them at.

I know your Disciples are talented, but if they come across a stronger Immortal Beast, they could be in real trouble." One of the guards at the last Sect that they passed called out.

"Thanks for the warning. I will be close by, so there shouldn't be any real danger. As long as we don't come across any Divine Beasts, we should be alright."

"Way to set the flag. Who wants to wager? Are we going to meet a Divine Beast today or tomorrow?" Penny asked.

"Tonight, just after we start cooking but before we can eat." Tena wagered.

"You ladies are too pessimistic. The Gods are looking out for us, and they want us to have a fun and enjoyable vacation. I say we don't see a single one until we reach the Dragon Peaks." Cain disagreed.

"What about after that?" Solara asked, not happy with his line of logic.

"Well, there is supposed to be at least one dragon there at that level, and we are going to see them on purpose, so I am hoping that we will see one at the Dragon Peaks."

"Somehow, that still doesn't make me feel better. I wager on tomorrow. There are too many people in the area for strong opponents to be hiding in the woods nearby." Solara bet.

"Keep walking. We have a long way to go." Cain ordered, shooing his Disciples forward.

The walk through the woods was quite relaxing, and the trail was nearly at the standard of a modern gravel road, well-used and clearly marked, with regular stopping points for the mundane humans who transported goods with wagons and oxen.

They passed a handful of similar caravans, bringing goods and food to the City of Knowledge which they had just left, but they didn't come across a single other Cultivator.

The event was in full swing, and the finals of the Inner Sect Competition were happening soon, followed by the Core Disciples competition, where the strongest of the younger generation would show off their might for the crowd.

No Cultivator wanted to miss that, and space was already at a premium around the city, so there wouldn't be too many groups still arriving this late into the season.

When it started to get close to sunset, Cain picked them a spot in the woods, away from the road, where they wouldn't be bothered by travelers who might still be out at this hour.

"Everyone set up Camp. Better yet, I will set up camp, and you all can get dinner ready." Cain decided.

He had a number of tents in his inventory, but he only pulled out the single largest one, similar to the one he had been staying in while they were in the Lotus Blossom Camp. That had more than enough space for everyone to sleep, and he could line the floor with a large tarp and cushions to make it extra comfortable.

While he set up, Luna summoned an adorable baby Earth Elemental to create a firepit and some seating, which Penny placed a large Cast Iron grill on top of, and Sabbath started a magical fire inside.

The heat that it gave off was a comfortable change from the chill mountain air, and it was close enough to the tent that they likely wouldn't have to heat it tonight, even if Penny was in human form and not the portable space heater that was her giant wolf form.

"Why are you putting green things on the skillet with the meat? Meat is good." Luna asked as Penny began to cook.

"Vegetables are good for you. They help you grow up big and strong. You can't eat only meat and sweets if you want to stay healthy." The Lycan explained.

"I require more documented evidence," Luna demanded, glaring at the sliced zucchini on the grill.

"If you dip it in sour cream and dill dip, it is really good," Tena whispered to the little Demon, making her eyes light up.

"Oh, so they're like potato chips? You could have just said that to start with." Luna complained.

"I have some mushrooms and flour. Do we have a pot and oil to fry them?" Solara asked as the grill heated.

"We have everything. Just ask Master Cain. He is holding most of the supplies." Jen told their newest member, who hadn't ever asked how they all came to be traveling together, and so didn't know why Cain had everything.

"I heard you. Here, I put the stuff in your old storage rings. Feel free to sort them out as you see fit based on daily duties." Cain called, then handed over a set of storage rings containing all their old supplies, as well as a split of the money their old Master had been carrying.

That was enough to get them through a lifetime of traveling, as long as they could find food, and the last of the tension about the journey began to melt away. If Cain didn't see a need to protect the valuables, they could infer that he wasn't expecting any real danger.

In Cain's mind, the rings were only taking up inventory space, and he didn't need anything that was in them. He could have a golem make him a castle every night if he wanted, so the camping gear was redundant. Even Luna could have made pots and pans if she wanted, though a well-seasoned Cast Iron skillet was a treasure that the Earth Elementals couldn't master.

When the food was ready, Tena passed over a single coin to Penny, having lost the wager on when they would meet their first Divine Beast of the trip, and they all settled in for the evening on the benches that the Earth Elemental had made.

Once it was fully dark and everyone was relaxed, Cain pointed to the tent. "Get some sleep. I will take the first two watches since I don't sleep as much. I will wake someone early for the last watch, and you can make breakfast once the sun comes up."

They all got ready to play rock paper scissors for the duty, but Penny moved Solara to the side, excluding her from the selection since she was the weakest of them at the moment and could be too easily ambushed.

She had the knowledge to set up a variety of alarms, traps, and other warning inscriptions, so the annoyed Alchemist set an intruder alarm on the tent and walked inside, finding the whole interior covered in pillows and blankets.

"No wonder Luna's sleeping habits are so strange. This is what Cain comes up with when he gets to make the bed." She laughed.

"That's a bit glorious, though, isn't it? We can just sleep in a pile or scattered, and it is all just as comfortable." Penny sighed. She had won the first round, so she didn't need to compete for the task anymore.

She transformed into her oversized Lycan form and grabbed a blanket, curling up in the very center of the room, ignoring the pleading look from Luna to turn into a wolf, which was much softer and larger.

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 660 660

The group woke up the next morning to the smell of a disgruntled Jen frying bacon and finishing her watch. That was easier than going inside to wake them up, and even if Luna somehow missed the smell of bacon frying, the sensitive nose of Penny's Lycan form would not.

The Lycan was currently wrapped around Sabbat, taking the role of the big spoon due to her size, while Luna was wrapped around Solara. Tena had wisely hidden behind the pile of bodies, ignoring the lower temperature so that she could escape the girl's urge to use someone as a body pillow, and Cain had taken a spot off to the side so he didn't wake them up when he finished his watch.

"See, this is why I don't bother to set up beds." Cain laughed as everyone began to rouse for the day.

"You could. Maybe it would work out." Tena suggested, but even to herself, it didn't sound convincing.

"Put on lots of eggs if we have them. I'm hungry." Luna called as she removed and re-equipped her Sect Robes, returning them to their perfectly clean state.

"Do we have to travel in Sect colors? It's not really great at blending into the forest." Penny asked, running her hand over the soft peach-colored fabric.

"There are a lot of Sects in the area, and being in matching colors will help them recognize us. All of the Sects travel in uniform, so we should likely go with the custom." Cain told her.

"I know you're right, and most Disciples don't even own clothing other than their Sect Robes and matching dresses, but still, bright peach and white? That really stands out in the woods."

Luna looked excited as an idea came into her head. "If we can't hide, why don't we really NOT hide? I could summon a few dozen more that look just like us, and then we would look like a full-sized sect on the move."

"That would just confuse the people who know who we are. They aren't expecting us to have dozens and dozens of members, remember? If it really bothers everyone so much, I can make a black base layer instead of white, and that will make the translucent Peach much less noticeable." Cain offered.

Penny considered it for a while, then waved off the idea of new robes. "No, we are already all used to these ones. It's just my forest sense telling me that I'm an idiot for dressing like a warning flag when I'm outside the city."

"You will get used to it, I am sure. The trip today will be a bit more interesting than yesterday. We have to cross a training ground, which is stocked with magical beasts as well as resources. I am certain that the local sect would get upset if we picked their precious plants, but they shouldn't mind if we killed a few beasts on our way through."

Just keep your eyes open for their disciples. We will be near the border, but the territory of the two Sects meets up at that point, so there is no way to avoid them. I will try to attract the attention of a patrol Disciple or Elder so that we don't get accused of trespassing." Cain explained.

"That could be bad. What Sect's territory are we going to be passing through?" Jen asked as she stirred the eggs on the grill.

"We have the option of the Thunder Gods or the Foot Clan. The second one sounds too much like a fetish to me, so I was planning to meet with the Thunder Gods if they have someone on patrol at the edge of their territory."

"The Foot Clan is a very serious fighting Sect. The name is in reference to their kicking techniques, not a foot fetish." Solara explained.

"Well, that's not bad then. The Thunder Gods seemed friendly when we were in the city, and the main road is on their side of the border, so we will try that way first and keep the Foot Clan as a backup plan."

Friendly in the city, with thousands of eyes on them, and friendly on their home turf, with nobody watching, could be very different things, but the fact that the road hadn't been moved suggested that they weren't too strict about travelers, or at least they were less strict about them than the Foot Clan.

Once they had packed up, Cain told Sabbath to put out the fire but to leave the campsite alone. The next group to camp there would appreciate the high-quality firepit and the benches.

Making it to the Thunder Gods' border only took a few hours, even jogging instead of flying, and they were met by two Elders, one in Red and one in pale blue, who were glaring at each other with great hatred.

"Welcome, travelers. The Thunder Gods welcome all Cultivators to pass through our hunting grounds along the main road for just a small fee. Our disciples keep the road clear for safety, you see, and they deserve a stipend for their work." The Elder in blue greeted them.

"Don't listen to that old windbag. They use Earth Skills to prevent an alternate route from forming while they extort the travelers. The Foot Clan welcomes the Forbidden Treasures Sect to travel through our territory." The Elder in red robes added while sparing a look of disgust for the other Elder.

Road tolls were nothing new to Cain. They existed in every world to pay for maintenance or to keep dangers away from the road, but the Foot Clan seemed to know who they were, which should mean that they had a presence in the city, though Cain didn't recognize them from among the many red robes he had seen.

"The Forbidden Treasures Sect, you say? Now, why didn't you mention that at the start? Please, feel free to pass through. No fee is needed. In fact, we would welcome you to visit our Sect grounds for the evening." The Thunder Gods Elder's tone was much more polite now that he could put a name to the faces in front of him.

Every Sect sent back stories of the events in the city, especially ones this close to the event, which should make both of these Sects part of the six great sects that filled the region, each with a Divine Realm Sect Master.

Cain was about to make an excuse about needing to get some distance down on their way to the Dragon Peaks when two powerful auras descended from the mountains on either side of the border.

"Looks like it isn't our robe color that draws the most attention," Penny whispered with a meaningful look toward Cain.

The two Divine Realm Cultivators flew down from their secluded mountain retreats at the same time, landing beside the stunned Elders of their Sects while staring intently at Cain. Not at the Forbidden Treasures Sect, but intently and directly at Cain.

"So they weren't exaggerating. How interesting. You really do have the aura of a Chaos Dragon. Or perhaps that is another type of Dragon, mixed with something else, something terrifying." The Foot Clan's new arrival muttered.

"It is no Chaos Dragon, you crazy old bat. But it is a Dragon Core. He must cultivate a lost Dragon Art." The Thunder God's Divine Cultivator snapped back without taking his eyes off Cain.

"We were hoping to pass by and make our way to the Dragon Peak. Might we trouble one of your Sects for passage?" Cain asked politely, complete with a small bow so that he didn't anger someone who might be able to squash him like a bug.

"Of course, that was never in question. Would you like to spend an evening with our Sect? We have heard wonderful things about your training methods." The Foot Clan leader offered.

"Hmph, why should he show you something like that? Are you from his Sect? Or are you perhaps one of the beauties of the Lotus Blossom Sect?" The Thunder Gods' leader snorted.

Clearly, these two were never going to get along, and Cain was just a bystander in their long-time feud. Even the two Elders who first greeted him had stepped back so that they weren't caught in the crossfire.

"Is there a nice clearing on the other side of the training grounds? We could gather members of both Sects for a friendly dinner, perhaps a short conversation about training techniques?" Cain suggested.

If he could get them to put this off until the other side of their territory, they would at least make some distance today.

"That is a fine idea. Perhaps we could compare notes? I have just finished recruitment of a fresh batch of Disciples, and there are some who will be sent away for lack of compatibility. I am sure that the snob has some of his own. We could exchange them and see what progress they could make in a day?" The Foot Clan leader suggested.

Even his own Elder looked shocked at that suggestion. Divine Realm Cultivators could work miracles upon mere mortals with no cultivation base. That they thought Cain could teach them anything, much less possibly keep up with them, was more than either Elder had expected.

"That sounds like fun. Maybe we could revolutionize the advancement of new Recruits." The Thunder Gods Elder replied sarcastically.

"It's settled then. Three old men will show the juniors a new path before they go on their way to a Sect that better suits their talents." The Foot Clan leader declared, ignoring the fact that the other Divine Cultivator was clearly mocking him.

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 661 661

The two Divine Cultivators led Cain and the Disciples down the road, which led along the border between the two Sects. It was nominally on the Thunder Gods' side of the river that divided the two territories, but that was only because the Foot Clan side was mostly marshy and not suitable for a road to be made without going further into their territory.

The trees here were incredible, though. Clearly, the Sect's attempts to increase the energy in the area had been working, and they didn't practice mass logging because many of the trees that they passed were a dozen meters wide and had an air of ancient energy to them that gave the area a solemn presence.

There also weren't any of the damaged areas that indicated recent fights between Cultivators or monsters here, so they weren't joking about keeping the area clear of major threats. It made for a very relaxing walk while the Divine Realm Cultivators exchanged barbed comments and bragged about how competent each of their Sects' Inner Disciples was.

The Core Disciples of the Sect rarely gained more than one new member every decade, thanks to the limited potential of most of the applicants, so the Inner Disciples were the hope for the future, while the old men viewed the Outer Disciples as nothing more than promising children, not yet old enough to have proven themselves worthy of attention.

That would normally apply to Cain's disciples as well, but both of the old men had taken a great interest in the rate at which they were progressing, as they knew that once power was amassed, it only took a single new skill of the appropriate power level, or a flash of inspiration to Awaken to the next level.

At their power level, granting those Immortal Rank skills was no big deal. They could teach them with a mind-to-mind transfer that was nearly as effective as Cain's method

of granting skills with [Modify]. It was that skill that had made them mistake him as one of them, an old monster and true powerhouse, even by the standards of an Immortal Realm.

The road eventually led them to a clearing, where there were many signs of recent camps and a small group of kids in plain gray cultivator's robes waiting for them.

"These are the applicants who either had no affinity for our Sect's technique or were turned away for a lack of potential. They have all volunteered for this experiment in hopes of having their potential increased so that they can find their place among the Sects in the future. If the chosen applicant's process is successful, we will escort them to the city, where they can petition a suitable Sect to take them in." The Thunder Gods' Elder explained.

If they were really volunteers, that took the moral ambiguity out of the situation in Cain's mind, and with a pair of bored old men looking to show off for each other, Cain was certain that three of these aspiring Cultivators would soon have enough potential for someone to take them in.

"Might we ask, what brought you out of seclusion today, Divine Elder? Did you sense something about the applicants?" The Foot Clan's representative waiting with the children asked.

"Nothing so fancy. I heard that an interesting man was passing by with the skills to change fate, and I wanted to see it for myself." The old man answered.

The younger Elders looked in shock at the high praise that the Divine Elder had heaped upon Cain, but none dared to question his judgment, so they only ordered the aspirants to line up for the selection.

[Wandering Cultivator System Quest] Grant a failed Disciple an Immortal Body and change their fate.

Cain looked at the notification with some confusion. That wasn't the first time he saw the System call itself that since he arrived in this world, and he was beginning to think that it was having a laugh with him and convincing the others that he met that the System was, in fact, him, not something that he had inherited.

Cain looked over the disciples and found his perfect target. There was a very bruised and scarred young boy among the gathered options. There were no girls, so he wouldn't be following in his usual pattern of just finding a cute thing to play with, but if Cain had to list the greatest Main Character tropes, he had to say that a bullied and abused, undergrown and malnourished failed applicant who had nearly given up hope on life was very near the peak.

You couldn't have a rags-to-riches story if they didn't start in rags, after all.

"You, boy. Come here and tell me your name." Cain demanded, gesturing for the filthy boy to come forward.

"They call me Slave, sir." The boy answered quietly.

"Seriously? Like, not even a job so that they know where you belong? And I thought I had terrible naming sense." Cain replied while the two Divine Realm Cultivators chuckled.

"He was once called Rupert, but he lost the right to a name after he was caught stealing for the second time." The Elder from the Thunder Gods Sect explained.

"A thief? Perhaps not then." Cain sighed. He wasn't trying to make a supervillain.

"Please, sir. It was a misunderstanding. I was asked to bring those clothes to the laundry." The boy begged.

"And the first time?" The Elder asked.

"I admit, I stole that food." The boy sighed, defeated.

Good, broken was perfect. Cain would give him a little tweak to make sure he stayed humble.

"I will give him a chance. Whether he seizes it or gets executed as a thief is up to him." Cain announced.

"Oh, a fine choice. A new lease on life while working with his very last chance. I like it." The Foot Clan Elder cheered, then pointed at one of the boys.

"You look like you have big dreams, come here, and I will give you a future."

The Thunder Gods Divine Elder looked over the options and then picked one out without a word. Cain could sense that the boy had a good aptitude for Lightning but no cultivation talent to speak of. He was rejected by the Foot Clan, who didn't train in Lightning skills, so he might have some hope by just moving across the valley once his talent was improved.

"Now that we all have our selections let's begin. Watch carefully, Elders. You might learn something today." The Thunder Gods' leader announced.

He sat the boy he had chosen down in front of him and took out a set of golden needles. Then he ordered the boy to strip to his skivvies and lay down so that he could begin the acupuncture techniques that would improve his energy flow.

The Foot Clan leader did something close to the same, but he also used a salve applied to strategic spots, and Cain could feel that he was channeling energy into his test subject right from the start, enhancing his muscles.

Cain looked over his charge with interest. By all standards, this guy was completely worthless. No Elemental Affinity, No open vital points, not a single speck of energy in him at all. He looked moderately intelligent, but Cain would be altering that as well, so the base material wasn't all that important, only his character.

Cain started with [Modify] and turned the boy's bones into the same energy-infused and incredibly durable pattern that Bear Monsters were known for. Once the skeleton was done, he increased the muscle density by dozens of times, making the boy a force to be reckoned with, even with no cultivation. Then it occurred to Cain that he could do this a much easier way than going bit by bit to improve the boy from a Mythic or Spirit Rank body to an Immortal Rank Constitution.

After he reworked the boy's energy pathways so that they would flow nearly as well as Cain's own, he dug a Beast Core out of his inventory. It was an Immortal Rank Dire Bear Core that had been traded to him as part of the payments for his services, and Cain set to work molding it into the boy's body and merging it with his energy paths.

The System wanted someone to get an Immortal Body? He would do exactly that. He would give the boy the body and core of an Immortal Bear.

It was going better than Cain had expected, but he had to wonder if the boy would even be able to cultivate once he was finished. For all intents and purposes, he had created a human-shaped monster.

It might have been funnier if he had started with an actual monster and made them look human before setting them loose, as stronger Magical Beasts were incredibly intelligent, to begin with, but that wasn't what the quest wanted.

As he finished, the core began to merge into the body, absorbed by the cells to grant them the vitality needed for an Immortal Beast, but leaving him with no cultivation base, only a very durable body.

The other two had fed their subjects a few rare materials as well, along with various energy manipulations and even a surgical procedure to repair past damage. Most of the day passed while they worked since it took so long for the Monster Core to be absorbed by Cain's subject and the other Elders' procedures to complete, but by nightfall, they had three completely revamped cultivators in front of them.

"Now, let's get a good look at you all and see how you turned out." The Thunder Gods' Divine Elder announced with a smile, looking down at his work with pride.

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 662 662 Making Monsters

The younger Elders took out a set of measuring devices, both for potential and Elemental Aptitudes, and set them out on a table in front of the three test subjects.

"Since you are so eager, why don't you introduce the juniors to your work, let them know what you were hoping for, and then we can test the outcomes." The Foot Clan leader suggested.

"Capital idea. This is, well, I've already forgotten his name, but I enhanced his Elemental Aptitude for Lightning, opened up his energy pathways and aligned his chakras, then fed him an enlightenment potion to improve his future learning capacity." The Elder announced.

The boy was so excited about the changes that he didn't even care that the Elder forgot his name even while he was working to improve the boy's cultivation potential.

"His original potential was a medium aptitude for Lightning, but a Maximum of mid-Mortal Rank cultivation." The Elder announced, then gestured toward the devices for the boy to test himself.

First off, he placed his hand on the Potential stone, and the glow slowly changed from green to teal and finally to mostly blue. It seemed to measure the same way as the stone sword that the Seraphim Statue had claimed, meaning that this was low Immortal Rank potential.

"Impressive change. I hadn't expected the boy to amount to much." The Foot Clan Elder admitted.

Then the subject moved to the affinity stones, and the Lightning Element Stone lit up with a bright glow, indicating a high affinity with the Element. No other stones lit up at all, but as the Sect only used one, it was enough to get him admitted into the Thunder Gods' Outer Sect.

"High affinity and Immortal Grade potential, you qualify for the Outer Sect of the Thunder Gods Sect and can bypass the first year spent outside the walls with the acolytes who have just tested. What do you say, boy?" The Divine Elder asked.

It wasn't much of an offer, but the man had just changed his future, and he wasn't about to turn it down.

"Thank you for your kindness, Master. I won't forget it as long as I live." The boy answered, then knelt in supplication before the Divine Elder.

"I have always liked polite Disciples. Elder, find him some Sect Robes."

"Since the Wanderer has such an interesting technique, I will go next, so there is time for questions at the end." The Foot Clan leader announced, sending his subject forward.

As he touched the potential stone, it shot right past green, and the indicator turned solidly blue with a hint of red in it. High Immortal Rank potential if Cain understood the measurement correctly.

"Not bad at all. Was that the salve that improved the needlework?" The Thunder Gods' leader asked.

"Precisely. The two working together improve the potential at a much faster rate." The Foot Clan leader replied with a smirk.

The results on the affinity stones weren't as great, with Wind Element showing medium and a low affinity for Fire and Lightning.

"Not bad, but not horribly impressive. Medium Elemental Affinity should be enough to get him through his training, though." The Elder shrugged, unimpressed by his competitor's effort.

"What do you say, boy? Will you join the Foot Clan?" The Elder asked.

"I will. Thank you for this opportunity, Divine Elder." The boy agreed, kneeling before his new Sect Master.

"Now for the part that we are really looking forward to. A boy with no potential, no form of affinity, and no dignity to speak of, reworked by the rumored hidden Divinity, Sect Master Cain. Tell us, Sect Master, what did you do, and what were your goals?"

All of the assembled Cultivators were eagerly looking at Cain for answers while the boy in question was still flexing his limbs and moving in small circles, getting used to his new body.

"I reworked the structure of his bones, the same as you do during the early stages of Cultivation, then did the same with his muscles, veins, and organs before moving on to opening all of his energy pathways as wide as I could.

That worked out well enough, so I decided to do something fun and melded an Immortal Rank Dire Bear Core with his body to create an Immortal Constitution. Every stage that he advances should make him even stronger and more durable."

The boy looked more than a little concerned at the word "Fun" as it related to a full modification of his body and future, but the power that he could feel flowing through him was the real thing, so the strange Elder's wording was of little concern to him.

"A bestial constitution? Now that is something I didn't expect. I saw you working with the Monster Core, but I thought it was just to imbue him with some additional energy and acclimatize his body to Immortal Energy before his rank advanced enough to use it himself." The Foot Clan Elder replied, looking closer at the boy using a skill.

"He should be able to absorb it now, as soon as he learns the difference in feeling between it and Mortal Energy. That is a result of merging with aspects of a beast." Cain agreed.

"Will there be side effects?" The Thunder Gods' Elder asked.

"Nothing too major. Likely some extra body hair, an alteration of the teeth to a more aggressive omnivorous pattern, and a chance that he will enjoy long naps in the winter." Cain shrugged.

"Hmm, that's not too big of a deal for a Cultivator. We train in seclusion for months at a time, anyhow. Now, we should likely add one more test to this round since his body has been improved in such a unique way. Someone bring out a Monster Strength testing inscription."

They were used to test dead monsters with their core removed, which didn't have the clear aura of a living beast. It would also give an indication of how strong the boy's body currently was.

"I also have a bloodline analysis Rune. We have had some rare bloodlines in the past, so I keep one with me to measure the bloodline potential of inheritors." The Foot Clan leader added.

The additional tests were set up, and the boy was called forward to test his potential.

The stone immediately turned almost fully red, indicating a very strong chance that the boy who formerly had no potential at all could advance to Divinity.

The Elemental stones showed only a small level of affinity with the Earth Element, and Cain realized that even with all that he had done, he had missed a step in the transformation, but the others didn't seem surprised. The monster bloodline would be enough to move him forward without Elemental skills as a Physical Cultivator.

The Monster Strength test was next, indicating that he was indeed an Immortal Rank Beast at the moment, despite not having any sort of cultivation base. By the standard of the test, he was a newborn Dire Bear, needing time to grow into his powers.

Finally, the bloodline analysis showed that the boy had a High Immortal Rank potential, meaning that he would naturally reach that level even if he only exercised and ate well, though he would become more bestial as he grew if he didn't have a base to keep himself centered.

"You know who would love this kid? Those meatheads at the Crushing Mountain Sect. He's practically tailor-made for them. They're even physical cultivators, so his lack of Elemental Aptitude doesn't matter.

"Oh, I made an axe for one of their Elders before we left the city. I think you're right. He does seem like a good fit for them." Cain agreed.

"They are allies of the Foot Clan. Why don't we wait here for the evening, and they can send someone to pick him up?" The Divine Elder suggested.

"Then we can make food. This took forever, and I am hungry." Luna declared.

The other Cultivators looked shocked that she had spoken so frankly in front of such powerful people, but the Divine Elders were smiling at the girl with knowing looks.

"You are right, little one. I hear you managed to con the Shadowed Blade out of their secret recipe book. How about you cook us something incredible?" The Foot Clan leader suggested, revealing a smile that said this was part of his goal all along.

"I like the way you think. How many are we cooking for? Just the people here? I will set up the cooking station right away." Luna agreed.

When she summoned an Earth Elemental to make her an oven and firepit, plus some seating and a nice smooth spot for the tents in three different circles, so that everyone could have their privacy, the younger Cultivators all stopped what they were doing to stare at her.

That level of Energy Manipulation was way beyond what they had expected from someone her age, and they didn't make the logical leap between the Elemental and actual Summoning since it was such a rare skill for anyone to know.

The promise of a good recruit brought the Crushing Mountain Sect's Elder to the camp before dinner was even made. The Immortal had flown in at Maximum speed, concerned that someone else would claim the potential Core Disciple before he could arrive.

It was the same big man Cain had made the axe for, and he landed with a solid thud between Cain and the test Disciple, stopping to shake Cain's hand before looking over the boy.

"Interesting. You won't find a bloodline like this very often. I owe you one for finding him and referring him to us. Boy, will you join the Crushing Mountain Sect? We are the finest purveyors of Physical strength in the region, and you will be perfect for our ranks."

"I would be honored, Immortal Elder." The boy replied with happy tears in his eyes.

"Now, we eat. Would you care to join us for a meal, Elder? Our young chef has real skills." Cain offered, pointing to where Luna was cooking a fruit puree to insert into her dessert of the day.

"It would be right rude of me to steal a Disciple and flee. I thank you for your hospitality." The big man laughed, then took a good whiff of the wind blowing over from the kitchen.

"Hey, is that Spirit Boar you're roasting? From the lowland valley?"

Jen leaned over to Cain as the Elder spoke. "This guy is good. He can even guess where the animal was from just by the smell of it roasting."

"Not a bad skill for anyone to have. I bet it's almost impossible to poison someone with that skill, and he would be able to identify potions by just opening the cap." Solara added, eyeing the big man in appreciation of his sense of smell.

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

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Once the dinner was finished, everyone settled in for the evening, with the Elders drinking and sharing stories while the Disciples caught up on much-needed sleep in preparation for a long journey the next day.

The Crushing Mountain Elder had agreed to escort the rest of the failed applicants to the city in exchange for the information that led him to such a perfect new Disciple for his own sect, while the two Divine Realm Cultivators were too busy making snide comments at each other to sleep anytime soon.

According to the younger Elders, they had a falling out over a thousand years ago and split apart their former Sect to set up two encampments across the pass from each other.

"So, it's an extended lover's spat?" Luna whispered to Penny, making the Lycan laugh.

"Not quite, at least, I don't think so. We will explain when you're older."

"The answer is always later or when I'm older. I tell you, this is discrimination. I need juicy details." Luna replied indignantly.

"Enough gossiping, you two. Get some sleep. We will be heading out first thing in the morning toward the Dragon Peak." Cain called back to where they were sitting.

"Can you tell Penny to sleep in wolf form? She's so much softer that way." Luna pouted, already upset that she couldn't get her gossip fix.

"Discuss that with Penny. It's her transformation ability."

Luna just grumbled under her breath and headed into the tent, where she found Solara sleeping alone and pulled her into a tight embrace before almost immediately drifting off to sleep.

"They're so precious when they're young. I recall my own when they were that age. All they wanted to do was fight with each other over everything. Even a different shape of steak for dinner would cause a huge blowout about who got the bigger portion." The Crushing Mountain Elder informed them with a nostalgic tone.

"Oh, I know the feeling. I used to work at an orphanage before joining the Foot Clan, and the children would argue over everything and do their best to pretend to be grown up. They would argue every night about bedtime, but the moment they were in bed, they were out like a light, exhausted." One of the younger Elders laughed.

"Yeah, that happens a lot. But my Luna is a cuddler, so she doesn't sleep unless there is someone else there to hold on to. Part of the living on the road, I suppose, but I am sure it drives some of my other Disciples insane." Cain agreed.

"I can't blame her, though. If I had a four-meter-tall wolf available, I would cuddle it every night as well." The Crushing Mountain Elder laughed, making Penny roll her eyes at him.

The Immortal noticed her look and decided to explain. "I raise guard dogs for the Sect of the Pyrenees variety, and they make excellent pillows. They're big dogs, but four meters tall is a lot of furs to keep a fellow warm in the mountains."

"I suppose that makes sense. The colder it gets, the more comfortable it is to sleep in wolf form instead of human or Lycan. That skill was a really useful one to learn." Penny agreed.

Eventually, they all turned in for the evening, leaving the younger Elders of the two sects to keep guard for the night. The Divine Elders could have returned home in a few

minutes, but camping gave them one last chance for interaction before Cain and his crew left in the morning.

"If you happen to be by here again, please do stop in. Your ability to work with Disciples is truly incredible, and it has opened our eyes to just how rigid our teaching structure has become.

Once upon a time, we strived for nothing more than to become strong, no matter how we accomplished it. But at some point, we started focusing on our legacy instead and limiting the skills that we were passing on to the ones that we ourselves had learned and used." The Foot Clan leader informed them while munching on one of Cain's specialty roast pork and egg breakfast burritos.

"The Crushing Mountain will welcome you as well. We owe you for this fine Disciple, and we hope that you can stop by sometime and help guide a few of our other youngsters toward the path of true power." The massive Elder declared.

"I will stop in at as many places as I can the next time I come through this region. I can't guarantee where my travels will take me next, though, as I am hoping to meet with the Ancient Dragon, as I have been advised that they might have information that will help me ascend." Cain explained to the group.

"Brave and adventurous. We won't keep you then, but I would advise that you remain close to the ground during the next week of travel. The monsters in the sky aren't as benevolent as the Dragons are, and a group like yours will draw them from many miles around." the Thunder Gods' Elder suggested.

"We will keep that in mind. The Disciples need some more practice fighting monsters as well, so hopefully, the few that we meet on the ground will be enough to keep them occupied and to help hone their skills."

"That shouldn't be an issue. Once you are past this point, the mountains are truly wild, and Spirit Beasts run rampant. We cull the strongest in the Sect territory to keep the Disciples safe, but we don't do the same out here, so you may run into something stronger as well." The Foot Clan's leader advised.

"That's what we are hoping for. A solitary Immortal Beast would be excellent training for the Disciples, and it would help hone their coordination the way that an easier fight wouldn't."

The girls all gave Cain a dirty look at that suggestion. Easy fights are good fights, they didn't want to get beat up by some angry Immortal Monster, but if they happened to come across one, there really wasn't anything that they could do about it.

With the camp packed up and the other Cultivators departed, Cain led his band of misfits toward the Dragon Peak. The road didn't go anywhere near there, so they were

going to walk through the woods following a river that was supposed to run down from the lake at the base of the mountain they were looking for.

They did their best not to make too much noise, intending to make it as far as they could without indulging Cain's desire to see them fight some random monster that they came across, but their plan was doomed to failure from the start.

Every beast, both magical and mundane, needs to drink, and they were walking beside the only water source for dozens of kilometers.

They had barely made it until noon before a small group of wild boars could be heard along the riverbank in front of them, fighting amongst themselves.

"This is the perfect opportunity to restock with fresh meat. I know you all like the pork, so head up ahead and get us some good stuff. I will be right behind you in case something goes wrong." Cain whispered to his Disciples before picking up Solara and pulling his flying sword from his inventory.

If they watched from the ground, the low-level alchemist would be in trouble, but from further up by the tree branches, they would be much safer unless the Pigs had some sort of ranged attack.

"Since we can't avoid this, I will draw their attention. Penny and Tena take my flanks, and Luna can summon reinforcements behind them. Once they're gathered together, Sabbath can take them out, and we can call it a day." Jen suggested.

"Less fire, more stabbing. I want meat for lunches. You guys help gather them up, and the summons will cut them down." Luna countered.

"Fine, but only because we like your cooking." Tena agreed and activated a skill that would let her walk on water for a short time, so she could take the left flank without splashing through the river.

The attack was swift and brutal. Luna summoned both a half dozen copies of carnage and a dozen of Oath Breaker to ensure that the group of wild boars was taken down efficiently, while the other three melee Disciples charged and then went to full defense after they caught the beasts' attention.

It was all over in under a minute, and Jen only had to cast a few defensive barriers to avoid having anyone take damage.

"Excellent job of the kills, and good experience rewards as well. Solara will thank you once she recovers from the notifications. Store the meat once Carnage finishes with the butchering, and let's get a move on before the blood draws even more attention from the monsters in the area." Cain congratulated them.

"And no slacking." Luna reminded Carnage, who had visibly slowed his work at the promise that there were more monsters in the area.

"Fine, but call me again soon." The big red demon complained, flapping his wings against the trees to rustle the branches in annoyance at not getting to fight anymore.

"You know we will. There is a lot of forest for us to cover between here and the Dragon Peaks, and the monsters will only get stronger as we get further from civilization." Cain assured him, then extended his senses to make sure that nothing was sneaking up on them.

The coast was clear, and they were back underway in minutes, jogging toward the sound of a waterfall, where their map said that they could safely set up camp for an evening, as a local Sect had set up an outpost there to keep track of the monster population.

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

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After three days of travel through the woods and hunting the beasts that they found at the river, a majestic mountain on the far side of a crystal clear lake finally came into view.

According to their map, that should be the Dragon Peak, which was supposed to be an active volcano, but thanks to the presence of the dragons, it had been allowed to peacefully vent down the far side and had never fully erupted.

From the far side of the lake, it felt like nothing was out of the ordinary, but as they walked, it became clear that the entire region was under the effects of the volcano. The temperature increased with every kilometer that they crossed, turning the mountain forest into a tropical jungle over the course of an hour.

Even the temperature of the lake beside them was increasing as they made their way down its length, and Cain gave a moment of thanks that they did not come here in the peak of summer when even the far side of the valley would have been warm, making the base of the mountain nearly intolerable for humans.

The roars of Dragons could be heard from inside the mountain, but none were visible in the sky overhead, and they hadn't seen any on their way up either. The absence was beginning to spook Jen, who knew a bit more about the local Dragons than most.

"I swear, something must have happened. Unless we came during the mating season, which only happens every ten years, there should be Dragons everywhere in this valley. Notice how there are no large animals? They eat them all if they venture too close. Not seeing Dragons while you can see the Dragon Peak is not normal." She insisted.

"Well, there are definitely dragons in the mountain. Even I can hear them. What does mating season sound like? These ones are just roaring at random like they're talking to each other, but I don't speak dragon. Shouldn't there be some scale-on-scale slapping, maybe grunts of exertion if it's the mating season?" Luna asked.

"There is something wrong with your brain. Who taught you those things, anyhow? Plus, what do scale-on-scale noises even sound like?" Penny reprimanded the youngest Disciple while glaring at Cain.

"Don't look at me like that. I didn't teach her."

Whatever was happening inside changed sounds a few minutes later, and a large Red Dragon flew out of a hole near the top of the peak, disappearing into the clouds and out of sight in seconds.

"Wow, that is some speed. I didn't know that anything that large could move so fast." Sabbath whispered as if afraid that the dragons would hear her.

"They're surprisingly agile for their size. Now, should we head up to see them, or should we wait here and introduce ourselves when they finally notice us?" Cain replied.

"I vote that we don't disturb the dragons while they're in the middle of an argument." Tena voted.

"She's got a point. If they are already in a bad mood, you won't be able to do whatever it is that you were hoping to do here at a mountain infested with angry dragons." Jen agreed.

"You know what? I'm just going to fly up and wait for them to notice us. It shouldn't take long." Cain called, then took out his flying sword and lifted himself up a hundred meters in the air, and sat down to wait to be noticed.

It didn't take long before a large head poked out of the mountain, having sensed a presence in the air that wasn't a food product, and a bronze dragon flew over to see what the intruder wanted.

"Go away. We're busy." The dragon roared at Cain when he got to a kilometer away.

"I was hoping to meet with the Ancient Dragon. The Laughing God sent me." Cain replied, hoping that name recognition would at least get them in the door.

"In that case, we're really busy. Someone stole an egg, and we don't have time for the Laughing God and his shenanigans." The dragon replied.

"What if I help you look for it? Have there been any visitors that weren't dragons?" Cain asked.

"Nobody in their right mind comes here. We haven't had visitors in years."

"I brought a Dragon Monk and some interesting things with me." Cain tried.

"A Dragon Monk? One of those unarmed weirdos who make their energy attacks look like Dragons? I admit, they're entertaining, but we're busy."

"I can Rune Craft and repair maimed and deformed hatchlings." Cain offered.

"You, a tiny human, think you can fix deformities in a mighty dragon hatchling?" The Bronze Dragon sneered.

"Hey, don't judge me. This appearance is just a disguise. You have Divine Realm Dragons, right? Surely you know what the Ancients are."

"A Horror from the Old World? Now that you mention it, your aura is a bit strange for a human. Transform back and let me see the truth. The wards around the mountain will cancel all charms and spells anyhow." The Dragon demanded.

Cain had been worried that they would ask that. His Disciples hadn't seen anything like this before, but he transformed back anyhow, growing to his full twenty-meter-tall tentacled glory.

He was far too large to use a flying sword now, so he stored it in his inventory and flapped his wings to hover before waving his tentacle in greeting to the Mythic Quality dragon in front of him.

"So you are, and a handsome one for your species. You must have been a real lady's man before you left home." The Dragon chuckled, and Cain wasn't sure if he was being insulted.

"My wife is currently pregnant, and a minor mishap left me on this plane without the means to get home," Cain explained.

"Fine, come in, and bring your pets, but if they bite or cause a fuss, we will kick them out."

Cain flew down to land beside the Disciples and transformed back into his human appearance, giving the girls the thumbs up.

"They say that we can come in, but everyone has to behave. Someone stole an egg from them, and they're in crisis mode at the moment."

"That's all well and good, but what the heck was that? What sort of monster did you turn into?" Penny asked.

"Oh, that form is called an Ancient. They're Mana Elementals who gained a solid form and independence during the creation of a Mortal Plane." Cain explained.

"The question was rhetorical. How do you even know what those things are? Do you know what the Gods would do if they saw one here?" She replied.

"Yeah, I heard they have a grudge going on. But the Dragons don't, so we should be fine, at least for now. But don't keep them waiting. It's time for us to fly in."

There was nothing they could say to that. All the Disciples could do was follow Cain into the Dragon Peak and hope that he knew what he was doing, or they would likely all end up dead without anyone around to resurrect them.

The volcano was unlike anything that the Disciples had ever seen before. Carved into the replica of an ancient Temple but sized for even hundred-meter-long dragons to easily navigate its corridors, the interior had been transformed into pure white Jadeite, gleaming in the light of thousands of magical torches set into sconces in the walls.

Every so often, there was a side corridor or a large room that was being used as a weyr by one of the local residents, but the real action was deep below the ground, where the Dragons had carved an enormous citadel for themselves.

Unlike the upper levels, the stone was in the various colors of the dragons' scales, showing that the regions were separated by Clans, with the central common areas in jet black and marked by pools of lava and thousands of dragons, mostly transformed into Dragonkin forms to save space, were gathered in a public forum to discuss their issue.

The one leading the argument was a black dragon, over a thousand meters long, but curled up around a Nest at the edge of the sector dedicated to her clan, with only her head and neck extending into the common area to join the argument.

"We have checked, Mistress Black. Our magic says that none have entered your nest. We have no way of finding the culprit." One of the dragons was speaking in a pleading voice.

"She must be found. She will grow up into a mighty High Priestess. The fates have decided it. Find the one that stole my egg." The enormous dragon roared, sending a wave of Divine Power rippling through the area.

"And someone tell me who let humans in here right now? There had better be a good reason, or I am going to eat you."

Cain transformed back into his natural Ancient form and bowed politely to the Dragon. "Mistress Black, I have brought my Daughter and my Disciples here for inspiration. We would like to help you if we can. I have an excellent sense for the traces of magic, as I am sure you know."

"Intriguing. But you're not coming near my nest."

"I might not have to. If they used a spell to open a portal in and out, I could detect the traces from a distance, and if they were using a skill like mine that actually transforms the body, I should be able to find them as well. If they're still hiding in the mountain."

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"Pretending to be a dragon? An Imposter in our mountain? If there is, do not kill them. I will do much, much worse to them." The irate black dragon Matriarch demanded.

"Just give me a bit of time. I will have to see them before I will know, and it won't be easy to get a good look at all the dragons here in the mountain." Cain agreed.

"Then it's decided. Nobody leaves. Come to the Ancient and make your mark on this scroll. Only once every dragon in the mountain has the enchantment will I allow anyone to exit." The Ancient Black Dragon declared.

A piece of black parchment appeared in front of Cain, completely blank, but with a set of runes at the top that Cain recognized as the Dragon version of a percentage completion indicator. The mark would fade with every mark and only vanish when every living being in the area had marked the parchment.

"Ladies, step up and mark the scroll. Just put your hand on it so that the Matriarch can tell who you are and that you don't have their stolen property." Cain instructed his Disciples.

They had just arrived, so it clearly wasn't them, but that didn't matter to the enchantment. Everyone had to be inspected, and if they came close while carrying the egg or had handled it at any point, the Matriarch would know.

Dragons were bound to their offspring with a mental link. The fact that someone had actually managed to steal it at all was shocking, and the moment that it hatched, she would be able to find her child again, so Cain wasn't sure what the end goal was if there was one at all.

It was possible that someone simply bore a grudge and wanted to take the egg and hide it to upset her.

One after another, the girls stepped up and marked the scroll, with their full names and species appearing on the parchment.

When Luna placed her hand on it, the gigantic head of the Black Dragon snaked forward to get a better look, verifying for herself what she had seen when the girl touched the scroll.

"This one, she is your daughter, isn't she? Such a thing shouldn't exist if it weren't for one of you." The Dragon asked, with a hint of mischief in her voice.

"She is. Her mother is back on the Mortal Plane world that the Creators made so long ago." Cain agreed.

"Don't speak their true names here. The Human Gods have put a taboo on them, and it will draw their attention. They are still holding a grudge over their failure to take a Mortal Realm world." She informed Cain.

"Noted. That's the last thing I need. We just need to finish up the quests and find a way back to the Ancient home, so I can meet the rest of my children." Cain agreed.

"Is the quest to merge with that Dragon Core?" She asked.

"Yeah, that's the quest. I am getting there. It just takes experience and time."

"If you find the thief or my egg, I will fix it for you. Even after you merge with it, that Core is still damaged." She decided.

Just Merging with it would be enough to bring Cain into the Immortal Realm, so if it was still damaged, he should be incredibly powerful once it was fixed. That would make it much easier to find a way to open a portal between Realms.

Tena was watching the interaction between the three, wondering how the Dragon knew that Luna was Cain's daughter with just a glance when she heard a group of dragons giggling and felt the eyes on her back.

"Is there something stuck to me? My sisters often play pranks." She asked the juvenile dragons.

"No, it's just that we never saw a Dragon Monk before. Do you worship Dragons, so you wanted to imbue your skills with our power? Or what?" The leader of the small group asked.

"It just seemed like the best way." Tena shrugged, not wanting to deal with a bunch of stuck-up Draconic schoolgirls.

She had seen enough of their types of personalities inside the Sects to know what they were up to, and she was in no mood to get into it with them, at least not here inside a mountain full of Dragons.

"Children, behave. The Human is right. It is the best way, even if they only know a pale imitation of what we do. What is your name, human? Since we are all locked in here until the scoundrel who offended the Divine Black Mistress is found, perhaps you would like to learn a few new things?" A dragon in the form of an old man with a long golden beard and bald head suggested.

"It is an honor to learn from an Elder. I am the only one following this path in our group, and I am a bit stuck on my path forward." Tena replied.

"Well, the Golden Dragons can cure that. There is nothing that we cannot do is the mightiest and noblest of Dragons." The man insisted.

"Stuck up old codger." One of the youths whispered under her breath, only to get a blast of golden fire in the face for her trouble.

"I am old, not deaf. You young punks would do well to remember it." He replied, then led Tena away by the hand.

One after another, the Dragons signed the sheet, marking their presence with a charm that only the Black Dragon Matriarch could sense, but the more that signed it, the happier she was becoming.

"Penny, you have a tracking spell to find specific objects, right? Can you use it on the other eggs in the nest and see if you get any sense of another one here in the mountain? There is a chance that they only hid their traces from Dragon Magic." Cain suggested to the druid, who was the only one of the disciples other than Luna, if she merged with a tracker, that could do it.

Penny cast the spell, then frowned. "It only has a range of a hundred meters. That doesn't even take me across the room."

Well, that was unfortunate.

"Then stand here next to me. If anyone has it hidden, you might be able to tell."

The chances were very slim, but it made the Black Dragon happy, so Cain was willing to go with it for as long as necessary.

It seemed more likely that whoever it was had either already left or they would be the one trying to avoid coming in to be marked on the list now that so many measures to find the egg had been taken.

It took them four hours to mark down everyone in the room, and the result was as Cain had expected. They were all dragons, and none of them had any traces of the egg on them.

Once they were finished, the Black Dragons in the mountain started leading the others inside to be checked. They were all equals inside the mountain, and the dragon's personal spaces were somewhat sacred to each other, but for an incident this large, they were willing to cooperate. At the very least, their cooperation meant that the Divine Black Dragon wouldn't make life unnecessarily hard on them.

She had already cast a barrier over the mountain so they couldn't leave, and all of the livestock were outside, leaving them to eat stored meals. That wouldn't be acceptable to them for long.

Just after the first room was cleared, the old Golden Dragon returned with Tena in tow to make his mark before returning with her to his study. Tena didn't seem to be in any distress, so Cain just waved goodbye as they left and let her find her own inspiration for her next Class Advancement.

"That Golden Dragon isn't a Dragon." Cain pointed out, indicating the sheet, where it clearly said "Chronomos, Deity" at his place in the list.

"Oh, we all know. But he has been masquerading as a Golden Dragon for so long that nobody minds." The Matriarch informed him, accompanied by the agreement of the next few dragons in line, all transformed into either whelps or humanoids, so they could line up more effectively.

She clearly trusted the old man, so Cain would as well. Learning from a Dragon was great. Learning from a fully-fledged Deity would be even better for Tena.

The next dragon in line tapped the sheet, and Cain smiled down at her humanoid form with pure white scales.

"What's so funny?" She asked.

"A memory. I have an Opal Prismatic Dragon as a friend at home, and she is obsessed with sweet things. The peanut butter on your cheek reminded me of her." Cain replied.

The dragon swiped her cheek clean in horror, realizing that he wasn't lying, then shrugged. "Peanut butter is good. Possibly the best thing that humans have come up with."

"Talk to Luna when you get a chance. She also loves sweet things, and I think she might be able to get you some new peanut butter snack recipes." Cain recommended.

"Your daughter? I will find her. I think she was headed for one of the restaurants." The dragon agreed, pointing toward a building at the edge of the central area.

"Remind her not to explore out too far. She is an inquisitive one, and she tends to wander off if there are interesting things." Cain requested, making the dragon laugh as she walked away.

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

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"You don't seem too concerned that your youngling is out of your sight." The Matriarch pointed out.

"It's not like she's outside of my sensory range, and she is relatively safe here. Everyone is on edge right now, and attacking a stranger would be very suspicious and draw attention that nobody wants when a Divine Dragon is looking for someone who would do something as low as stealing an egg." Cain replied.

"Not a bad analysis, but Dragons are carnivores."

"So are Lamia Progenitors. Even if she's in a human form, she's not quite as helpless as she looks. Maybe as naive, but not as helpless."

"You are an odd one. Hopefully, that is enough to find my missing daughter. I wasn't even gone for long, I only went hunting for a few hours, and I came back to a missing egg." She explained.

"So they didn't need to sneak past your senses, only the Dragons who guarded your nest. I wish I could check for traces of Magic, but with you being in the nest for so long, I don't think I would be able to pick out anything. Your magic has soaked into everything." Cain sighed.

"I can see the flows and traces of magic as well, and I didn't detect anything in the nest. I think they took it out before they did anything, but the question is how they did it without any of the other dragons noticing.

They might not come too close to the nest, but sneaking past them should be nearly impossible." The Matriarch insisted.

Not only that, but she had the power to turn half the world upside down while she searched for her missing daughter. Whoever would take something like that had to have some sort of a plan. The Matriarch would have sensed if the hatchling inside the egg was dead, so it probably hadn't been harmed yet, or she was too far away from it to sense the danger.

Cain could only assume that Dragons put some serious wards on their eggs since they had the power to spare, and they defended their homes so stringently. If it was taken away anyhow, then whoever did it wasn't weak. Unless it was an oversight or a loophole, and the egg was only guarded against creatures that could logically pose a threat to it.

"Do any other creatures live here? Any pets, livestock, or pests?" Cain asked.

"We wouldn't allow pests into our den except for the rare human who offered enough to intrigue us. But we do have some pets on the lower levels. Lava cats love the heat, and they feel good on the scales."

"I will send a Summoned creature down there to check it out while we sign up the rest of the Dragons in the mountain," Cain suggested.

"Just keep in mind where you are."

Cain focused for a second and summoned Kone, then instructed her to call for Su in her natural form. The Spirit Folk girl happily hopped on the Forest Dragon before they both activated a series of searching spells to detect everything resembling an egg within the mountain.

"How many eggs are supposed to be in the nest right now, Divine One?" Su asked, speaking Draconic.

"Seven. One is missing, and when it is returned, there should be eight." The Matriarch replied.

"Yes, that is what my spells detected as well. I just had to make sure that your wards weren't hiding too much from me, given the power difference. My partner is very good at tracking as well, so if it is here, we will find it. If not, we will bring you back a count of every other clutch we find, so you can check them against the records to see if it is disguised as someone else's hatchling." Su informed her.

The Forest Dragon took off toward the lower levels, hoping that the Egg would be found somewhere safe, and not eaten by the Lava Cats.

They probably couldn't even if they tried, but Cain had heard of stranger things in his time, and it was possible that something was disguised as one of the Dragons' pets. Su and Kone would be able to see if that was the case by checking everything's status with their interface, the same way that Cain was doing right now.

Cain was intently searching the room when Luna came running over with the Opal Prismatic Dragon right behind her. His first thought was that there was an emergency, but the happy look on her face said that it was not a dangerous sort of urgent matter.

"Can I have a pet? Just one? I swear it is cute and nearly as cuddly as Penny." She begged as she ran up to him.

"A pet what?" Cain asked suspiciously.

"I don't know, but it's like twice my length and shaggy, and it glows a little bit, and it is warm and likes to cuddle," She replied.

"Does it have really big pleading eyes, wings, and four legs?"

"Yes, exactly like that. It is adorable, and I love it, and I will treat it really well." She insisted while her follower wiped tears of mirth from her eyes.

"Why is everyone laughing?" Luna asked, looking around the room, where all the dragons were in the same state, with only a few managing to hide their amusement.

"That is a baby Swamp Dragon. You can't keep it, it lives here, and it is intelligent. It just can't speak human languages yet, and you don't speak Dragon." Cain explained.

"I can't keep it?" Luna verified.

"You can't. But if you talk to its parents, you might be able to play with it for a while during our visit."

"Not a bad idea. Thanks, Dad. See you in a bit. There are cookies in the oven."

With that, she was gone again, and the young Dragon with a sweet tooth followed her back to wherever they had been baking cookies.

"You are raising a very strange daughter, Ancient Cain. But she seems well-liked here. The Dragons don't see much excitement in their long lives, but everything is so new to her." The next man in line, a Green Dragon of Legendary Quality, laughed.

"She has a very easy time making friends. The problem is convincing her that they can't all come with us and that we can't spend our whole lives making snacks somewhere. If she had her choice, she would just sit in a kitchen and eat all day, every day."

"Lamia and Dragons are both like that when they are young. All they think about is food and friendship so that they aren't alone and they grow up as fast as possible. The only difference is that the Lamia only usually keep friends of other species since they view their own kind as competition." The dragon agreed.

"You seem quite familiar with them," Cain asked.

"I spent some time in the Demon Realms as a botanist. The Lamia are very friendly sorts, as I'm sure you know." He replied with a wink.

Oh yes, Cain knew that very well.

"If you gentlemen of culture are finished, you are holding up the line." The next dragon complained while the Green Dragon stepped to the side, making way for others to mark the scroll.

"Sorry about that. Please, step forward, and we will get everyone marked down so that the Matriarch can be assured that her neighbors don't harbor ill intentions." Cain replied, holding out the scroll for the Dragon.

The line started to move smoothly again, and every Dragon that came up seemed to be exactly what they claimed to be, and the Black Dragon didn't sense any presence of her egg on them, and the detection spells that Penny was using didn't show anything out of the ordinary at all.

Late that evening, the line drew short, but the rune still indicated that there were quite a few Dragons yet to be scanned.

"Are some of the others sleeping? The ones who are here don't seem to be enough to complete the count." Cain informed the Black Dragon.

"Likely. Getting everyone together on the same day is very difficult, especially with the older Dragons, since they like to sleep for years at a time to wait for interesting things to happen or enough changes to occur that it is worth going out into the outside world again." The Ancient Dragon explained.

That could pose a problem for their count, but if Cain went to the ones who didn't come on their own, he could record them even while they were sleeping. He would just have to rely on his own group's spells to detect any signs of the egg.

"It looks like my Disciples are getting sleepy. Is there somewhere that we can stay for the evening? An empty room or even a clear spot to set up our tent is fine." Cain asked.

"We have space for visitors. It is over to your right, by the building where your Disciple is training with the Golden Dragon. Humans might want something softer though since dragons prefer to sleep on much harder surfaces." She offered.

"That won't be a problem. I have a fine collection of sleeping cushions with me. Penny, will you pick up Luna and bring her with us? We can complete the work in the morning."

"Just leave the scroll with me. I will record any who still want to get their names down tonight." The Matriarch offered, but the Dragons were quickly backing away, unwilling to face her scrutiny directly. Dealing with Cain while she watched in the background was much less stressful, and without him as a buffer, the full weight of her aura and anger would fall on the ones coming to sign their names.

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

- Chapter 667 667 A Lead

Chapter 667 667 A Lead

Early the next morning, the clone of Kone that Cain had summoned reported that she had found signs of a Dragon down a vent tunnel in the mountain that was far too small for any grown dragon to have fit through. Even with Su transformed into a petite Dryad, and Kone's own diminutive size, she was having problems fitting through some of the tighter sections of the tunnel, but her detection spell still showed that there was a Dragon of some sort up ahead.

"I will be right there. I can transform into something even smaller, and I will merge with you until we are through the tight spots, then let you lead the way again." Cain decided before sneaking out of the bedroom without waking the others.

If they were up, they would want to come along, and that would totally defeat the purpose, as well as requiring him to cast multiple transformation spells so that they all would fit through the tunnel.

When Cain arrived at the spot where he sensed his Summons, he almost missed the entrance to the side tunnel. The magma vent overhung the opening and was only visible from below, looking like a simple outcrop from the side or above.

It was surprising that they found it at all, but both of them had very good senses, so they might have detected the gentle breeze that Cain could feel coming from the tunnel. It

smelled of fresh air and plants, so either it led up to the Caldera of the ancient volcano or it led outside of the mountain entirely.

If it led outside, they could be in for a long hunt, but Kone's senses said that there was still a Dragon somewhere nearby.

The dynamic duo was waiting for him in a small chamber, with an exit less than thirty centimeters across, which led into a twisting tunnel, which they had found impassible with their body size.

"Alright, ladies. I will pull you into a Merger but keep your detection spell active. Hopefully, we can find the egg that we are looking for." Cain told them before transforming into a copy of Luna in her natural Lamia Progenitor form.

Her body was as slender as his arm, and she was three meters long, making the navigation of a tunnel a simple matter for the snakelike body.

Cain rapidly slithered through the tunnels, keeping low and following both the tracking spell that said there was a dragon up ahead and the Reptilian sense for vibrations which told him that there was something moving less than fifty meters away in the direction that he was traveling.

When he reached the end of the tunnel, Cain found that a simple alarm barrier blocked the exit. It wouldn't stop him from advancing, but it would let anyone up ahead know that he was here. That might be bad news for the egg if it was in their possession, so Cain took the time to use Record Keeper's [Dispel] skill to remove the alarm before carefully sneaking into the darkened room.

A group of six human Cultivators was gathered around the smoldering remains of a fire, sleeping through the last of the evening, while a shimmering magical barrier blocked the far end of the chamber, where Cain could see the trees of a tropical forest blowing in the breeze.

The Ancient Dragon must have locked them in here when she put the barrier over the mountain, and it was only a coincidence that there was another way into the chamber from the back. Unless they could transform themselves, there was no way that they had come into the Chamber from the same direction that Cain had. Even as what was basically a snake with arms, he had found many of the sections to be a tight squeeze.

Cain focused on his Magic Sense, trying to spot the egg, which should be glowing with magical energy, but found only the humans and their belongings.

But after a closer inspection, there was an open scroll on the ground near one of them, and it gave off the sensation of a Dragon's presence, according to the Tracking Spell.

A careful application of the [Telekenesis] spell brought the scroll to his hands, and Cain found the prize. There were at least a dozen dragon eggs hidden inside the magical item, just waiting for someone to take them out.

It couldn't be stored in his inventory with living creatures in it, so Cain held it out in front of him and retreated from the chamber, back down the narrow tunnels until he was fifty meters away again, in the small chamber where he first transformed.

From here on, it would be easier to move, so Cain released Kone and Su to lead the way and scout for dangers while he put up an Arcane Barrier on the tunnel and followed behind them.

He would know if the barrier was attacked, but he wasn't expecting that to happen just yet. The humans were still asleep, including their watchman, so it would take some time before they realized that they had been robbed and begin hunting for their treasures.

They were back in the main chamber and almost ready to transform back into their natural forms when suddenly a Portal opened on Cain's left, smelling like the forest outside the mountain. Without hesitation, Cain thrust his spear into the portal, getting a pained scream back in response before the portal closed again.

"Run for the Ancient Dragon," Cain instructed Kone and transformed back into his Ancient form, flying as fast as he could with the scroll tucked under his armor.

They had made it up to the next level when Cain sensed another portal opening, back at the exact same spot where they had attacked the last one. The Cultivators must have marked it as a safe spot and could only portal to that location without risking ending up inside a rock face or a Dragon's nest.

When they made it to the main floor, they met with a group of Dragons flying their way in combat formation, ready to attack any intruders that they found.

"There are humans two levels down. They came in through a portal next to a hidden magma vent. One that overhangs the opening and has a narrow tunnel that leads outside the mountain." Cain told them, trying his best to describe the location.

"We know the one. Stay near the Matriarch until we have found the intruders." The patrol leader informed them without slowing their flight through the caverns.

When those humans were found, they were going to have a very, very bad day.

Cain flew up to the Matriarch, who was holding the scroll of names and glaring around the room, trying to get dragons to come forward to sign the sheet. The only ones brave enough to come near her at this point were dragons whose names had been recorded, so she wasn't getting far, and it was not helping her mood at all.

"Matriarch, we recovered a scroll full of Dragon Eggs from a group of humans hidden in a cave on the side of the mountain. Take a look and tell me if this is what you were looking for." Cain requested, handing over the scroll to the enormous Dragon.

One by one, she carefully pulled the eggs out of the scroll and placed them around the edge of her nest, but when it was finished, she only frowned and searched it over and over, not finding what she was looking for.

"Most of these were stolen from the nests of younger Dragons here in the mountain and some from nests in the forest outside, but none of them is mine." She sighed, then raised her voice to address every Dragon she could.

"Hear this. Humans have broken into our sacred mountain and stolen Eggs from our nests. The Ancient Cain has recovered fifteen stolen eggs, but mine was not among them. I will present a precious treasure to anyone who brings me a human from the mountain or the surrounding forest alive. I want my Egg found, and I will not let a single one of these thieves escape."

Her announcement brought a flurry of wings as the Dragons took flight, incensed that the humans would dare to steal their young from right under them, as well as all of Cain's disciples.

"How is your mind reading, Matriarch? I can read all of a person's thoughts, so if I lead them through questions, I can find out everything that they know about a topic quite easily." Cain suggested.

"I prefer to simply torture them until they tell me what I want to hear." The Black Dragon responded with a cruel chuckle.

Not many creatures would last a single hour if she were determined to make them talk. Black Dragons served the Goddess of Death, and she could torture their very souls if they refused to tell her what she wanted to know.

"You have humans in your group, and the Dragons are angry. It is best that you all stay right here so that you aren't mistaken for someone else and brought back for questioning." She decided, then curled back up on her nest and looked at the collection of eggs that Cain had brought back.

She was mentally contacting all of the dragons whose nests had been raided, including some who had been napping and hadn't even realized that an egg was missing yet. That concerned the Matriarch more than anything else. If the humans had gotten eggs out of a nest while the Mother was sleeping on top of them, they were very good at what they did.

They had better be just as good at fighting, though, or it wouldn't save them today. Not when the Dragons knew where their camp was and where they had entered the mountain.

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

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[Boss, you need to come down here. There is a ward that doesn't feel like Dragons, and I can't get through it.] Su mentally linked Cain early the next morning.

[I'm on my way. Tell me about where you found it.] Cain requested as he flew through the tunnels in his smaller Ancient form, following the same path that Su and Kone had taken to search the lower levels.

It led him to a large lava lake, where Cain noticed that there were some injured Lava Cats. That didn't seem right, they didn't fight among themselves that seriously, and there weren't any predators in the tunnels that would try to kill them.

Su would have mentioned it if they had attacked her, so something abnormal had happened here.

Cain slowed his approach and took a deep breath, trying to sense anything out of the normal.

Human blood. He could smell humans in the room, and not all of the blood belonged to the cats.

[Follow the ridge behind the lava waterfall, then squeeze through the tunnel. It was tight for Su, but she's bigger than you are.] Kone instructed as Cain searched the room for more signs.

Off along one wall, Cain sensed magic. An Earth Spell had hit the wall here, and the residual energy was lingering on the stones. There was definitely a battle between the Lava Cats and the humans here.

Cain followed the path behind the rock, transforming into Luna's Lamia form again after he singed his wing on the waterfall. It didn't do much damage to him, but it was incredibly painful.

"I'm here. What did you find?" He asked when he found Kone standing in front of a blank wall.

"This wall is a ward, and it's stronger than Immortal Rank, or I could have broken through it. Neither of us can tell what's on the other side, but nothing has come out, and there are no fluctuations of Magic in use." Kone informed him.

Cain explored the area with his Magic Sense and found that the ward was a bubble buried in the rock, and there was no tunnel on the other side. It seemed that whoever set the ward had retreated here to hide and recover after a nasty battle. The question was, who was it? If they really were at the Demigod Rank or higher, the Lava Cats wouldn't be a threat, even if they had their powers sealed. Or perhaps they had been weakened or crippled by an attack, leaving them vulnerable.

"Keep searching the area. I found traces of Earth magic on one wall as well, and human blood. Search everything in this region twice and tell me what you come up with." Cain instructed, then began focusing on the ward, trying to use Spell Crafting to try to unravel it the same way that he did with the Vortexes on the Southern Continent.

In theory, he could unravel the ward enough to break it, but it was very powerful, and finding a starting point was difficult since it was cast from inside.

Finally, he found a weak point and tore the weave enough to begin unraveling it near the middle of the opening in front of him. It took two hours of hard work to open it enough that he could sneak through with Luna's slender body, but he didn't sense anything inside.

Did the caster recover enough to portal out? That thought worried Cain quite a bit. If a Divine Realm human had escaped with the Black Dragon's egg, this world was in for a very bad time.

[I have the answers you needed. There was a large battle here in the chamber outside, but it was so spread out that it was hard to determine what happened. I found some Lava Cats that were here, though. The humans fought each other, and the lone survivor hid behind the waterfall where they couldn't find him.]

[If there was a huge battle, where are the rest of the traces?] Cain asked.

[Apparently, humans are tasty, and they licked up most of the blood after they ate the bodies, bones, and all.] Kone informed him.

That explained why there was so little to find except scattered traces of magic.

Cain cautiously slid through the chambers inside the ward until he found what he was looking for. A Divine Realm Human, on the verge of death, held in stasis with some sort of talisman and his power fluctuating.

The solution was both simple and obvious. Cain removed a Scimitar from his inventory and removed the man's head from his shoulders, then created a puppet body and trapped his soul inside, resurrecting him under Cain's control.

"Now, let's see what you had on your body," Cain mumbled while he let the new puppet recover from the shock of being awakened by way of murder.

Cain dug through the man's clothes, pulling out multiple storage rings and a few hidden potions, as well as a lot of empty vials. Then he came across an amulet hidden inside the man's stomach. That was sure to be less than pleasant coming back out, but it explained the intense battle outside. The man's companions couldn't snatch it from inside his stomach while he was alive, but they weren't strong enough to take it from him.

A precise cut freed the amulet, dropping it into Cain's hand with a wet plop.

[Quest Complete: Egg Recovered]

"Well, isn't this wonderful news? I have a good friend that really wants to talk to you, waiting right upstairs. Don't bother attacking me, you can't injure me, and I forbid you from harming yourself." Cain informed the reincarnated Cultivator.

The man was still focusing on something else though and getting more frustrated by the moment. Cain moved the amulet under his clothes, in case the man was thinking of doing something to harm it, and then pulled him back out into the open before transforming back into his full twenty-meter-tall Ancient Form.

"An Ancient? You don't belong in this world. If my masters find you, they will tear your soul to shreds." The puppet informed Cain with a sneer.

"I am your master now, and you should worry about your own soul since I am taking you to the Divine Black Dragon, who really wants to know all about your idea to steal her egg," Cain informed him, then picked him up and began flying back up through the mountain.

[Finish your investigation and bring your report to the Black Dragon Matriarch when you finish. I am sure she will want a second opinion since this one seems like a lot of trouble.] Cain told Kone as he left.

The man struggled the entire way, even managing to overcome Cain's order to stay still. The willpower of a Divine Realm Soul was impressive, and if he had another half hour, Cain was sure that he would manage to break free of the bond and become a free person in the puppet body.

Normally, it would have been much faster, mere seconds or a few minutes at most, but he was heavily injured by the battle in both body and soul and hadn't had time to recover yet.

"Matriarch Black. I have this pathetic thief for you, as well as your missing egg." Cain informed her as soon as he entered the main floor, knowing that every adult dragon on the level could hear him.

"That was much faster than expected. How did you find him?" She asked, using magic to pull the man from Cain's grasp and into her enormous claw.

"His allies turned on him once they had the prize, and he hid in the lower levels of the mountain to recover. Fortunately, the pair I sent into the lower levels are very sensitive to magic, and they detected the traces of a battle and then the Divine Ward he placed over his hiding spot." Cain explained while the man glared at him.

"If a meddling Ancient hadn't shown up, they would have never known. That ward was perfectly hidden from any Dragon." The man complained.

Cain saw the Matriarch's expression change. Though he was no expert on Dragon form body language, he was certain that this one was a sadistic pleasure.

"So you freely admit to stealing from me and even attempting to hide within my territory once you were exposed. That is good. It means that what I'm about to do won't violate the agreement that I have with the Human Gods."

The man looked confused for half a second, then Cain felt the loss of a Puppet before the man began shrieking in agony while she dragged him halfway into the realm of the dead and shredded and healed his soul over and over in a seemingly infinite loop, compressed down to a single minute in the land of the living.

"Remind me not to make her mad," Cain whispered to the closest of her bodyguards, who gave him an amused smile before turning her gaze back to the crowd.

"Are you sure that you will ever need a reminder after that?" She asked.

"I am a slow learner."

The shrieking brought every dragon in the vicinity, including the Golden Dragon, which wasn't actually a dragon who was teaching Tena, out to see what had happened.

"The Ancient has found our intruder. Now, we only need to account for the thieves of every other egg in the Mountain and Valley. Get to work. I want to see more humans in front of me by the end of the day, dead or alive." The Matriarch demanded.

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

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The barrier around the mountain was lowered now that the egg was back, and the Dragons flooded out over the slopes and the surrounding forests, looking for someone to vent their anger and boredom on.

Cain sincerely hoped that there were no innocents in the forest at the moment, but there wasn't much he could do about it now. Thousands of Dragons had poured out of the city, and they would be swarming everywhere.

If the intruders were smart, they would have begun to run the moment that they saw the spectacle so that they wouldn't have to learn what it was all about firsthand, but you never really knew when it came to humans. Some of them might even try to approach an angry dragon to find out what it is mad about.

Death by trying to pet unpettable things was just an occupational hazard of being a human.

An hour after the dragons left in a wave, one of the black dragons returned with an overjoyed fuzzy hatchling and a terrified human in its claws.

The hatchling was a Swamp Dragon, which couldn't fly until it was a little more grown, and the way it had its tail wrapped around the human meant that they weren't strangers. Well, that or the Dragon had a personality like Luna and would cuddle anything that didn't run away.

"Mistress, I found this human trying to steal a hatchling." The dragon informed the Divine Black Dragon.

"Interesting. Set them down. I will ask the questions." She agreed.

The human was about to speak, but Cain clapped a hand over his mouth, signaling him to be silent.

"Little one, what were you doing with the human?" She asked.

The swamp dragon got overly excited, and the first few words were gibberish accompanied by hand waving, but then it got itself under control a little.

"I found a pet human as soon as I hatched, and he is going to take me to see lots of other mountains. He gives me meat and something called a hammock, which is up in the air like I'm flying while I sleep." The hatchling informed her, speaking Draconic.

"Where is your mother?" The black dragon asked.

"Dunno. She hasn't been back to the nest since I became aware. But now that I'm out, me and the human can go on an adventure." The Dragon insisted.

The dragons in the area were smiling at its exuberance, and it was clear that while the man might have stolen the hatchling from its nest, he didn't seem to have bad intentions for it.

"When did you find the human? How long after you hatched?" She asked.

"Three nights. I went down to the open part of the swamp to find better fish, but I found a human with fire and meat. He looked a bit frightened when I stole his lunch, but he didn't get mad or anything. At least, not after I offered him a fish to replace it."

Swamp Dragons' breath was a poisonous cloud, they couldn't cook anything without using fire magic or an actual fire, and the hatchling hadn't learned to do either of them yet.

"Does he know things you want to learn?" The Matriarch asked.

"He can use shadow skills to sneak up on the meat, and that is really cool. Look, I can do it now too." The little swamp dragon replied, then created a zone of darkness around itself.

"Not bad for a hatchling. I will approve of your match for now. Just tell any other dragon if he isn't treating you well, and we will take you back here to the city to finish your training among your own kind.

My guard will take you out to the edge of the forest, so you don't get hunted by the others. The humans have stolen many eggs from us, and we are hunting the thieves down."

"Thieves? I hate thieves. Especially seagulls. Fuck seagulls. If I see a thieving human, I will eat them." The swamp dragon declared.

"That's the spirit. Now, enjoy your flight." The Matriarch told him.

"She says that you've been deemed not an egg thief. They will take you outside the forest with your new owner, and you can continue your travels." Cain informed the terrified human, who had only heard a collection of roaring and huffs.

"Wait, my new owner? I thought we were partners." The cultivator declared as the black dragon guardian grabbed the two of them and flew away, leaving a room full of laughing dragons in their wake.

"You know, he's going to worry about that for years, thinking that the Swamp Dragon really does view him as property." The Matriarch laughed.

"If he doesn't tell it otherwise, it's going to view him as a pet, so really, it's not that much different," Cain replied, bringing another round of laughter to the room.

Tena and her instructor were the first to return to the main hall, smiling happily, with the Deity guarding her like a precious treasure.

"We found a loophole in the blessing that has been placed on her." The man declared proudly.

He must mean that they found a new class option.

"Let's see it then. The others are all out, and I could use some entertainment. One of the other Gold Dragons declared.

"Go on, show them the new skill." The old man urged Tena, who smiled at Cain, then abruptly transformed into a Golden Dragon whelp.

Cain took the time to check her status to see what the change was called.

[Name] Tena

[Class] Golden Dragonblessed

Not a bad choice at all, as Cain looked through her skills. She could transform into a Golden Dragon for an indefinite time, with the size being based on her age, which was based on her current human form, making her barely more than a hatchling in the dragons' eyes. She also had a large number of Light Abilities, as well as dragon form Combat skills.

"But can she fly?" The oldest of the actual Golden Dragons asked.

Tena gave a short hop straight up to give her wings room to cycle and began to slowly fly her way around the room, slightly wobbly and uncoordinated in the way of hatchlings everywhere.

"Impressive. Who gave her a blessing that would let her learn a skill like that?" The dragon asked, looking directly at Cain, who was an Ancient, but containing a Dragon's Core.

"Not me. Well, sort of me. But mostly as a result of the one who blessed me to be able to grant that blessing to others." Cain tried to explain, unsure how to do it without actually mentioning the pantheon of the Creators.

"Oh, the ones whose names must not be spoken. I understand now. It makes sense that their peculiar forms of entertainment would have been passed down to their Ancients.

But did you notice that something is happening to your Core?" The dragon asked.

Cain checked his logs quickly to make sure nothing had gone wrong.

The last message he had was [Quest Experience Gained. Core Integration Complete.]

"It looks like it finally finished integrating into my body properly. It was a gift from them, and I came to this world in order to merge with it and not upset the balance of the world that I came from." Cain explained.

"Integrate with a Dragon Core? What an interesting way to achieve Divinity. Did you know that this one was still damaged? No, of course, you did. The Matriarch must have noticed the first time you met. Do you think we should fix it for him, Divine One? Or should we wait for his patron to send him on a mission to do it himself?" The Golden Dragon asked.

"I will do it for him. I promised him I would if he found my egg for me, and he is the one that brought my beloved daughter back to me." The Black Dragon Matriarch informed him.

"Interesting. Can you do it here in the open? I think we all want to see what happens when an Ancient on the verge of True Immortality makes the Awakening with a Dragon Core in his body instead of an Arcane Magic Core." The dragon requested.

Cain could do that at any point now since it was a Class skill, and he met all of the requirements as soon as the core had been integrated with his body. The advancement would also complete his class, which should give him either a new class option or more skills for this current one, as had happened when he reached the Spirit Realm and unlocked the Immortal Awakening option.

It had been quite a while since Cain had considered advancing his own class, and at this point, he wondered where he could even go from here. He was far more powerful than any Spirit Rank being had any right to be, and the advancement to Immortal would let him use [Versatility] to bring all of his skills up another rank.

He could call on thousands of summons already, and certain skills were far beyond what was socially acceptable for an Immortal to show off. An army of Immortal Seraphim? That would likely offend more than a few light Sects if he used them as servants in public. It would be even worse if it were an army of demons.

"Would you like me to allow the advancement to complete to Immortality so that you can work on the Core without the restraints currently placed on it?" Cain asked the Matriarch.

"Yes, please do. I really want to see what happens."

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 670 670 Cain Ascends

Cain activated the last remaining skill option in his tree, and an influx of power flowed into him from everywhere around the mountain.

"Oh, it feels like a Dragon has reached Immortality. That energy is incredibly familiar. It is the Nature God's Energy. I wonder if that will let him merge with this world the way that Immortal Priestesses of the Nature God do?" The Golden Dragon mused.

"Maybe not, since his core isn't from this world. But it is a good thing that it feels like a Dragon Ascension since his power level is so ridiculously high that the Divine Realm Cultivators will be able to feel his rebirth from tens of thousands of kilometers away." The Black Dragon Matriarch told him, without taking her eyes off Cain.

More and more power was flowing into Cain, forcing him back into his full-sized Ancient form and remaking every cell of his body at the same time. If his cells had been intact, Cain would have been screaming from the pain of having his whole body remade at once, but seconds later, a soothing feeling entered his body as the assembled Ancient Dragons began to cast some sort of spell on him.

Cain could feel his body changing as his core evolved and was repaired, becoming not only larger but somehow different. He still felt like an Ancient, but he wasn't sure what he would look like once he was finished. The species came in hundreds of different basic configurations, from nearly human to mind-breakingly alien, in an impossible way that defied the rules of the known universe.

All sense of time was lost as he changed, but Cain became aware that at some point, new dragons came and went, admiring his change before going about their business. Some of them were at least as strong as the Matriarch, and he wondered if they were the Dragon Gods' Avatars or some other Dragon deities that had been attracted by or informed of the event.

When the change was finally done, Cain felt as if he could overturn the entire world with a single thought. There was so much power in his body. His newly merged Dragon Core thrummed with Divine Energy, infusing every cell of his body, and Cain could sense that he was no longer humanoid, or at least not in the way that he was before. He was still

standing on two legs, and he had two arms, one of which was a mass of tentacles he could individually control, but he now had scales and four enormous wings, plus a tail.

None of it felt natural though, or perhaps it felt too natural as if every bit of him was connected to the world individually, each able to act on its own to fulfill his instructions. If he wanted, he could order a single scale on his neck to use all of his summoning skills.

The feeling was surreal.

[Name] Cain

[Level] 700

[Class] Watcher From Beyond ->Avatar of Life

[Race] Ancient ->Hatchling World Dragon

[Awakened] Immortal

[Physique] Divine

[Stats] Locked

[STR] 700->7000

[DEX] 700->7000

[CON] 700-> 7000

[INT] 700->7000

[HP] 1,120,000

[MP] 1,400,000

Cain was absolutely certain that at no point did he choose a new Class, but he had to admit, it had changed, and so had he. He briefly wondered if he would still be welcome among the Ancients now that he wasn't really one of them anymore, but they still had Misha and, with her, their twins, so he was going there to find out anyhow.

"Look at that. You're so shiny. Change me back. I need to wrap your wrist in this new form." Luna demanded.

Before Cain could act, he felt the nearest scale to Luna ponder the question, then decide it was a good idea and request permission. It was like the voices in his head

giving suggestions, but they were all his voice and his thoughts, not a separate entity, so they agreed on everything he was certain about.

Cain changed Luna back into her Progenitor form, which was only slightly larger than he recalled, not as huge as she had been hoping to grow, though it looked like her Lamia body was nearly into its teenage years now and would reach puberty soon, the same as the human body he had put her in.

Luna giggled as she wrapped around his wrist. "The scales have a texture, and it feels really good on my scales. Tena, get up here and give this a try. No, wait, tell everyone else first, then come up here and give this a try." Luna called down to her friend.

"You know, after seeing Cain change forms, I had been sure that Luna wasn't really human, but somehow, this is not at all what I had expected her to look like," Tena muttered to nobody in particular.

The chaos of Cain's transformation couldn't be missed by anyone residing inside the mountain, and the rest of the group arrived soon after, following the flow of intrigued dragons, but stood back to admire Cain.

"Is that you, Boss? Looking Good, in an impossible horror from the void sort of way." Penny complimented him.

"It's me. Sorry that I don't have a mirror, so I don't know what I look like yet. Luna, climb down so I can shrink to more human-sized and see myself." Cain replied.

Once he was suitably transformed, Jen took out a mirror, and Cain whistled in appreciation when he saw himself. He had black slacks on still but no shirt, though he had armor equipped, and his body was a mixture of golden scales covered in soft green and golden leaves.

His limbs were what he expected, but his face was no longer human, being replaced by a Golden Dragon's thick muzzle and sharp teeth. Only his had tentacles hanging down the sides. They could extend at will, up to five meters long when he was this size, and they were prehensile, so he could use them to feed himself if he was too lazy to use his one actual hand.

His eyes were deep black orbs with stars shining in them, and his tail ended in an obsidian ball with small spikes on it.

"You have a point. It is a very hybrid dragon meets Creature from your nightmares look, isn't it?" Cain laughed, admiring how the muscles under his scales rippled as he moved.

"Show that to the next human you meet and see what they think. Maybe at this size, though, because if you were fifty meters tall, they would likely just die of fright." Penny agreed.

"I want one of those scales. There's just something about them." Jen muttered, reaching out to touch Cain's body.

"Are you sure he's a dragon and not a succubus? He's only been ascended for a minute or two, and already he has mortal women throwing themselves at him." One of the dragons asked his Elder.

"It's an effect of the Divine Physique. It causes various attractions or repulsions, depending on the person that they meet. It's how Divine Realm Cultivators pick out those with the most suitable personalities to train." One of the Ancient Dragons that Cain couldn't see replied, though he could sense the power in the voice.

Cain plucked a scale for Jen, then watched as it immediately regrew. Jen took it from him with both hands, staring at it like the most precious of treasures, and then it disappeared as she equipped it and was covered in Golden Plate Mail from head to toe, with a Dragon Mask helmet and shield. It even came with a new sword, glowing with power to Cain's magic sense.

"Right, Divine Constitution, so it can grant boons to those best matched to its power." One of the Dragons whispered, carrying through the entire room in the absolute silence that followed the spectacle of Jen's armor changing.

"Hey, what's up with that? You get cool new armor, and what do I get? Nothing." Luna complained, breaking the silence.

"You get an Immortal Father with a Divine body that you can wrap your freaky serpentine body around as much as you want," Jen replied.

"Oh yeah, I forgot to mention to everyone that I was a Lamia Progenitor, didn't I? Um, surprise?" Luna replied, then snaked her way around Cain's waist to become his belt the same way that Cyrene was fond of doing, but with her body resting over his shoulder, tucked between his back and his wings.

"Yes, that would have been a good thing to mention. Like just a simple, hey, I'm not actually human." Sabbath agreed, then got picked up off the ground by Luna's tail so that the Lamia could hug her.

"Sorry, everyone. I kind of forgot. But I will make it up to you." Luna informed them all very sincerely.

"Can you put me down now?" Sabbath asked, tucking her hand under her knees so that those below couldn't see up her dress.

"NO."

"Well, it looks like our quest was completed successfully anyhow. Plus, Tena got an advanced class, and Jen got new armor. Hands together for their achievements." Cain instructed, using his tentacles to clap.

Everyone but Luna was too shocked to comply, and she had her hands full of Sabbat, so only Cain clapped for the next few seconds, then stopped and gently took Sabbat from his daughter.

"Time for you to change back to human. We are going to head back into the outside world and look for a portal to go see Misha, and you need to be human to do that."

"Won't you stay a little longer? We would love to know what sorts of abilities your new body has, and I don't think that you have had time to explore them yet." The Matriarch asked.

"Yeah, it's nice here. A few more days won't hurt, and it will give the Dragons time to finish their hunt while you get used to being whatever it is that you advanced to." Sabbat suggested.

"Alright, just a few more days." Cain agreed, then noticed that Luna was missing from his waist.

"Someone go rescue Solara. Luna already got Sabbat, so I know the alchemist is next." Cain laughed, tracking Luna's presence through the crowd as she disappeared toward the lab where the former Elder was discussing work with some young Dragons.

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

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This new class [Avatar of Life] was incredible.

Cain opened his skill tree and found that it was basically all creation-based skills, with an innate ability to alter nature within his level in kilometers. One of the skills let him appoint Assistants, which sounded somewhere between puppets and Priestesses, to do the work on his behalf, while another let him grant blessings, which would advance in power when he reached the Demigod Realm, the first stage of Divinity.

"So this is what an endgame Class looks like. I don't really see where there is to go with this. Summoning became summoning or creation, and my puppets are now as powerful as my old Echoes were." Cain mused as he poured his skill points into all of the interesting-looking paths, saving the more esoteric ones for later.

Creating new forms of Divine Crafting Materials was very cool but not high enough on the priority list to get his points yet.

Blessing people with one of his skills for 24 hours made the cut, though. Because he was a benevolent sort of person and because he didn't have to tell them that it was going to wear off the very next day if he didn't want to.

"Sect Master Cain. I have a request. There are no more Opal Prismatic Males. I don't suppose that you could . . ." The little dragon with a sweet tooth asked with a flustered expression.

"Well, I don't see why not. I haven't tried creating a summon as an independent being yet, though I could free the ones I made before." Cain agreed. That had to be worth some experience, right? He was an Avatar of Life now, and he was helping someone get laid.

That totally had to count.

Cain looked into her thoughts to see what the Dragon thought the perfect man would look like in Dragon and humanoid form, then called out a [Free Being] and imbued it with a sense of devotion to her and some basic skills like hunting and cooking that every Puppet he created would have.

All he needed was a name. Lars, this dragon would be Lars.

"Lars, meet your fellow Opal Prismatic Dragon, Leeann. Leeann, meet Lars." He introduced them.

"Well, hello there, sexy." Did I get summoned to a Divine Realm, or did you descend to meet me?" Lars asked once the introductions were finished.

The older dragons chuckled at his cheesy pickup line, but it worked especially well on his counterpart, who was blushing a rainbow of colors.

"Oh, he is smooth. Next, he will compliment her scales, just watch." One of the other young dragons whispered to Luna, who was standing next to her.

Sure enough, Lars leaned forward to brush his muzzle against hers. "What polish do you use? I simply must have some for myself."

From what Cain could tell, that was as good as a public kiss only seconds after they met, but Leeann was leaning into it, then she grabbed his wingtip with her forepaw.

"Come with me, and I will show you."

The two young dragons flew off to her nest, where she spelled the entrance for privacy and soundproofing. Cain smirked up at them while half of the crowd shook their head in dismay at the scene.

"That ability is practically cheating. You used her thoughts of the perfect personality and appearance to make a mate for her, didn't you?" One of the Ancients, a Bronze Dragon that Cain vaguely remembered meeting before, asked.

Cain gave the old dragon a smile. "Yes, in both dragon and human form, so even if they transform to go somewhere together, he will still be perfect for her."

"See, this is why the Nature Dragons refuse to do transformations, except in exceptional cases. Everyone gets jealous," One of the others rumbled.

"The rest of my skills are similar to each other, and mostly for the creation and altering of natural surroundings, which might not be considered polite inside the mountain," Cain added.

"How about the lower levels? We are running low on Nests now that we have the power to stop the humans from constantly hunting us in this region, so a few new ones to test out your new skills might not be a bad idea." Someone suggested, looking pointedly at the nest under the Matriarch.

"That's not a bad idea. And you can close up that entrance you found so that the humans can't sneak in that way again." She agreed.

A number of older dragons, transformed into human shapes due to the currently crowded conditions in what amounted to the Dragon's town square, began leading the way toward what they thought would be a good area for development, deeper underground and further from the main column of the city, for the species that liked a bit more privacy than most.

It also reduced the risk that they would have to make an emergency intervention if Cain should make a mistake in his first few attempts at carving nests into the mountain.

Cain called a Dwarven Engineer into [Merger] with him and inspected the area, noting the available materials. The dragons liked natural surroundings, and their homes didn't usually contain materials that didn't belong to the mountain, except for their personal belongings.

That meant that he had a lot of granite and obsidian to work with from this area and not much else.

[What do you think? Like the Pillars and alcoves of Graska to give that solid feeling, or should we go more flowing and rounded, like the underground cities of the Gnomes?]
Cain asked the Engineer.

[Dragons are like Elves. They like pointless and decorative carvings, no matter what they tell you. So go for the curved and pointy Elven styles, like the South Coast of the Serrah Woods.] The Engineer recommended showing Cain how that would work inside a mountain.

The rooms were square, but all of the doorways and interior windows had pointed arches lined with elegant carvings. Cain decided to do all the carvings in the style of the Ancient houses that he had been in while keeping the basic elven styling cues.

That would give a nice personalized touch to the area. From what he could tell, the nest was usually one large front room, with a smaller nest off one side, often hidden by a curved tunnel so that others couldn't see inside.

The standard height was sixty meters, giving the dragons room to grow into their nest without ever having to move, so Cain made this one the same way while adding a few extras to the front room, including a human-sized kitchen with bench seating and a table made of the natural stone.

The actual nest room was entered from the back corner while extending forward so that the occupant couldn't be seen until the intruder was actually inside the second room.

He even carved the floor with a slight indent so that the loot that Dragons liked to pile in their nest would naturally move to the middle of the room, where it could be best appreciated.

"What do you all think? How do you like a Dragon Nest designed by an Ancient?" Cain asked.

"I know it is pretty bare right now, but everyone likes to personalize their own space, so I left room for paintings, statues, and such all through the alcoves and tried not to clutter the space too much."

"Not bad at all. But why is the floor not flat?" Someone asked from the back.

"Empty a bag of coins from your storage ring, and you will see," Cain called back, loud enough to be heard through the thick stone.

"Is that a self-piling treasure horde? I mean, it will only work for the young ones who don't have enough to cover the floor, but that is ingenious." The dragon laughed, and Cain heard the sound of coins spilling over and over as he played with the feature.

"Should I make more like it along this wall? There should be room for three in total." Cain asked the oldest of the Dragons who were examining the carvings around the doorframes.

"Where did you find this creature? It should have gone extinct tens of thousands of years ago." One of them asked, pointing to the carving of a hippogryph.

"They still exist, or I should say that they again exist, on my homeworld. They were reintroduced during the second Great War and trapped in time-looped dungeons.

Then the intelligent species learned ways to remove clones of creatures from the dungeons, and they became rare but not extinct on the surface.

The carving style is from a particular historical city that I found hidden in the mountains during my travels." Cain explained.

"I like it. Do the others this way too. It makes the new lairs feel like they have a bit of history to them instead of trying to embrace something new or trendy."

With that in mind, Cain made the other two exactly the same, creating a uniform row of Dragon nests in the formerly abandoned tunnel deep within the ground.

The Earth Element Dragons opened up the tunnels that led to the three new nests while they made plans to develop the whole zone under this portion of the forest at a later date. That wasn't Cain's problem, though, as even the near future to the Dragons was at least a decade later, and he wasn't planning to be here anywhere near that long.

"I should go check on my disciples and make sure that my Daughter hasn't hugged anyone to death. She's a bit too cuddly for most people's personal space." Cain told the dragons, who began making their way back up to the main level, eager to see if Cain was right about the chances of Luna having captured someone unwilling.

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

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When they returned to the main level, Luna was wrapped around Jen's waist, catching a ride back to meet them and bemoaning the loss of her cooking partner to "Some Guy with Shiny Scales."

"And here I thought I would have to physically pry you off of Solara," Cain told her with a sly wink.

"They wouldn't let me. But Jen let me be her belt for now, so it's fine, I guess. Maybe I can later when Solara isn't busy with alchemy.

"I am beginning to understand her sleeping habits a little better. When this is her natural form and behavior, it makes sense that she wants to hold someone while she sleeps." Penny told Cain with a tolerant smile.

"Yeah, her mother is the same way. If I weren't doing anything strenuous, she would just stay wrapped around my waist day and night. Even at meals, she would just lean over, or I would feed her from my plate." Cain agreed.

"You know, if you ignore the fact that the story involves an Eldritch Horror and a Snake Demon, that's actually really sweet."

"Why don't we all have a sit-down and enjoy the Dragons' hospitality for a while? Some of us have been so busy running around that we didn't have time to really look at the city." Cain suggested.

That's exactly what they did for the next three days until the last of the dragons who went to clear the surrounding areas of invaders had returned. A few of the dragons had been showing signs of combat when they returned, but none of them seemed overly concerned, so either the problem was dealt with, or it was from an upset local beast whose territory they had invaded during their search.

It was an emotional moment when Cain transformed Luna back into a human girl, and the group started packing their belongings to leave the mountain. The Dragons had come to accept Cain and Tena as two of their own, and a few days was not nearly enough time to relax, in their opinion. A year-long nap seemed much more appropriate.

"I will send a message back when I find a portal that leads me where I need to go," Cain informed the residents of the Dragon Peak, then decided to show off a little bit and transformed himself into the Golden Proto Dragon that he had used in combat so many times before, letting the rest of the group climb on his back for the flight out of the top exit.

"This is incredible. Have you always been able to do this?" Tena asked while holding her hands out to the sides and enjoying the wind.

"It's actually a skill that enhances my summoning skills. I've been able to do it since I was around your level, perhaps a little before that."

"They told me that one day I will be able to become a Dragon this size, but the skill is based on my main body's age, so my dragon form is still a hatchling." She sighed.

"You'll grow up before you know it. One of the Bronze Dragons mentioned that there are portals to a few dozen other worlds on the far side of the mountains, guarded by the

Sects in the plains. Why don't we head that way, and you can practice your flying?" Cain suggested.

"That would be great. But only when everyone else is walking, because I don't fly very fast yet. I thought it would be instinctive, but only the basic motion is, and the rest takes practice and coordination." She sighed.

"Yeah, flying as an Ancient was the same way, though these transformation spells help you with coordination the way others don't."

Cain carried them out of the forest around Dragon Peak and then landed back very close to where they had started, back near the clearing where they had spent the night with the Foot Clan and Thunder Gods Sects.

They were greeted by a pair of Elders, who seemed to be expecting to see them but also very worried about something.

"Greetings from the Forbidden Treasures Sect. Might your Divine Elders be present? They had requested that I say hello the next time I was through." Cain asked.

"I am sorry, both of the Divine Elders have gone to the city of Wisdom to take a look at the finals of the Core Disciples combat competition. I am told that there are a number of skilled competitors there this year, and they didn't want to miss out.

Your divination statue is the talk of the Continent, though. It has identified no fewer than ten hidden talents among the younger generation, one of which was in a Sect unsuitable to their skills. It caused quite the sensation as the Water Sects fought over him." The Foot Clan Elder replied politely.

"I wouldn't want to keep them away from their duties to the Sect. Please let them know that we passed through on our way to the plains beyond the mountains. I will be examining the portals to other worlds there, looking for one that leads where I want to go." Cain told them, and both Elders bowed.

They also both took out small green slips and sent a message to someone, then shouted for a Disciple to come to them and escort the Forbidden Treasures Sect through the training grounds.

"Our Disciples are on a shared mission to control the beasts, so the entire area is full of young Cultivators, and I don't want you to be mistaken as interlopers." The Thunder Gods Sect Elder explained.

"Yeah, that wouldn't end well for the Disciples." The younger man that had just arrived agreed, looking at the group with some sort of glowing rock in his hand.

The Elder noticed Cain looking at it and decided to explain. "It is an aura stone. It isn't a precision tool, but it is commonly worn as a bracelet to warn the wearer of the approach of a strong opponent. If that one glows any more brightly, he will be able to use it as a flashlight instead."

"It's not as bright as when the Divine Elder came to the Disciples Compound, but you must be fairly close, right Sect Master?" The disciple asked.

"Not too far now, I suppose. But at this point, who knows how long it will take until I take that final step?"

"One of the Immortal Elders has been stuck where you are for ten thousand years. The leap to Divinity isn't an easy one to make, and the preparations for the Tribulation take some time." The Foot Clan Elder agreed.

Cain had just assumed that everyone did like the Dragons and simply took the hits from the lightning, but it made sense that it would actually kill a human, so some sort of protection would be vital to their advancement. That did seem a bit unsporting since it was a tribulation to prove your worth, but perhaps it made it easier for dragons to advance later since they took the full brunt of the tribulation, while less durable species relied on tricks to survive.

He had heard about bottlenecks from the Cultivators in the city and just now from the Foot Clan Elder, and that wasn't a thing that the Dragons experienced, so there must be some difference that was making it easier for them to advance.

"I should warn you, don't enter the Dragon Peak area, including the forest around it, for a while. Someone stole some eggs from them, and the Divine Black Dragon is not happy with humanity. If the dragons catch any humans there, you'll likely be eaten." Cain offered as they began to walk down the road.

"I thought something was wrong. We had a few reports of travelers being attacked in the woods near the peak, but fortunately, they were all accompanied by an Immortal and managed to escape with most of their groups.

Taking eggs from the forest is nothing new. It's how many of the Dragon followers gain their companions and mounts, but entering the Peak to get them is suicidal." The Elder sighed.

"Well, it seems to be solved now, but give them some time to calm down before returning. Dragons hold a grudge for longer than you might expect."

They walked in silence for a few minutes before a group of Disciples with blades in hand jumped out into the road and then stopped in surprise, not finding what they were expecting.

"Sorry, Elder, we were sure that we sensed a beast aura, and we were going to hunt it, but the trace led us to you." The leader of the group stammered.

Cain activated one of his new spells [Nature Sense] and searched the area for a beast, finding what he was looking for with only a little effort. It was a Mythic Rank Cardinal, and it was in the branches above them, watching the Disciples with disdain.

The bird would fit into Cain's hand, so it was no shock that it was hard to pinpoint, but it was bright red, so it shouldn't be that hard to spot, especially since it wasn't hiding its aura at the moment. Perhaps it was actually trying to start a fight between the groups but didn't understand that they were on the same side.

"That's fine. You were quite close to the right spot. Keep working on your senses, and you'll be able to accurately track beasts soon enough." Cain told them, then turned his glance up to the tree where the bird was sitting.

"It's that thing again. I swear that bird is immortal. We have attacked it dozens of times, but it keeps slipping away and leading us into traps or other groups." The Disciple exclaimed in disgust, then walked away, not willing to deal with the evasive Cardinal at the moment.

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

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The Elders escorted them safely through the grounds, with only a few more run-ins with the Disciples, mostly the Outer Sect Disciples, who didn't have the skills to accurately determine the power level of a presence they sensed nearby.

It was great entertainment when they came out with weapons in hand and found that there was a pair of Elders as well as a group of traveling ladies in bright Peach-colored robes standing in the road, already aware of their approach.

"Now, we turn down the other branch and see what the road has in stock for us. Maybe we will meet more fun people at the next Sect that we pass by." Luna cheered once they were alone again, and the Elders had returned to their posts.

They hadn't been walking long when Cain noticed the signs of a large battle between two high-level cultivators. The ground was torn up in vast swathes, with the gouges dug down to bedrock and every tree for kilometers destroyed.

It was an excellent time to test out his new skills for repairing nature, so he raised a hand for the group to stop.

"I want to repair the battle scene. I can actually feel the damage with my new nature sense, and if my estimation is right, it will only take a few minutes." Cain informed them.

"Let's see that. Battles always destroy the forest, but I've never seen them repaired before. Usually, they just wait for everything to grow back." Penny agreed.

Lycans loved to run in the woods, so she had certainly been annoyed by the damages left from Cultivator battles in the past while out for a jog.

They moved to the center and checked for bodies before they began, not finding any sign of either combatant, only a handful of small creatures who hadn't left the area fast enough, mistakenly thinking that their trees would protect them from the fallout.

Cain made a note of everything and then began to work.

The first thing on his list was to level the ground and then reform a hill that had been flattened to the best guess of how it looked before. Then he replaced the undergrowth before starting on the trees.

With the trees replaced, the area looked normal again, but it was missing a lot, according to Cain's senses. He added the vines that were growing in the trees, then the birds' nests, and the birds, then the few snakes and all of the squirrels, plus some strange armored creature that seemed to have been eating a venomous snake when it was killed.

"There, that feels better," Cain told his Disciples with a smile.

"You're right. It even sounds normal again. The birds are back, and the tree creatures. That's much closer to undisturbed." Penny agreed.

His efforts hadn't gone unnoticed, though, and when the group returned to the road, there were a number of Immortal Cultivators waiting for them.

"Traveler, might we ask what you were doing in the forest?" A man in gray with a prodigious white mustache asked.

"There was a battle here, so I fixed the forest. Their skills cut deep gouges down to the bedrock, so the plants couldn't regrow at all, so I put everything right again." Cain informed him, straightening the translucent peach outer robe of his Sect Master outfit.

"Is that the goal of your Sect, then?" The man continued.

Cain shook his head. "No, just a little hobby of mine. I teach my disciples to follow their own path to Divinity and help them where I can."

That seemed to jog the memory of one of the Immortals. "You must be the Forbidden Treasures Sect then. I heard a lot about you when I was in the city, but the timing simply didn't work out to meet you. Our campsite neighbors from the Crushing Mountain Sect can't speak highly enough of your skills."

"Hopefully, he hasn't smacked too many more people with that axe I made for him. It's not really the sort of thing that you casually use in a crowded area."

The other man shook his head. "That particular Elder was sent back to the Sect to take over the Disciple training when the new group set out. Most of us won't stay here the entire Season, only a month or so, and then return home to let others take our place."

"What form of power was it that restored an entire forest in an instant?" The white-haired Cultivator who had first greeted them asked, bringing the conversation back to his real interest.

"Nature Magic. I am a Magic type Cultivator, with a variety of skills suitable to training new Disciples individually." Cain explained.

"Nature Magic? Like the Nature God's power?"

"Exactly that. I learned it from the Dragon Elders of the Dragon Peak just recently, and this was the first time I had a chance to use it."

The old man seemed shocked. "The Divine Black Dragon actually agreed to let you learn from the Elders? That is shocking. You must have had something truly interesting to show her."

"The opposite, actually. Some fool had dared to steal an egg from her nest, and I helped the Dragons hunt for it in the areas where they were too small to fit. When it was recovered, they were quite grateful."

When Cain finished speaking, a man in black and bronze robes pushed through to the front.

"Did you perhaps see who had taken it? Were they alive? What of their companions?"

Cain patted the man on the shoulder in consolation. "His allies turned on him, and there was a grand battle underneath the mountains. The lone survivor was the carrier of the egg, who died of his hubris, and the egg was returned to the Black Matriarch."

"Died of his hubris?"

"He was decapitated, and his soul eviscerated when he was found," Cain explained, bringing a look of agony to the Cultivator's face and causing many to make some sort of warding symbol in front of their chest.

"How could that happen? He was almost ready to ascend to the Deity Realm. Even ten on one, those beginner Demigods shouldn't have been able to kill him." The man insisted.

"I probably wouldn't let the Dragons find out that you knew of his actions." Cain pointed out, making a few of the others turn amused glances on the Cultivator, who was apparently in on the attempt to steal the egg of a Divine Realm Dragon.

"They wouldn't dare to take action against us." He replied, unconcerned by Cain's warning.

"I will take your word for it since I am not local to the area. I just thought that it would be kind to warn others that the Dragons are holding humans as a whole responsible for the theft, so it isn't particularly safe near their mountain at the moment.

"What of the others? Were there bodies that might be recovered? We could send some of our dragon riders in to collect them for a proper burial." The Cultivator asked.

That explained a lot. If they were dragon riders and they lost a mount, they would certainly want one with the potential to reach their level, and as a late-stage Demigod, he would have only wanted the best to accompany him in the future.

The silly part was that if he asked after they hatched, he might have even convinced one of the Black Matriarch's hatchlings to accompany him, the way that the Swamp Dragon chose to accompany that guy he found.

"There were no bodies. Whether that was a result of the battle or the Lava Cats, I can't say, but there was nothing more than a few traces of blood when I arrived." Cain informed him.

"If the Dragons have granted you such a powerful gift, perhaps you would enjoy a trip to our Sect? There are many more Dragons there for you to commune with." Another man in the same black and bronze suggested.

"I am afraid that I have a destination to reach beyond the mountains, but if I should be back through here in the future. I would greatly enjoy taking the time to visit." Cain apologized.

"My friend, I am afraid that I must insist. You are the last one to see our Sect Master alive, and someone must report to the Council of Elders and take responsibility." The Cultivator informed him, releasing the aura of a newly ascended Demigod.

The rest of the group were hastily backing away, not wanting to get into the middle of this fight and not close enough with the man's sect to intervene on his behalf.

Cain considered the options for a moment, including the risk of his Disciples being injured or killed during a battle of that magnitude, and reluctantly nodded.

"I will accompany you back to your Sect, but the responsibility can be assigned to those who knew and encouraged his final act of folly."

That didn't impress the two Cultivators at all, and even Cain's disciples looked surprised, but they didn't do anything to cause more issues here.

The man whistled a strange tune, and a large red dragon flew into sight, landing on the road behind the confrontation, and then bowed his head to Cain before turning to the man who called him.

"You needed me for something?" The Dragon asked, barely intelligible in dragon form.

"Carry these prisoners to the Sect. They witnessed the death of the Sect Master." The man instructed.

The dragon hesitated for a second, so Cain intervened. "We would be grateful for the escort. If you have a moment later, the Black Matriarch requests the presence of all Dragons in the region so that she can inform them of recent events."

The Cultivator used a wind skill to move everyone to the Dragon's back, and the Immortal Realm beast gave Cain an amused look before taking off, then mentally linked him.

[You lazy bum. Next time you can fly yourself to the Sect when the humans start making allegations.]

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

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As they flew, Cain pointed out the various landmarks that they were flying over, including the statue in the center of the city, where a large line was formed again to test the potential of disciples and hopeful young cultivators.

A cultivator's potential wasn't static, many things in life could lower or raise it, but it would give them a baseline or let them know if they had made a mistake and led themselves to a dead end, according to the spell on the statue.

The Demigod cultivator guiding the dragon was getting more and more annoyed with Cain's narration as the flight went on, especially as he pointed out the various hidden Sects by name and greeted every Dragon that they flew by.

The Dragons all greeted him back, and the happy greeting of the dragon on guard duty at his own Sect was the final straw that made the man snap.

"Can you not just behave for one bloody minute? You haven't shut up since we started flying." He shouted.

"You shouldn't have called him a prisoner. You have no frame of reference sufficient to understand just exactly how petty he can be." The man's own dragon warned him.

"He IS a prisoner. I am a Demigod, and I have captured him and his Disciples." The Cultivator argued.

"No, his lazy ass caught a flight past our security to come to visit the other Dragons with your assistance." The Dragon corrected him.

"Damnable Dragon. What do you know? You lot, follow me to the Council Chambers, where they will hear your description of what happened." The Cultivator finished, leading the way with a group of guards moving to surround them.

A barrier blocked the entrance, stopping Cain and Luna in their tracks right at the door to the council building.

"Looks like I physically can't enter. Guess the meeting will have to wait. Can I go talk to the dragons now?" Cain asked.

"Transform back into your natural form and enter." A voice from inside demanded.

"If I do that, I won't fit through the door," Cain told him.

"Do you have to do this now?" Jen asked.

"Sorry, but yes. They have a barrier up, and I can't pass it without breaking it, and they might think that is rude." Cain replied.

"Just teleport already and be done with it." Jen sighed.

"See, that's why I like smart people." Cain laughed and had Oath Breaker teleport him and Luna inside the building, which caused them to revert to their true forms instantly,

leaving an enormous world dragon with a tiny Lamia around his wrist standing in the middle of the room.

". . ."

[That's the response I was looking for. Now, can we break this spell, or should I just roar at you for a while?] Cain asked the room telepathically.

"I want it. Dragon, submit to me as my mount, and I will treat you very well." The man at the right end of the line of cultivators demanded.

"Are you stupid, or just dumb? Ask your question about your suicidal Sect Master, and I will answer. You are not nearly cute enough to get to ride on me." Cain replied, letting his voice ring through the Sect compound.

"Do you think you can resist?" The Elder asked.

"Do you think you can survive me getting annoyed?" Cain replied.

The Demigod smirked at him, so Cain decided to make a bit of a show of things, summoning a full seventy-two Golden Proto Dragons and using [Versatility] to bump them to the Immortal Realm.

Then he summoned two dozen copies of Kone with Su and had them call all their summons outside the building.

Hundreds of Immortal Rank Turtle Kin and Forest Dragons filled the grounds of the Sect, while the Proto Dragons, each nearly ten kilometers long at Immortal Rank, blocked out the sun.

Every Summon prepared for battle, and the Sect descended into Chaos.

"What the hell is going on? Did we attack Dragon Peak?" Someone outside shouted, and another Demigod ran into the room.

"Yes. Your former Sect Master tried to steal an egg from the Divine Black Matriarch." Cain explained.

"So, that was the news? The dragons are holding him for ransom?" One of the Elders asked.

"Ransom? No, the Black Matriarch flayed his soul out of existence for stealing from her." Cain informed them.

"And the rest of the Elders?" The man who wanted Cain as a mount asked with a shaky voice.

"Killed by the Sect Master after they turned on him to steal the dragon eggs he had hoarded."

Now everyone was looking at the Elder who had brought Cain here.

"Did you know all this?" The man at the end, the bravest one in Cain's estimation, asked.

"I did. I came here to have him take responsibility for killing the Sect Master." The Elder announced, still confident of his decision and refusing to turn around and see what the commotion behind him was.

"World Dragon, perhaps we can come to an equitable agreement." One of the Elders offered.

"He's not a World Dragon. He's too small." The man who brought Cain in insisted, making his dragon laugh.

"Just ask any of your mounts. They can all tell." Cain suggested.

"Do you have some sort of grudge against us?" The last Elder to arrive asked, looking back outside in fear.

"Not really. I just thought that I should make a point. A thousand Immortal Dragons is an impressive show, isn't it?"

That got the man who brought Cain in to look outside.

"When did they get here? How did they get past the wards? What is going on?" He asked, just realizing that their Sect was in trouble.

"You tell us. You opened the wards to escort him and his Disciples inside the wards." One of the Elders practically growled at him.

"Lock him down." The man on the far right demanded, pulling out a black stone tablet and placing a hand on it to activate a ward.

The Disciples all froze in place, so Cain summoned a War Princess into [Merger] and opened the same sort of [Battlefield] that Luna used for snack production to safely tuck them away, then tossed Luna inside with them and closed the exit, so nobody got hurt during the fight.

With Record Keeper Merged with him, the ward simply rolled off his body, rejected by the Magical Immunity. Cain tilted his head to get a better look at the tablet, then decided to try the [World Breath] of his new Dragon form.

It came out as a simple gust of air, harmless-seeming at first. It didn't even harm the clothing on the Cultivators, but a split second later, the building itself began to crumble, returning to the Earth as all the wards shattered.

The invisible cloud lingered, returning the area to a natural state, even unraveling the clothing of the servants who didn't have powerful enough protections active. Strangely, the building itself remained intact and standing, but the top windows disappeared.

"Oh, I get it. You carved it out of a cave. Very creative." Cain commended them when he realized what had happened.

"What the hell was that? Did he attack us with a spell I couldn't detect?" Someone asked.

"World Dragon Breath returns everything to a natural state. With it lingering in the air, even your blades would crumble to ore in seconds." The man on the far right answered with a hint of pride in his voice, still convinced that he could take Cain as a mount.

"And you want to piss him off more? What about those Dragons outside? We can't fight that many." A more pragmatic Elder declared.

"They haven't attacked. They're not real." The Elder replied with certainty.

[Maybe kill them a little bit. Just the ones nearby with weapons or something. These idiots aren't listening.] Cain informed the group in Draconic so that the Dragons outside would hear and understand.

"Hey, no, wait. There is no need to be rash." The newest arrival shouted.

[Wait one minute, then do it if I am still annoyed.] Cain amended.

"So you speak Draconic. Minor oversight on my part." Cain told him.

"Please, tell us what happened in the Dragon Peak, and we can make amends for insulting the Dragons." The man pleaded on behalf of his Sect.

"I already said it. They broke in, stole some eggs, including one from the Divine Black Matriarch, and then got into a fight with each other, leaving only the one with the Eggs alive. I helped the Matriarch find him, and she flayed his soul until it stopped existing." Cain clarified.

"That is, well, horrible. Did she need to do that?" The man asked.

"He stole one of her daughters. She was pretty mad, and who was going to argue with her?" Cain asked.

"More importantly, how did you find him? Our Sect's ward is completely undetectable to Dragons." The strongest of the Demigods present asked.

"I have human and Lycan Disciples. Finding him wasn't really a big problem, and it only took a minute to break the ward once we knew where it was." Cain explained.

The man nodded in understanding, then sighed, falling into a state of deep thought that almost seemed like standing meditation.

"Chief Elder, if he becomes my mount, the word of the vulnerability will never get out." The man on the right insisted.

"Yes, he is too much of a threat." The man who brought Cain in agreed.

"You idiots really are trying to get our Disciples killed, aren't you? Those aren't fake Dragons outside, and they're going to attack in under a minute." The newest arrival reminded them, moving to stand in front of Cain, facing his fellow Sect Elders.

The Elders silently argued with each other, using some sort of mental communication that Cain couldn't hear.

"You are outvoted. The threat is too great." The Chief Elder announced.

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

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[Proto Dragons, tear the roof off this cave and fill it with fire.] Cain ordered.

Half a second later, the room was filled with falling rock, bouncing off hastily erected barriers, as Cain surrounded his one ally in the room with a simple shield since it wouldn't fall to the Dragon Fire from his own group members.

The effect was much like standing in a volcano or a blast furnace. The rock walls glowed red, then white, then melted down into puddles as the ground everywhere except under the cultivators turned to a pool of lava with rocks floating in it where their barriers were.

Then the smaller rocks under the Elders sunk, and the barriers they had erected began to fail as shrieking filled the air.

There was an enormous battle going on outside, as the Disciples trying to save the Elders had signaled the rest of the Summons to attack while the bonded Dragons were hanging back at the edge of the Sect, trying to fight off the spells that would force them to suicidally join their masters in this battle.

Half the Elders fell to the Proto Dragons and were buried in the magma puddle, while the other half used escape skills to get free and join the battle outside.

The Dragons outside roared as they launched themselves at the Cultivators and were met with energy attacks that blew away their breath attacks and shredded scales. Most of the attacks were entirely ineffective against the Immortal Realm Dragons, and screams were coming from everywhere as the whole Sect joined the fight.

Then the Turtles charged into combat with Kone and Su backing up the lines, regenerating the lines of Summons faster than they were being damaged and forcing the humans into smaller and smaller defensive pockets.

That made the breath attacks even more effective and the area spells even more deadly, forcing the humans to focus even more on defense.

"Just stand right here with me. The battle won't last long with these numbers, and it would be a shame to lose the one person in the room with any common sense." Cain informed the Elder at his feet.

The man looked up at him with tearful eyes, and Cain began to relent. He always did have a soft spot for pleading eyes.

[Fine, let the ones that want to flee the battle live.] Cain amended his orders.

"You can keep the ones smart or cowardly enough to flee. The rest who choose to fight to the death against these odds are too dumb to live." Cain informed the Elder.

The battle was beginning to look hopeless for the Humans when a new presence entered the area. A True God or some high-level Divine Realm Cultivator had come to see what the commotion was as soon as the wards around the Sect failed.

"Call off your Dragons. This Sect must not be destroyed." The new arrival demanded, wiping out a whole section of them in an instant.

That was a bit more than Cain could deal with, so he dismissed the rest, letting the humans recover while he stood on an island of calm amidst the ruins of the Sect compound.

"Explain yourself, Dragon. The powerful human demanded.

"They stole from the Black Matriarch and broke the Pact. With the Pact no longer active, I was well within my rights to attack when they tried to make me a mount." Cain insisted, making it up as he went along.

"Is that true?" The man asked the Elder at Cain's feet.

"Yes, Divine One. I tried to make them see sense, but they insisted." He replied, sounding forced.

Cain checked his status and saw that a spell [Forced Truth] was active on him. With a thought, Cain recorded the new arrival before he forgot. That spell alone could be fun later.

"World Dragon, leave this place. You are not welcome here. I will speak to the Matriarch and renew the Pact before her Dragons rampage again." the God insisted.

"As you wish, I will leave the mountain range immediately." Cain agreed and took to the air, letting the Elder defend himself once the shield dropped.

[This should be a show worth watching. The Matriarch hates that guy's guts, and he's not powerful enough to defeat her.] The dragon that Cain flew in on informed him as he began to fly away.

[Feel free to watch. I am pretty sure that the human who bound you is gone now.] Cain agreed.

[Yeah, he melted. Using the building as a furnace to have Immortal Fire burn through Demigod Shields was ingenious. I will have to remember it for later.] The dragon laughed, taking to the air with dozens of other dragons to follow the human toward Dragon Peak.

"Good luck with the cleanup. I would stay and clean up my mess, but you know." Cain called to the man on the ground.

"I will be happiest if I never see you again. No offense." The Elder shouted back as Cain soared over the peaks and toward the coast where they had been heading, to begin with.

A few hours later, Cain landed and let everyone out of the Battlefield, transforming back into his human form and noting that Luna had naturally returned to human as soon as the ward was broken.

He wondered what was wrong with his [Modify] ability that it didn't fool the ward. It might be the power level difference since everything else that he had come across would have considered them both as humans. The only other time he had come across a similar

effect had been at the Auctions, and that spell was specifically designed to reverse the effects of active System Abilities.

Perhaps this was similar. Only it didn't force the change until you were past the barrier.

"How did it go? We can't sense the outside from in there." Penny asked.

"I Summoned Dragons to melt the meeting hall and then started a big fight before an angry guy showed up and told me to piss off." Cain summarized the interaction.

"So, we are back on our way and not prisoners of the Sect anymore?" Jen verified.

"Correct. I'm not sure how much Sect is left. I roasted most of the Elders, but there is at least one left, and some disciples for sure since the battle stopped in the middle."

"So, we are fleeing an angry god, whose Sect you melted with Dragon Fire, and whose Elders you killed, while we search for a way off this planet and onto one that has your wife?" Penny asked.

"You missed the part where we are going to find some time to practice so that you all can perfect your skills before we run out of places to visit. Fortunately, the God never saw me in human form, and he doesn't know about all of you, so he might not notice us right away if we come across him again." Cain added.

"There is a nice village in that valley. Maybe we should stop in there?" Luna suggested, pointing into the distance.

Cain let his eyes shift to the World Dragon's golden orbs, and zoom in on the village, which turned out to be a Sect compound.

The Crushing Mountain Sect. That was perfect.

"Alright, everyone, onto their flying swords. Let's go see the Crushing Mountain Sect and see what they have been up to lately. Their Elder a lot of fun the last time I met one." Cain agreed.

They glided at a sedate pace above the trees, clearly visible from the Sect, so that they couldn't be accused of trying to sneak up on anyone and approached the grounds of the Crushing Mountain Sect.

Unlike most, it wasn't a hidden Sect. It was out in the open where anyone could see it, and they just set defensive wards to keep out intruders.

"Who are you? The Dragon Lords' Guardian Divinity flew through here only moments ago, and the Sect is on high alert at the moment." The patrol Disciple informed Cain as the Sect approached.

"It is Sect Master Cain and the Forbidden Treasures Sect, passing through on our way to the coast. Your Elder at the city of knowledge suggested that we come to visit if we were in the vicinity, but I understand if now is not a good time." Cain informed them.

"Please wait for a moment. Do you know which Elder I should approach?" The Disciple asked.

"I am bad with names. The one with the new Axe that I made him. Roughly the size of the mountain the Sect is built next to." Cain shrugged.

"Oh, that's easy. I will be right back."

The young man flew away, landing in the training grounds at the center of the Sect and talking animatedly to someone, then nodding and flying back up.

"He practiced himself to exhaustion, and he is sleeping at the moment, but you are welcome to come in and get cleaned up while you wait." The Disciple offered.

"We could go visit your smiths if he isn't awake when we are cleaned up if you don't mind. The short Elder seemed interested in my Smithing techniques as well." Cain agreed, bowing politely to the Disciple.

"Of course. The Forbidden Treasures Sect is always welcome in the Crushing Mountain Sect."

The Disciples who were in the city with the first group were back at home now, and the enthusiastic waving that they did when they saw the Forbidden Treasures Sect arrive assured all of the Elders that these were not imposters but the real Sect traveling off the main roads and straight across the mountains.

"Here you are. There are two shower rooms and a bedroom if you require rest before socializing. Feel free to make yourself comfortable. It will be winter in the mountains in only a few weeks, and not many choose to travel once the blinding snows start flying."

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

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None of them wanted to be stuck in the mountains all winter, so the Disciples started making plans to do as much training and socializing as they could during the limited

amount of time that they were here. The first task after showering was to go visit the Disciples training in the main grounds, giving them a chance to practice their skills against nominally friendly cultivators while Cain went to the forges to talk to the Elder there about smithing techniques.

"Sect Master Cain, I wasn't expecting to see you so soon. What brings you here?" The man that Cain was almost certain was actually a Dwarf pretending to be a human cultivator asked as soon as Cain entered the area reserved for the Sect's smiths.

"We are taking the direct route through the mountains to get to the area with portals off-world. I am hoping to get there before winter falls so that I can start looking for the portal that I need." Cain explained.

"Yes, winter is a long time to the young Disciples, even if it isn't to us. It seems that your damaged core is recovering remarkably well, though. Soon you will be back to full power, and it won't matter, but soon to us and soon to a child are far different things aren't they?" The old man laughed.

"I am more concerned about the time flow. It's different between planes, but I've got a pregnant wife on the other end, and I would really rather not show up to half-grown children." Cain chuckled ruefully.

"That would do it for sure. Women tend to remember things like that. Missing the early years of childhood probably lists higher on the danger list than shaving your beard or serving nonalcoholic ale." The smith agreed.

"Speaking of which, how about we have a little sip, and I will show you the tricks I learned for smithing various metals back in my homeworld?" Cain asked.

"A sip, you say?" The dwarf asked with a smile, and Cain took out a cask of Dwarven Whiskey from his inventory.

"Just a sip." Cain agreed, filling two tankards with the potent liquor.

"How long did it take you to realize?" The Dwarf asked.

"About three seconds. You know, we have Dwarves in the Mortal Plane, and I had hundreds of them working with my Guild before I left." Cain laughed, sipping at the whiskey.

The old blacksmith downed the entire tankard in a gulp, so Cain poured him another and handed back the mug.

"Forget the forge. We can talk about that later. I never was a brewmaster, and that is simply divine, even if it tastes of the Mortal Realms."

"We can handle that. Do you have brewers here in the Sect? It might be easiest to teach them." Cain suggested.

"Good thinking. Follow me. OY THORIN, WATCH THE FORGE. Now we can go."

The young man known as Thorin was startled out of a nap beside the forge bellows, hitting his head on a table stacked with ingots and looking around to see where the forge master had gone while the smiths laughed at him.

They passed the training grounds on their way to the brewers and found Carnage holding a training seminar for the assembled Disciples while the Elder on duty watched in horror.

"Carnage, don't go all out. They don't have an arena." Cain shouted to the Demon.

"It's fine. They have lifesaving wards. They just need to heal themselves." Carnage replied with a smirk but shouldered his axe and picked up a large metal bar.

The brewery was an even more impressive facility than the smithy, and Cain could tell that they had been working here for centuries, trying to perfect their craft. The liquors looked quite good, but there was apparently still something missing if the Dwarf had reacted so strongly to his first mug of Mortal Realm ordinary Dwarven Whiskey.

Cain had never tried making it himself, so it might actually need a Dwarf to make it, but he had that covered. He knew a lot of brewmasters, and he could call one in the Immortal Realm now, so they shouldn't have any problems making a decent whiskey.

"Gentlemen, meet Sect Master Cain of the Forbidden Treasures Sect. He came here from a rather unique Mortal World, where stout men and impressive beards are highly respected."

That seemed to be a code from the smith that Cain knew about Dwarves, and a number of older Dwarves came out of the back rooms of the brewery. Cain inspected them and found that their brewing skills had barely reached journeyman status, not enough to make proper Dwarven Whiskey, though they could likely make a mighty fine ale.

"First things first. Let me prove myself." Cain informed them and took the half-empty keg of whiskey out, pouring another round of drinks in flagons, emptying the keg in the process. Every eye in the brewery lit up, and the old men lifted the mugs to their faces, savoring the smell like the finest of wines.

"Yes, this is the stuff." They sighed in unison and barely managed to restrain themselves from emptying the mugs in one shot, wanting to savor it a little since the keg was empty.

Cain called on a Dwarven female-shaped puppet and inserted the memories and skills from Griselda, a Dwarven Brewmaster, well into her senior years in reality, into the body.

"Where did you call me to now? Bloody reeks of humans in here, and the rock is too young. Are we even on a mountain? Disgraceful, the lot of you." She greeted them.

"Welcome back, Mistress Griselda. We need your skills to introduce proper brewing to these human lands. Just try not to mention anything about Dwarves. You know how humans can get." Cain informed her.

The brewmaster looked the group over one by one and reluctantly nodded. "They're not much, and one is a blacksmith, but I will work with what you've got. What are we making?"

"Whiskey. Good enough to make the humans regret not being born Dwarves." Cain told her.

"They ought to regret it already, but that's beyond the point. Alright, fill this list for me, apprentices." She laughed, taking a pencil and parchment from one of the brewers and making a list for him.

"Are all Dwarves in your world like that?" The Elder Blacksmith asked.

"Not at all. She's particularly charming, isn't she?" Cain laughed.

"You could say that. Reminds me of my own mother." The smith agreed.

"If you two louts are just standing around, make me some casks for when we're finished. Good Whiskey needs to age." She informed them.

"Did you think I would leave you hanging like that? How about these ones?" Cain asked, grabbing some Oak casks from the other side of the brewery.

"How many are we feeding? Those are Ale casks." She informed him with a smirk.

"A few thousand? Most of them are human though, so maybe fifty, adjusted to adult Dwarves." Cain replied, making the Brewmaster laugh.

"Well, even if you can't tell casks apart, at least you can count."

The other dwarves returned a minute later with carts full of ingredients, and the woman sighed. "We really are going to have to make a full batch, aren't we? That's fine. This copper barrel will do in a pinch, even if it's not right."

"Want me to summon an Elemental so you can make new tools?" Cain suggested.

"Captial idea. I will direct it."

With the two of them linked, she could issue directions directly to the Elemental, so Cain called a half dozen Earth Elementals and had them move the other brewing equipment out of the way to make room for one more set of stills inside the building.

The ones that went up were Black Gold, Adamantium, and Mythril, a far cry from the simple copper barrels that the other liquors were made inside. They were also lined on the inside with hundreds of runes written in Dwarven and not the Ancient language, marking them as Racial Magic, which explained why the brewers here had never figured it out.

They had all been raised among humans, so they didn't know the language or the spells necessary to make real Dwarven Whiskey.

"Now that we have proper facilities, we can start by pouring in the ingredients and adding ten thousand liters of water." She explained, ordering the Elementals to pick up the carts and dump them in the still.

Cain called a Water Elemental and let it fill the container with pure water so that the brew wouldn't pick up any strange flavor from the local water. That was part of the charm of a local brew, but for the demonstration batch, it was best to limit the number of variables.

"Now the runes inside just need to be activated. This is way better than having to cast the spells one at a time. First, we bring up the temperature to let the yeast ferment, and we pour an ale. You do have ale, don't you?"

The brewers took notes, and poured her a mug of ale that she downed in a long gulp, then inspected the mug and refilled it.

"I will teach you how to make ale later." She muttered while Cain and the smith smirked at the unfortunate souls of the brewery.

Step by step, she made her way through the process until the whiskey was ready to be moved into barrels a full twelve hours later to begin the aging process.

"Now, we either wait a decade, or we use time alteration to age it faster. Does anyone among your staff know any time abilities?" She asked.

"Just me." The old smith informed her.

"Good enough, it only takes one. Go age one of those Ale casks full of raw whiskey for a century and tap it so we can test it."

An hour later, the raucous singing coming from the brewery woke half the sect from a dead sleep.

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

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The rest of the Elders from the Crushing Mountain Sect didn't take long to get down to the brewery to see what in the world was worth keeping an entire Sect from Cultivation that night but were left to gather outside in confusion after a stout, bearded woman in the Immortal Realm slammed the door in their faces.

"Master Brewer Jurgen, come out here right this instant and tell us what is going on." One of the men shouted.

"Ah, shut yer yap. We're just trying to celebrate our success. You can survive one night without meditation." The dwarf shouted back, prompting the irate man to kick the door down and force his way into the building.

Before he could strangle the very drunk brewmaster, he was grabbed by a huge Elder and placed back outside.

"Elders, how about you show me what is going on? Master Cain? When did you get here?" He asked, sidetracked when he noticed that the strange Sect Master who made his new ax was here in the Crushing Mountain Sect.

"Just yesterday afternoon. My Disciples spent the evening in the training grounds with your Sect, letting Carnage teach some combat techniques that they weren't familiar with." Cain explained.

"And what prompted this party?"

"Party? This is just a few old friends having a drink. But we've got plenty if you want to turn it into a proper party. In fact, grab a mug and have a seat. Hey, someone pour the Elder a drink." Cain shouted back, weaving slightly on his feet.

The Puppet poured a flagon full of whiskey and handed it to the Elder, who downed half the mug before he realized it was whiskey and not ale.

"By the Gods, that nearly killed me. How much of this have you lot had to drink?" He wheezed, trying to soothe the burn of the Dwarven Whiskey on his throat.

"Not much. There's still most of the barrel here. Bring the others in, and let's drink to celebrate the completion of the Sect's new still." Cain informed him, staggering over to the wall to grab a case full of mugs.

The puppet filled them and handed them out the door, still blocking the other Elders from entering, and then refilled the mugs of everyone inside.

"You might want to sip that if you're not much of a drinking sort. This brew has a large number of medicinal purposes, from preventing infection to lowering blood pressure, and it even has a chance to invoke an epiphany state." Cain informed the Elders outside.

They looked truly impressed at first until they tasted it and realized that it was really just extremely high-quality whiskey with a lingering magical effect that they couldn't identify.

"That epiphany that you mentioned, might it have something to do with the realization that they had made an incredible mistake and even an Immortal should not drink like that ever again?" The Elder sitting with the Dwarves asked.

"An Immortal Human. That last word is important." The Blacksmith laughed.

"Wait, is this the legendary Dwarven Whiskey that you have been going on about for centuries? Have they finally learned to make it?" The Elder asked.

"Indeed they have, with the help of Elder Cain and his summoned brew mistress."

"Crushing Mountain will be famous in no time with this. Good liquor that can get an Immortal Drunk is hard to come by anywhere in this world. We owe you again, Sect Master Cain." The big man laughed.

The Elders outside began to calm down as the liquor took effect, and when the morning work bells chimed, the weary, sleep-deprived Disciples made their way out to start the day's chores and found the whole courtyard around the Brewery was filled with drunken Elders sleeping off the effects of the drink.

"Should we go rescue Sect Master Cain?" Penny asked, wondering if he was going to be alright.

"Don't worry about him. He can drink like a dwarf, and he can cleanse his own hangover when he wakes up, so there's nothing to fear." Luna shrugged, trying not to giggle at the sound of snoring coming from that direction.

"Let's practice a bit more. I think I'm almost there. But we really do need the arena if we are going to fight all day. Getting everyone healed is a real pain." Penny told the group, not looking forward to having to wake Cain up.

"Oh, give me a second. As long as none of the Elders are going to be there, I can make one too. It's not as good, but I can totally do that." Luna insisted.

She might be a War Princess now, but she was a Puppet Master at birth, and she had watched the summoning a few times now and had updated her recording of Elder Ling after the spell was learned.

"Everyone, please clear the courtyard. We are going to create an arena for training, where the wards will eject and heal the combatants before they take critical damage." Jen shouted, letting her voice carry across the Sect.

"The grass over behind the dorms is way bigger and almost as flat. Can we make it there? It would give us more room to fight." One of the Disciples who had seen the one they made in the City of Knowledge asked.

"Sure, that shouldn't be an issue. Lead the way." Luna agreed, brushing the last crumbs from breakfast from her uniform.

If she was going to imitate the arena made by Cain, she needed to look her best. Shiny things required showmanship when they were made, or people wouldn't appreciate them enough. She had learned that from watching her father.

Once they got to the field behind the dorms, Luna summoned her flying sword so she could get a good look at the area where the arena would go, then summoned her Dragon Princess Robes and Crown, which bathed her in red light, making her glow like a gem in the sky.

Then, she raised her hands to the sky and summoned the Seraphim Arena, using a merged version of Elder Ling as the base.

All of the Disciples clapped and cheered as the bright white light filled the area, condensing to a mist and then into a fully formed training arena, with its door carefully placed to line up with the main walkway into the open space.

The light faded, and Luna dismissed all of her additional effects, then flew down to the ground and dismissed her flying sword.

"What do you think? Did I do it right? Were they suitably awed and impressed?" Luna asked, giving everyone a pleading look that left no doubts about her need for assurance.

"You did magnificently, even better than the Sect Master. He just flew up and summoned it. Everyone will love your arena, and they won't mind at all that it caps out at the Spirit Realm." Jen assured her, accepting the happy hug she got in return.

"What's all that noise? Oh Gods, I think my head is going to explode." An Elder mumbled, staggering past them to see what had everyone so worked up that they woke him up for the second time that day.

He walked directly into the new arena in his attempt to take the shortcut to his quarters, then popped a pill in his mouth, letting his eyes and mind clear from the hangover as the cleansing Pill took effect.

"Was there always an Arena here? No, I should be on the right path." He mumbled.

"Sorry, Elder. We made it especially for today's training, and this was the closest convenient spot for it since the main courtyard wasn't large enough for multiple fights. Miss Luna made it herself since Sect Master Cain is still sleeping." Penny whispered, sparing the man any loud noises.

"That explains it. The Brewery mastered a new Immortal Realm liquor recipe that packs a bit of a punch, so the Elders might not be available to help referee the matches today." He informed them.

"That's fine. This is Luna's version of the Seraphim Arena that was erected in the Lotus Blossom Sect Camp, and it comes with its own arena and recovery room, so we won't even be using up the Disciples' training resources to help them recover after their matches." Penny explained.

"Oh, I heard about that. I think I will stay and watch for a while." The Elder answered brightly.

"In that case, I suggest the VIP booths at the top. The Disciples all understand that they're normally off limits, and they have comfortable seating, as well as being out of direct sunlight." Luna offered.

"You are a lifesaver, Miss Luna. I will take you up on your offer."

The arena blocked most of the noise from the fights, making the Sect a bit quieter than usual, much to the Elders' and the cultivating Disciples' relief. Not even the sound of the snoring Elder in the VIP booths could be heard from further away than the lower Disciples' dorms, and all of them were already at the arena or doing chores in the Sect.

Cain joined them just in time for lunch, with a chipper-looking bunch of Dwarves holding mugs full of liquor strong enough that the smell made Penny's eyes water from three seats away.

"That's what you fed the Elders? Are you sure it isn't poison?" The Lycan asked, moving one more seat away.

"It's not poison, but in a way, I suppose that it is as well. They will learn a fine lesson in temperance today." The puppet laughed, winking at Penny.

"I bet that they will. Life is all about lessons, right?"

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 678 678 Meeting Of Deities

Between the appearance of the new still and the temporary battle arena that Luna had made for them, the Crushing Mountain Sect was in high spirits that afternoon when a distinguished visitor from the coastal region showed up to bring them their new batch of trial attendees.

The Sects had an agreement. Every four years, each of them would have an acceptance test, with hopeful applicants spending an entire season at the Sect they hoped to join, going through trials and assessments. The tests were staggered two years apart, so students who failed one due to lack of compatibility with either earth or water could try the other during their next intake, and the Elders would bring them over with a Portal.

This time the Seaside Sect had a much higher than usual failure rate and had brought fifty failed applicants to the Crushing Mountain Sect to attempt to pass their entrance exams. The Sect had brought most of their applicants back from the City of Knowledge with them already, but they were waiting a few more days for the last to arrive either on foot or hand-picked by the Elders still in the city.

It was a very important time to the Sect, and the gathered Elders intended to do their very best to keep Cain around until the end of the trial so that they could take advantage of his skills, and especially his Sect's specialty training arena, for the initiation process.

The great question for them was how.

Cain had revealed to them last night that his wife was waiting in a world full of Ancients for him to arrive and that he couldn't delay too long, thanks to the impending birth of his twins.

Until they knew how long he had in relative terms, he would always want to be on his way.

"Divine Elder Mariel, do you know where the Ancients went? I know that they have a pact with the Gods not to interfere or appear here, but since the Forbidden Treasures Sect Master is searching for them and we want him to stay, it would help if we could give him assurance that he won't miss the birth of his children." The Sect Master of the Crushing Mountain asked the newly arrived Elder from the Seaside Sect, giving her his best smile while not quite begging for her help.

"In fact, I do know. The portal to their world is in our Sect Compound, safely guarded by two of the Human Gods, including our Sect Master. I don't think it would be a problem for him to leave if he never planned to return, but he could never come back through that entrance." Mariel told him while looking down at all the fun the Disciples and Elders were having in the Arena.

"Could we prevail upon you to get permission for him to leave to that world with his Disciples if an emergency comes up on his end? I am told that his wife is totally human, and the Ancients only took a liking to her.

I read his memories while he was building the still for the Sect last night, and he is a truly unique existence. As he grows up, he will become a force to be reckoned with across a number of planes, and it would do us well to get on good terms with him. Perhaps we could finally end this cold war between the two pantheons?

Half of the Creators are humans, to begin with. Having them antagonistic to the Human Gods' pantheon for so many eons is absolutely ridiculous. Most of the Gods have forgotten what the original insult was already, and they are simply holding a grudge." The Crushing Mountain Sect Master grumbled.

"Don't let Divine Empress Mila hear you say that. You know how personal her grudge is." Mariel laughed.

"But the daughters that she had with the Dark Librarian are so cute, and they're Gods themselves already and on good terms with their biological father." The Sect Master sighed.

"That's the only reason she's not still in open war with him for getting her pregnant on her wedding night and leaving before she realized she had been tricked."

The Sect Master shook his head with a slight smile. "Enough of the old times. Let's look to the future. I suspect that Sect Master Cain has tricks up his sleeve that he will share with the initiates if we can convince him to stay.

I watched much of his interactions in the City, and he did something strange to a number of Elders. It's more than just teaching them a single skill or changing their appearance. Something else changed, and even I can't see through it, and I am an Ascended Deity already."

"I heard something about that from our friends at the Shadowed Blade Sect. He did something to Elder Dragon Fang, and she has been having the time of her life bullying the other Elders ever since. If he does something similar to help other humans grow, I don't think it matters that he is a World Dragon Hatchling. He could still be a good friend to the Pantheon." She agreed.

"Do you think it will be hard to convince him? We might have gotten off on the wrong foot after he attacked one of the Sects I protect." A new voice asked, stepping out of a portal.

"Guardian Wu, it is good to see you. I don't think he will hold a grudge. He is petty but seems to value personal amusement over most other things, and doesn't hold long-term grudges over little things like chasing him away without hurting anyone he cares about." The Sect Master greeted their new arrival, the very same Deity that showed up to protect the Dragon Lords' Sect.

"If he were really mad at you, it would have come to a fight. He killed a half dozen Demigods in an instant, and despite the disguise, that is a Divine Realm Dragon body hidden under his suit." Elder Mariel chuckled.

"Do you have any idea how annoying it was to dig them all back out of the bedrock afterward? The Death God didn't want to give their souls back, and the World Dragon from the Dragon Gods Pantheon thought it was too funny to make it easy on me, so they hardened the stone every time I tried to dig it up." Guardian Wu pouted.

"It seems he attracts the attention of the Gods everywhere he goes. All the more reason to keep him here with us for the winter while the Initiates grow into their skills. He might even bless our Disciples if they impress him.

His Cultivation might only be Immortal Realm, but a Divine World Dragon can pass on [Blessings] when they feel like it, and the ones he grants could be especially unique, given the range of skills that he has."

Elder Mariel smiled at the two men. "I will go talk to him and assure him that he has time. Even if he stays here for the entire winter, it will only be a few days in the world where his wife is waiting, and the Ancients would have caused an incident already if she were that close to birth."

With their conversation finished, she flew down to see how Cain and his Disciples were enjoying the matches between the Disciples while the Elders of the Crushing Mountain Sect escorted the initiates down to the grounds outside the main compound where the other hopeful applicants were already waiting in the rickety shacks that were built on the mountainside.

"Sect Master Cain, I am Divine Elder Mariel of the Seaside Sect. It is a pleasure to meet you. Your Disciple has done a wonderful job building this arena, and I simply must

congratulate your teaching methods." She greeted him as she landed on an open seat in the row behind the Forbidden Treasure Sect.

Cain patted Luna's head in pride before answering. "Thank you. It is my specialty, you see. I enjoy seeing my Disciples advance on their path, so I do my best to find them the most suitable way forward."

"That is exactly what I would like to talk to you about. I know where the portal you are seeking is. In fact, my Sect Master is the one guarding it. The time flow between the two is a bit strange, though, and a whole winter in this world is only a few days there.

You might not know yet, since I am informed that you were having far too much fun with the Dwarves to think of much else, but the Crushing Mountain Sect has an initiate trial coming up, and they were hoping that you would remain a while and supervise the proceedings with your variety of unique skills.

If there is an emergency, I will take you to the other world through our Sect Compound, but I will warn you in advance once you leave you can never return through that portal. The Human Gods' Pantheon has set wards to crush anything trying to enter this world that way."

"You want me to stay here and assist with the trials instead of leaving immediately to meet with my wife?" Cain asked.

"Oh, the impassioned hurry of youth. Yes, that is what I am asking. We won't let you miss any important days, even if I have to pay the Human Gods to use Time Magic to ensure you arrive on time." She assured him.

"Plus, staying here is bound to be a lot of fun."

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

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"Staying here to watch brand new applicants? While that does sound entertaining, I am not sure it is entertaining enough to delay my journey." Cain shrugged.

"We don't mind if you play with them a little. A number of the Deities have noticed your activities already, and Elder Dragon Fang of the Shadowed Blade Sect is a friend of mine. I haven't gone to see her yet to find out what you did, but she is having an

amazing time with it, pranking and bullying the other Elders." Mariel told him with a smirk.

"Yeah, that sounds like her. It was only a little change, but she loved to prank the others, to begin with." Cain laughed, wondering what the assassin turned Witch had come up with to annoy the other Elders of her Sect.

Cain thought about the offer for a while. If actual Gods and Deities would be willing to turn back time to make sure he arrived at the proper moment before his twins were born, there really wasn't any harm in remaining here for a while longer.

"I suppose I can stay for a while. I'm not looking for more disciples though, so don't get your hopes up too high on me intervening to do wondrous things for your initiates." Cain reminded her.

"Oh, I didn't expect you to take any more in, but since you're a World Dragon, you could do incredible things for the trials if I showed you a few new skills." She suggested.

Luna perked up at that. "Fun new skills?"

"A bit above your level, little one, but once you're fully grown, I think you'll be able to do them as well as your father, despite the difference in species."

"How did you know that? It's supposed to be a secret?" Luna asked.

"I might have used clairvoyance to watch the past and saw the moment when you entered the Sect Council chambers and were forced to transform. I will even tell you why since I can tell it bothered you both.

The spell is not based on recognition of what you are but on Truth. You both knew that you weren't humans, so you were forced to return to the shape your mind identified as the true form you belonged in."

Luna thought about that for a while. "That can't be right. I should have been bigger and more glorious with proper breasts."

Elder Mariel burst into laughter. "No, that is what you wish to be. Deep down in your mind, you know you're still a growing young lady, and it will take some time for your body to catch up to your wishes."

Luna was clearly pouting but began to relax when Cain petted her head, which made the rest of the Disciples smile.

"You will find that her emotions are actually very easy to manipulate if you have what she wants. The Sect Master has fatherly affection, and it works basically every time." Penny whispered to the Elder.

"Can you blame her? I bet if he gently petted your ears, you would be asleep in seconds."

The Lycan chuckled at her assessment and shrugged. "That's why I keep my ears hidden. They're weak against petting to begin with, and I have a suspicion that the Sect Master has a lot of experience with gently stroking animal ears."

She wasn't wrong. Between Nemu and the bunnies, Cain had a LOT of experience with animal ears.

Cain briefly considered calling for a new copy of his Companions to see what would happen but dismissed the thought for now since he had a large enough group following him around, and adding a plethora of new species in an almost all-human world would only cause more trouble than it was worth.

"Sect Master Cain's skills don't only extend to combat skills. Be careful, Elder, or he might attempt to charm you." Jen warned the new arrival in a very serious tone.

"He is a bit young for my tastes but rather sweet with his devotion. I don't think it would work out in any romantic sense, though." Elder Mariel replied, brushing off her concern.

The Disciples looked at her strangely after that comment before remembering that at the Divine Realm, appearance was malleable, and if she had reached Immortality early enough, she might have never had to in order to maintain such a youthful figure, appearing to be barely into her thirties.

"I still want to know what fun new skill you mean, though." Luna requested, with much more polite sincerity in her voice this time.

"As a World Dragon, he can operate on many levels at the same time. If I teach him a new Illusion Skill, he can individually set trials for every Applicant and Disciple and grant them a reward or ranking at the end." The Divine Elder explained.

"He could be his own Dungeon? How freaking cool is that? Where would the rewards come from, though?" Luna asked.

"Most of the rewards would be in the form of Blessings unless he chose to have the illusion make an actual physical item for him. At his level, I could teach him [Pocket Dimension], which combines well with the illusion spell [Trial of the Gods], and would let him have a summoned being create a reward individually for every champion.

Time is mostly irrelevant inside a Pocket Dimension and can be up to a hundred times different than the normal flow of the world you're in. It's a Divine Rank Skill, but I am certain that he can use it without issue, being a World Dragon." Elder Mariel explained.

"Is that how you usually test Disciples?" Cain asked.

"Oh heavens no. Most of us can only cast one at a time. Until we're True Gods, keeping an active pocket dimension up prevents us from opening another. But your body is different from humans, and you could make one attached to every scale on your body in dragon form." She elaborated.

"That's actually not a bad plan, but how do you plan on teaching me a Divine Skill when I am still an Immortal?" Cain asked.

"That's the easy part. Since you've got a Divine Body, you will be able to use the necessary Divine Power to operate the skill, and that's all that actually separates most Divine Skills from their Immortal Realm counterparts. Once you know the skill, I can transfer you the knowledge on how to use it properly, and the problem should be solved." Elder Mariel insisted.

"Well, it sounds like fun to me. If worst comes to worst, I can create the illusion in the [Battlefield] skill area and test them that way. It runs at the normal time, and it's not quite a separate space in the sense of a pocket dimension, but it is very close." Cain agreed.

Mariel tapped Cain on the forehead and transferred the knowledge of the new skill and its proper use directly into his brain. At first, the System seemed like it was going to reject the skill completely, but after a few minutes, the skill sunk through the resistance, and Cain received a notification.

[Divine Skill Learned: Pocket Dimension]

[Immortal Skill Learned: Trial of the Gods] Human Edition

Cain chuckled at the bit of snark from the system, as if the human gods' trial was somehow incomplete or lesser than the version it would have preferred, but the most important notification was still to come.

With the new skills learned, he should be getting one more notification.

[Awakening Complete] Divine Realm [Demigod]

[System Error] Invalid Rank. Please Imbue your body with Divine Energy to finish ascension.

[Begin Tribulation Now?] Y/N

"Oh shoot. I might have forgotten about the side effects. Sorry ladies, I need to borrow your Sect Master for a short while." Elder Mariel panicked, then grabbed Cain and tossed him through a portal, chasing right after him and closing the portal behind her.

"What just happened? Did she steal him? He's got all the spare cake." Luna's panic actually calmed the others down a little and gave them a reason to think about why the Elder might have needed to move Cain somewhere else.

A storm was brewing over the Crushing Mountain next to the Sect, drawing the attention of every cultivator in the area.

"Is that a Divine Tribulation? Who ascended? Did we have someone on the cusp?" One of the Disciples in the arena asked in awe, staring up at the rapidly growing black stormcloud.

"I think it was that Forbidden Treasures Sect Master. He was talking with the Seaside Sect Elder about something, and I think he had an epiphany." One of the older Disciples suggested from the bleachers.

"You realize he's going to be totally insufferable now, right? The number of Divine Realm Dad Jokes he will be able to unleash on us will take him decades to get through." Penny sighed.

"A small price to pay, I suppose. But do you think that he will be alright? You're supposed to prepare for centuries before the Tribulation, and he literally just became an Immortal this year." Jen asked.

"That I can't say, but that cloud looks pretty ominous. I wonder how to tell if it's a good one." Penny replied, then tossed a small rock at the Core Disciple further down the bleachers.

"Do you know how to tell the strength of a Tribulation?" She asked.

"Anything over ten kilometers is supposed to be top-notch. Anything under two kilometers has a chance of failing, and anything over twenty kilometers usually kills the one taking it." The disciple answered politely, realizing that it was their Sect Master they were concerned about.

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 680 680 Tribulation

"I am so sorry, Sect Master. I totally forgot that teaching you a Divine Skill might trigger the Tribulation. Most Cultivators wouldn't have an epiphany from it since it would take them centuries to fully integrate the knowledge, as opposed to just learning enough to

be able to activate the skill." Elder Mariel was apologizing from her seat on the ground beside Cain atop the Mountain.

The Crushing Mountain Sect Master had made an ascension temple here for his own rise to Divinity many centuries before, and the Elder had appropriated it for Cain's trial today.

The rapidly growing storm cloud had attracted many curious Divinities, both human and Dragon, with a few other species that Cain couldn't identify through the distortion caused by the storm scattered in.

One was a Lycan for sure, as it was in full Lycan form, and one might be an Ancient, going by the black orbs for eyes, but since the others weren't upset at its presence, perhaps it was another species he wasn't familiar with.

"Back away from the Tribulation if you don't want to get caught up in it, little human." The Black Matriarch warned Elder Mariel as the clouds reached a radius of fifty kilometers and began to glow with golden light.

"Sorry, gotta go." The Elder sighed, then flew off to a safe distance, leaving Cain alone on the mountaintop, surrounded by Divine Realm Cultivators of many species from all over the world.

As the storm clouds intensified, Cain sensed that he was being watched, a familiar presence that he identified as Misha, as well as an unfamiliar one that he thought might be an Ancient.

"At least she gets to watch, even if she isn't here for it." Cain chuckled.

[Is there anything more appropriate than accidentally becoming a Divine Being because you wanted to prank a bunch of initiates during their trials?] A familiar voice asked in Cain's mind.

[You have a point. I never really tried to do anything but have fun in my second chance at life, but look where it led me. Maybe I really am your perfect Avatar.] Cain agreed.

[My Avatar? You were never my Avatar, only my favorite. But that's not the point. I should leave your mind before I mess with your trial. Good luck.]

As the voice faded, the density of the storm cloud stopped increasing, and the glowing golden light began to take on hints of multiple other colors, shining like a second sun in the sky before the first bolt crashed down onto Cain and forced his body back into its World Dragon form.

Every scale on his body shone with light for a moment, then dimmed as the energy was absorbed, tempering his mana into a slightly different feeling than it had before.

Again and again, the lightning crashed down on him, making his scales glow with heat as the Divine Energy began to build up faster than he could process it.

Cain merged with Kone and Su, gaining the double healing aura for ten percent of his life every five seconds, a truly stupendous amount of regeneration with his current stat line.

That was enough to cool his scales, so they didn't feel like they were burning his flesh, but he was starting to glow pretty brightly with the excess energy.

A flash of insight told Cain to step left, and he flicked to the side, almost making the next bolt miss him entirely until it suddenly turned at the last instant and hit him from the side instead of the top.

Cain could swear that the cloud was annoyed with him now, and he wondered if the Divine Will of the planet was actually sentient or if it was just a figment of his imagination. The Divine Energy was changing all of his senses by the millisecond, and it was becoming disorienting trying to recall where he was and what he was doing.

After he tried to dodge, the bolts stopped coming one at a time and began coming in pairs, then three, six, and finally twelve at a time.

That must be a normal thing because he could sense the excitement of the dragons over the worry of the other cultivators present, though the Lycan seemed to be just as excited as the Dragons, and the being with black eyes was simply curious, in a detached, scientific researcher sort of way.

A dozen at a time, the bolts hit Cain, and he focused his entire mind on letting them remake his mana and his body's stored life energy, then fill his body instead of collecting on his scales.

Once he was focusing on it, he realized that every scale could do it on its own, and his body became a veritable whirlwind, sucking all of the available energy from around him and causing the speed and intensity of the tribulation lightning to increase.

Eventually, it was cracking his scales with every hit, with barely enough time to regenerate in between volleys, so Cain activated [Regrowth], [Regeneration], and [Superior Recovery], the three best heal over time spells that he could recall, all at Immortal Rank, and let them keep his body intact through what he hoped was the peak of the Tribulation.

Cain had dropped below one-quarter health when the tribulation stopped as suddenly as it started, leaving him glowing with energy and slowly healing his cracked scales and singed hide. Exhausted, he crumpled to the ground and let the spells work their magic.

Somehow, even the blue sky above him held more depth and meaning now that he had reached the Divine Realm, and he could sense the flow of the world's energy in a way that transcended the simple mana detection that he could do as an Ancient.

The first to approach him was the Black Matriarch, accompanied by the Lycan and the creature with black eyes.

"These two are guests from the Divine Planes. They were playing a game when they noticed your tribulation and decided to stop in to visit." The black dragon informed him.

"I hope it was satisfactory for you. It was rather painful at my end." Cain greeted them.

"Quite impressive, really. Not every Dragon can absorb that much energy. Your mana pool must have been absolutely ridiculous." The black-eyed creature, whose thoughts identified its species as a Celestial, agreed.

"Yes, it was enough to distract me from the game, and it takes a lot to do that. I just thought I really should come to see you in person first before you were invited to play with us." The Lycan informed him, then vanished into thin air with the Celestial right behind him.

"Was that a good thing or not?" Cain asked, confused.

"That depends on what team you're on for the game. The Lycans have a habit of stealing their brides and taking them on a journey through the various Planes and worlds with their family in hot pursuit as a method of courtship. You have a number of daughters, so it is possible that you might be on the chasing team." The Black Matriarch laughed.

That was an interesting tradition, but knowing how Lycans loved to run, it really did make sense.

Cain waited a few minutes while his body recovered from the Tribulation and then slowly got to his feet, feeling very different than he had only a few minutes ago.

Much less divine energy than mana was needed to activate a skill, but his regeneration rate hadn't decreased at all. His body had already been in the Divine Realm, and it didn't seem to get any stronger, but the amount of power he could put into his skills was now many times more than it had been when he was using Mortal Grade Mana.

Having the [Versatility] skill as a Demigod was completely broken and blurred the lines between a Demigod and a Lesser God, which could innately use all their skills at their own level, with the perfect understanding that their power granted to them. With the body of a World Dragon, even a Hatchling one, Cain was certain that he wasn't inferior to many Lesser Gods and certainly not any of the demigods that he had met so far.

Many more people were coming forward now to congratulate Cain, including both of the Divine Realm Sect Masters that he had met from the Foot Clan and Thunder Gods Sects. A new Demigod seemed to be a huge deal, even when it wasn't someone from their species, since he didn't know most of these people but they were still here to wish him well and welcome him to the fold.

"You seem like you have had another epiphany." Elder Mariel greeted him once the others had finished their greetings and returned to their homes.

"In a way, yes, I did. I have the perfect idea of what I should do for the Initiates trials. It's going to be incredible." Cain laughed.

His plan was to activate the Divine Trials but to set the deity they were supposed to appease to a randomized state instead of having the spell base their trials on what would gain his own approval. Letting the greater Deities pick and choose the fates of the initiates sounded like way more fun than having them audition to impress him while applying for someone else's Sect.

"You're still thinking of that?" She asked.

"Of course. That was the whole point of this experiment. I couldn't get totally sidetracked just because of a bit of angry lightning."

"Very angry Divine lightning." Cain amended when the sky let out a rumble of thunder.

"We should likely fix the shrine before we go down. The Sect Master made this for himself, we just borrowed it for your tribulation, and it's a bit broken. As you said, that was quite the experience, and the cloud made it to nearly sixty kilometers before it settled. If you weren't a Dragon, you would have been in very real trouble."

Cain patted her on the head, then returned to his human form. "I was still very much in danger. The power of the healing skills I used to avoid having my scales blown off would have healed you from dead to full three times a second."

"It looked like they still almost did get blown off. I have seen a lot of dead dragons after battles, but I have never seen scales crack like that before." Elder Mariel told him, straightening her hair back into its messy curls.

"Time to go see my Disciples. Then we can fix the mountain. I am sure they're more than a little bit worried, and we didn't have time to explain what was happening before we left. I mean, I'm sure they figured it out, but you know."

The Elder laughed at Cain's frazzled state and opened a portal back to the arena.

[New Skill recorded: Portal] Divine Rank Skill

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

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"Are you alright? That storm freaked me out, and I thought you would die. Why do you smell like burning Dragon Scales?" Luna asked the moment that they arrived back at the arena.

"Just a minor case of Tribulation Lightning. Nothing to worry about. It's all over, and I'm fully recovered. I hope it didn't interfere with the Sect too much." Cain consoled Luna, pulling her into his lap to pat her head and hug her.

"Interfere with the Sect? Not at all. Why would a thousand Deities in the sky and a massive Tribulation Lightning storm possibly interfere with the day-to-day activities of the mortal Disciples?" Penny asked, words dripping with sarcasm.

"Hey, I'm a demigod now, shouldn't there be some sort of reverence?" Cain asked.

"Did you know that most demigods in the legends were the results of beast-type divine beings mating with human women and producing half-god offspring?" Penny replied with a smirk.

"Well, you know how it is. Human women are popular everywhere they go. Just as popular as the ever-lewd elves." Cain shrugged, secretly happy that their attitude didn't change.

"Since when are Elves lewd? I thought that they were peaceful forest-loving kin to the fae folk?" Elder Mariel asked, confused.

"You haven't met many Elves, have you? Trust me. They're lewd in a way that most humans find hard to grasp. Especially the Forest Elves, that bunch of orgy-loving nudists." Cain chuckled.

"Not listening. They're gentle and sweet, innocent souls." The Elder told him, sticking her tongue out him.

The Disciples in the area seemed scandalized by this conversation, both because of the subject matter and because a pair of Divine Realm Cultivators were teasing each other like children in public.

"When were we going to start those trials for the initiates anyhow? I have this really good idea, and I don't want to forget it." Cain asked.

"Is it even possible for you to forget? When I ascended, my memory became flawless." Mariel asked.

"I don't know, but there are so many thoughts all at once, I am not sure I'll be able to find it again if I lose it. Think of it like having ten thousand visions of the present at the same time. There is so much information that I am having issues remembering what all of the other trains of thought were working on." Cain explained.

"Oh, that makes sense. Like the clarity, it takes a while to get used to. But we can start the trials right now if you want. The initiates are supposed to be ready to be called at any moment, and now that the storm is over, they should all be awake and about. It's not like anything within a hundred kilometers slept through that." She laughed.

Cain stopped for a moment and used his class ability as an Avatar of Nature to reconstruct the mountain top that had been destroyed by his tribulation back to its original temple design, keeping as much of the Divine Energy embedded in the stones as he could, turning it into a top-notch cultivation spot for Immortal Realm Cultivators looking for a breakthrough.

The Elders called the initiates to the courtyard while he was working, making a milling mass of nervous children in the training area, none of whom knew what was going on but who were all panicked by the Tribulation.

Cain flew over, reveling in the fact that as a Demigod, he no longer needed a sword or wings to do it. It would be much less suspicious to see him flying at this level of cultivation than when he used a spell to do it before.

It was kind of slow, though. His dragon form was way faster than this.

Cain landed atop the steps by the training area and addressed the crowd while surrounded by the Elders of the Crushing Mountain Sect.

"Welcome, everyone. I am Sect Master Cain of the Forbidden Treasures Sect. I have been invited to run your trial today thanks to a particular skill of mine. Each of you will be given an individual trial. You might pass, you might fail, and you might die, but if you do well enough, you will get a Divine Blessing or even a rare artifact as a reward.

I will begin the trials now. Best of luck to you all."

The Elders all looked at Cain in shock, thinking he needed some preparation time, but Cain opened a separate [Pocket Dimension] for each of them and then began the [Trial of the Gods] Human Gods edition.

The initiates disappeared into his spells, and the trials began, leaving Cain the only one who could see what was going on for a moment until he opened up the entrance to the

Pocket Dimensions a little so that the others could see the events inside like watching a hundred small television screens at once.

Each test was very different but somewhat suited to the initiates' skills and talents, intended to push them to their very limits and see if they had the perseverance and attitude that would help them shine.

The better they were, the more they would gain from the experience, so it was actually a waste to use it on untested initiates, but the entertainment value as students who had only begun the very beginning stages of refining their bodies were faced with various life-threatening challenges was enough to make up for it.

They only had to wait for ten minutes before the first initiate was ejected after failing the test. He had been presented with a tunnel full of spiders and fled, crying out into the open areas, refusing to continue. That was enough for the trial to fail him and toss him back out to the very real judgment of the Elders who had been watching.

Anyone at the Divine Realm could watch all the screens at once, and even Luna, who was still in Cain's arms, could keep track of a half dozen at once, constantly scanning for people doing interesting things.

"Oh, I think we're close to another failure." One of the gods chuckled as a boy was seen curled up in the arms of a friendly innkeeper, forgetting his quest to obtain power in favor of a life of comfort. It was hard for Luna to follow, as the trials ran at a hundred times normal speed, but soon after, the boy was ejected with a confused look before sighing and dropping his head in shame.

The trials blocked his memory of the outside world, so he didn't know he was in a trial, only that he had an opportunity to gain great power and change the path of his destiny, and he had given it up.

Perhaps not a moral failing in any way, but not the sort of attitude that led to a powerful cultivator. He would have to be judged on talent and whether it was worthwhile to keep him on track and moving forward.

One by one, there were failures until four hours into the test, the first success appeared with a huge smile on their face and rune-inscribed armor on under their Sect Robes.

"Very impressive initiate. I see you were blessed with a great defensive treasure." The Elder from the Crushing Mountain Sect, who was in charge of the applications, greeted him with a smile.

"That was possibly the most intense experience of my life. I thought I was going to die every second for the last two days. But I got it, the treasure to change my destiny." The boy replied, then collapsed onto the ground, exhausted.

Just after him, a young girl appeared, checking her body for injuries, then sighed and smiled. She had been on a mission to find justice for an artifact destroyed by evil cultivators and now held the small round object in her hand.

The real object was created by a puppet inside the Pocket Dimension with Rune Crafting, but it would gather power for her at ten times the ambient density, greatly speeding her growth rate and enhancing every opportunity she got in the future.

Only about one in fifty actually passed the trials, but many of the initiates did quite well before failing on their quest, often through poor decision-making rather than a lack of determination or skill.

The last one out appeared empty-handed, but she was smiling in a way that suggested she had a huge secret. She had succeeded, and the Trial had granted her the Skill Book for [Crushing Blow], which had activated the [Wandering Cultivator System] as the System called itself, when Cain did something to activate it in this world.

She was now a human Berserker, which startled Cain, who didn't expect her to have picked such a brutal class instead of warrior or another balanced option since all basic classes other than mages could use the skill book. Even Clerics could use [Crushing Blow].

"I see you did very well, and your future is looking bright, so I will teach you one more skill as an extra reward," Cain told her and used [Modify] to grant her [Mana Transformation] so that she could absorb mana containing resources to grow herself.

"Indeed, you were most outstanding, despite taking the longest to complete the first round of your trial. In recognition, I will grant you the first training resource you will receive as a potential Disciple of the Crushing Mountain." The Elder announced, having seen that she had learned [Crushing Blow], a very suitable skill for a Crushing Mountain disciple.

He passed her a Spirit Rank Monster Core, a minor trinket at his level, but an incredible treasure that would keep most of the new Disciples ahead of their peers for the entire first year as they worked to absorb it.

She focused on it for a split second after seeing the System Notification that it could be absorbed to gain power, then promptly passed out as the flood of notifications hit her.

Cain caught her on the way down and placed the Disciple gently on the ground to recover. "Oops, I guess I should have warned her about the side effects of rapidly absorbing resources like that."

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

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"Are you saying she absorbed and integrated that entire core instantly?" The Elder asked.

"Exactly. That was the blessing I gave her, to be able to instantly absorb mana-bearing resources. She will do very well with a supply of mana stones and monster cores, and given her choice of a Berserker fighting style, I think she will do exceptionally well among the Crushing Mountain Disciples."

"Why do you say she chose a Berserker fighting style?" The Elder asked.

"It was part of the reward from the trial. I can see it because I ran the trials, and she chose the path of a Berserker after learning the [Crushing Blow] Skill. She will naturally learn many more skills related to her path in the future, and with the right opportunity, she might even go much further along the path of a violent warrior as she grows." Cain explained.

"So, like you have been doing for your Disciples, but without your direct supervision?" Elder Mariel asked.

"Somewhat similar. I don't know how far she will make it without a qualified guide, but that is part of the fun of being a Cultivator, right? Forging your own path through life and toward Immortality?" Cain asked.

The assembled Elders nodded. Coddling her would do her no good. All they could do was wait for the process to finish and see how powerful she had gotten when she regained consciousness so they knew what to do with her in the immediate future.

Cain wasn't entirely familiar with their names for the stages of development in the Mortal Realms before the first awakening, but she had made it to level 82 with that one stone, about a third of the way through the Mortal Realm in one shot by level numbers.

Of course, that was only a thousandth of the way by pure experience needed, but that wasn't the point. She would wake up with the opportunity to take almost all of the Berserker skills, and then she could work her way toward the First Advancement as she settled into the Sect.

It would be an incredible experience for her, and she was likely to be hailed as a hero among the initiates, given her ability to defend against attacks by the senior Disciples who wanted to bully them. If her personality were as strong as the trial suggested, she would soon be a rising star among the Cultivators of this region.

The Elders began listing names, going through everyone who was accepted into the Sect, while those who failed to gain acceptance grew more and more desperate to hear their names. The remaining few looked shattered when the Elder announced the end of the list.

"Those are all of the successful applicants for the first round of this year's exams. Those who wish to try again may return to the Initiate areas outside the walls, where you will be brought to the Seaside Sect in two years for another attempt to gain entry into a Sect. Those who passed will be gathered again in a few days' time for your next test.

If you choose, you may leave and pursue your own destiny outside, and we will provide you with the necessities to make the first part of your journey.

The choice, as always, is your own, and in life, you can only rely on your own strength." The Crushing Mountain Sect Elder informed them.

Cain had expected to see more than one single System activation, but the Initiates weren't really an impressive bunch, and only a handful had passed the test at all, so the variety of rewards available had only given the top prize to a single person today.

Cain considered making it an option for all Disciples, but that would cause Chaos in the Crushing Mountain Sect, and the Elders had asked him to hang around for a while before they brought him back to the Sect with the portals, which would lead him to Misha.

"What do they need to do now that they passed the first test? Is there some cool oath or something?" Luna asked as she watched an Inner Sect Disciple lead the new kids away.

"The first day is simple. There are only half as many open dorms as marked for their use as there are potential disciples. They need to pick a roommate and get settled into a room. That part is always a struggle for them, and some will end up sleeping in alleys for weeks before they get themselves settled.

The Crushing Mountain values strength, including the strength of will, so we let them sort out their own living arrangements. Some will want a lackey with them, some an equal, but eventually, all of them will find a space, or someone will take pity on them and help them apply for a new space. The rest of the trials reject those without a suitable character." The Elder explained.

"Oh, I like it. Survival of the fittest and all. Do we bet on the outcomes?" Luna asked.

"You're too young to gamble, little lady." Cain admonished her.

"Can you bet on my behalf?" Luna asked, giving him her best pleading look.

"Maybe. Should we bet on the first to be forcefully ejected from a room?" Cain asked the Elders who were gathered around him.

"Oh, that is a fine first wager of the trials. I wager one flagon of whiskey that it will be that boy with the snake tattoo on his arm. He looks like the sort who can't back up his words." One of the brewers suggested.

"The boy with the left side of his head shaved. He is already unpopular among the others. I can see a pair ganging up on him no matter where he picks." Another Elder suggested.

"Why aren't the bets on who will settle in fastest?" Luna whispered to Cain.

"Because that's too easy. A cute girl got extra prizes for doing so well in the trials. Half of the Initiates would beg to join her, so she should only take a few seconds to settle in." Cain replied, then pointed at a room in the apartment-style outer Disciples dorms.

"See, there she is, already settled in with her choice of roommate. It looks like we might have our first forcible ejection as well." Cain said, pointing toward a room near the end of the row, where they would get the most sunlight in the evening but be in the shade for the early mornings.

An arrogant-looking young man with flowers in his hands, picked from the flowerbed outside the dorm, was strutting up to her door with what he presumably thought was an endearing smile on his face.

"I should probably go resurrect him." Cain sighed, making the Elders laugh.

"He can't see inside the dorm. There is no way he can see how she greeted that roommate of hers, but he should know better than what he's about to do. It's a small kindness to let him die for a moment first." One of the Elders agreed.

The boy simply marched up to the dorm and pulled the roommate out through the window before stepping inside with the flowers held in front of him before being violently ejected back out of the dorm and across the roadway, hitting the far wall with a wet splat that could only mean death.

The Berserker Girl looked enraged for a few more seconds while she picked up her roommate and carried her back inside in a princess carry, but quickly calmed down and then looked horrified as she saw the blood streak extending down the wall of the dorm across the way, from the second floor to the ground.

Cain set Luna down on top of a pillar near the training grounds and flew over, resurrecting the man as he landed and looking down at the pathetic sight of the sobbing Initiate.

"I hope you learned a valuable lesson today. It wasn't easy to get the Death Goddess to return your soul to your body. I won't bring you back to life again if you make another mistake." Cain informed him, then flew away.

The Death Goddess honestly couldn't care less about his soul since he had no power and nothing else about him to draw her interest, but the warning should be enough to keep the boy on the right path for a while, assuming he passed the other tests.

The display of power was enough to keep anyone else from bothering the top seed or her roommate, and it also seemed to smooth over the process, leading to almost everyone finding roommates within the first few minutes.

The resurrected initiate and one other boy were left out, as two others decided that they would rather be solo than room with them, but after a few minutes, they realized that they could actually room with each other and work together, leaving everyone indoors, and the two outcasts uncomfortably sharing a room.

"Wow, I have never seen them all get rooms the first night. Maybe we should let them kill one the first day all the time." An Elder suggested.

"Most groups aren't going to have someone capable of putting on such a show that it would make the others fall in line, though. Should we start planting a ringer in the groups?" Another Elder asked.

"No, that's too dishonorable. We can take this one as a one-off and rejoice that, for once, the Initiates are behaving themselves." The brewer suggested.

"Speaking of behaving themselves, the Elders are going to stay sober for the evening, right? I have Inscription Exams to mark, and a courtyard full of Immortal Drunks did not make it easy for me." An older woman complained, looking around with disgust.

"We promise. That hangover was nothing to joke about." An Immortal promised with a sincere hand over his heart, making the Elders chuckle.

They had all been in the same shape this morning, but most of them had poison-cleansing potions on them that let them recover in minutes. It was still enough to know that drinking whisky from the mug was not a great idea.

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

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The next morning could not come early enough for the excited initiates, but it seemed to arrive way too suddenly to the Elders of the Sect, who would have their hands full today.

Now that Cain's trials had given them an idea of the skills and personalities of all of the applicants, as well as handing out a few rewards to the best performers, they could begin the traditional sorting. They would sort by skill, then aptitude so that they could place the newcomers with an appropriate teacher.

The Crushing Mountain Sect was mostly an Earth Sect, but they valued strength over everything else, so they had various skills for every aptitude and weren't afraid to take in students who shared their values.

They were arranged by the order in which they arrived at the courtyard, with many arriving well before dawn, too excited to remain in their dorms and sleep or meditate. It was a deliberate system so that they didn't discourage any of the initiates.

If they were sorted by potential, no matter which direction, it would discourage some who knew they would fail or who knew they would barely pass, simply by their place in line, so sorting them by arrival time gave everyone hopes that they could pass today's tests, no matter how they did yesterday.

The first in line today was the boy that got killed last night, as the dorm walls were very thin, and he couldn't take the sound of people laughing at him anymore, only an hour after dark. Behind him was a hugely muscled youth with a prodigious beard but too tall to be a Dwarf.

He was clearly still very young, but the beard was impressive enough that Cain wondered if one of his parents might not have been human. Cain had always been clean-shaven in his preferred forms, but that braided mass of black hair gave him beard envy.

The first boy stepped up to the testing device, where the Elder was barely hiding her amusement at his haggard appearance, but he managed to muster a bit of yesterday's pride and walked smoothly up to place his hand on the testing stone.

The first Elder looked at him with sympathy and spoke softly. "Place your hands on the stone to show your current cultivation status."

The device was a totem with clearly marked levels etched into it. The boy's touch lit up the first stone, showing that he was in the very early stages of Body Refining, which was not surprising for someone his age, but not horribly impressive.

"Passable. Please move to the next station." The Elder declared, moving him to a station with a flat stone tablet.

"Elemental aptitudes: Earth, Medium. Wind, Low." The Elder at the second stone announced, then gestured for the boy to move on to the next Elder.

With more pride now, the boy placed his hands on the next device.

"Physical Cultivation aptitude is moderate. Mystic Cultivation aptitude is very low. Dual Cultivation Aptitude is abysmal. Candidate may be suffering from a misfortune curse." The Elder announced, deadpan.

The boy blushed and hurried to the next Elder while the other initiates did their best not to laugh out loud and get reprimanded.

The last stop was a potential stone in the shape of a shield. The boy's touch lit it up in turquoise all the way across the surface, and the Elder nodded before gesturing for him to move to the right.

"Moderate chance of reaching the Immortal Realm. Passable. Congratulations on passing the second test."

The big man behind him managed to earn a High aptitude for physical cultivation, with a high affinity for Earth Elements, making him an excellent fit for the Sect, but he had no better chance of reaching Immortality than the first Disciple, a common issue for physical cultivators.

A dozen names passed without an outstanding applicant before the girl who received the System Interface yesterday came up to the testing booths.

"Current Cultivation status, Early Foundation Formation." The Elder announced for the others to hear.

That made her one of the strongest applicants they had seen in a long time, but she hurried along to the next booth to see how she fared with aptitude.

"Elemental Affinities: Blood, Excellent. That's all." The Elder informed the crowd in confusion. Blood wasn't an Element, but it was clear what the stone said, so he repeated it just as the stone told him to.

The third booth was where the real shocks started.

"Physical Cultivation aptitude is excellent. Mystic Cultivation aptitude is Excellent. Dual Cultivation aptitude is Abysmal." The Elder announced with a smile.

"Ice princess." Someone among the Initiates chuckled, earning himself a glare from the woman in question that promised violence.

She stepped up to the stone, and it turned bright blood red the moment her fingertip made contact.

"That's an excellent chance to reach Divinity." The Elder announced in awe.

It made sense to Cain. As long as she could learn the right skills, all she had to do was level up high enough to make the Awakening activate, and she would reach Immortality the same way that Cain himself did. There wasn't much higher chance than that, at least not in this world.

The discussion between Elders about who got to take her in as their personal Disciple was going to be highly entertaining this afternoon, Cain decided.

He would have to pick up more whiskey.

Not many Initiates failed out at this stage, thanks to yesterday's testing, but many of them were having a tough time coming to grips with the fact that they would likely remain an Outer Sect Disciple for most of their life, given their low aptitudes, unless they had a lucky encounter that changed their fate.

"Can we go play in the arena now? Everyone was here watching, but I think they should be free now." Luna whispered to Cain as the last disciple finished their sorting, and those eliminated were escorted back to the camp outside the walls.

"Give it a minute. There is usually a speech or something." Cain whispered back, patting her head to keep her silent for one more minute.

"Congratulations, everyone. You have all passed the second day of testing, and you will begin the longest portion of the initiation. You will be granted a skill from the library, and you will have one week to learn the basics and demonstrate them to an Elder to prove your dedication to the path of cultivation."

It was a tough test that most Sects didn't bother with, but the Strength is everything mentality here made the applicants go through an extra stage so those who didn't have the drive would be eliminated immediately instead of months or years later.

The Elders disappeared to hold their talks about taking in the one truly talented applicant, and the new Disciples in waiting were left to their own devices for the first time inside the Sect compound.

Cain let Luna go, and she grabbed the others to return to the Arena to test their skills with the newest combat techniques that Carnage had taught them.

"Do you think I could join them, Sect Master Cain? I know they're your disciples, not from my Sect, but they said they were going to an arena to fight." The Berserker girl asked.

"That's fine. Just ask them when you get there, and maybe pick a nickname." Cain agreed.

"Why a nickname? Does the Crushing Mountain Sect use code names?" She asked.

"No, but your name is Comamryggrghail, and it hurts my tongue to try to pronounce it, so don't make them try to do it," Cain replied, and the girl froze.

"How did you know that? Nobody should know that name but my mother, who has already passed. Did you commune with the dead?" The girl asked.

"No, I cheated. Check your System interface and look at me. What does it tell you?" Cain replied.

"Um, it says you are Cain, Sect Master of the Forbidden Treasures Sect, and a lot of lines with question marks. Oh, so you can see my name in the interface. Wait that means. . ."

"Exactly. Now, run along and have fun. Don't forget to use your new skill points to buy up all the skills you find interesting. The rest of your future is up to you." Cain replied with a wink.

The girl ran off after Luna and the others, catching up quickly since they kept stopping to pull in more people for the Arena matches. Cain was going to have to make a higher quality permanent one for them eventually since the one Luna created struggled with Spirit Ranked fights hitting the barriers, but mostly she wasn't fighting, only training and watching the junior disciples fight in order to get new ideas for her own techniques.

Cain had just settled himself into a seat in the bleachers when the victorious Elder from the discussions about the Berserker's future arrived.

"So, how is she? Has she been out on the floor yet?" The Elder asked, straightening his uniform, and clearly uncomfortable wearing the top, being one of the Physical Cultivators who preferred to go bare-chested all the time, as he was immune to the cold.

"You were quicker than anticipated. They have just dismissed Carnage after the first skill demonstration, and they are about to practice. The Disciple she has ended up with is pretty well matched in cultivation, so we can see how she is doing with the skills from the blessing she got from the trials." Cain replied.

"It wasn't just the [Crushing Blow]?"

Cain shook his head. "No, she got an entire cultivation path as a bonus after learning the skill book. She is a proper Berserker now, but the question is if she fights like one."

The second the Seraphim referee started the match, the Berserker activated [Brutal Rush] and leaped across the ring in a single bound, using [Crushing Blow] with two clubs at the same time, taking her opponent by surprise and very nearly bashing his skull apart before he could react.

"Looks like she has the rage." The Elder informed Cain while smiling at his new personal Disciple, assuming she accepted.

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

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Cain and the Elder watched as the Disciple finished her match, totally crushing her opponent before the Elder went down to talk to her about becoming his personal Disciple.

"Excellent work, young Disciple. I also walk the path of the Berserker, and I would like to take you as my personal Disciple. I can help guide you in mastering your skills and the gift you have received, as well as helping you manage the rage that will come with them as you progress." The Elder offered.

"Personal Disciple to an Elder already? Is there some trick?" She asked.

"No tricks. The way of the Berserker doesn't take well to deception and double-speak. I see your potential and the ways that you can improve now that I have seen you fight, so I would like to train you." The Elder replied simply.

"In that case, I would be greatly honored to become your Disciple Elder." She smiled while her defeated opponent gave an envious glare from the recovery area.

"Excellent. I am Elder Murg, and this is my token. Keep it on you at all times, as it will allow you to pass the wards and enter the Elder's area for your lessons with me. What should I call you?"

"You can call me Ali. I've grown fond of the name, and I think I'll keep it."

The Elder smiled and patted her on the head, only to get his hand swatted away, which made his smile even larger.

"Excellent. Let's find you another opponent, and I will give you pointers after the match."

More than a few of the boys looked afraid to face her, but there was an easy solution to that problem. The Elder simply picked one large young man from the older Disciples and informed him that he would be fighting the Berserker.

A few minutes after their match started, one of the new recruits came up to Cain with a slim book in his hands and a pleading look on his face.

"Sect Master Cain, might I ask you for a moment of your time? I picked this skill because it sounded cool, but I can't make the top or bottom of what's written in it." The boy asked.

Cain plucked the obviously incomplete skill book from the boy's hands and laughed quietly at the skill name. Ultimate Divine Mountain Crushing Demon Destroying Fist. Quite possibly the most chunni skill name he had come across so far.

He flipped the book open to the first page and looked at the diagram, then went through the other diagrams that were present despite the missing pages, and then started over to read the words, which were written in Draconic of all things.

The skill was called [Backhand] and was intended to slap impertinent cultivators unconscious without killing them. If he, or another Dragon on his level, had used it against a human, Cain could understand how they thought it could crush mountains.

The skill was designed to stun, so the victim might think that the attacker had held back and spared their lives and not that the skill was a nonlethal one.

"Alright, I can demonstrate this one for you right here. In the earliest form, this is an attack with the back of a closed hand. First, move the mana through your body like this, focusing it on your hand, and then strike out." Cain instructed, highlighting the path that the energy took through his arm.

The boy nodded happily, and then Cain watched as a tiny trickle of energy flowed from his chest through his arm but stopped short of his hand when he began the attack too early.

"No, don't move until it is complete. With practice, you will be able to do it in an instant, but for now, don't move until the power reaches the end of your fist." Cain clarified.

The boy tried dozens of times, but finally, he managed to get it right, and a faint glow surrounded his fist as he struck out at the air in front of him.

"What are you teaching that boy?" One of the Dwarves from the Brewery asked.

"He picked a skill from the Library for his training, and I was available to help. I think he's doing pretty well, even if the skill is a bit odd." Cain shrugged.

"Aye, odd is the word for it. My own mother used to use it all the time, but I've never seen a man who wants to live actually use it in combat." The Dwarf laughed.

"Is it useless then? The name on the folder was very impressive." The boy said, showing the dwarf the cover.

The brewer burst into laughter and then shot a backhand out at Cain with his hand open and glowing with light. It slammed into Cain's open palm, and the Dwarf laughed at the boy's naivety.

"That's the ultimate form of the skill. It is incredible at knocking people out, but if you don't, you've just slapped a man in the face." He explained, making the boy go pale.

"Well, I've only got a week to learn a skill's basic form, and I think I'm getting the hang of this one. Do you think they'll let me pick a different skill after the exam?" The boy asked.

"Of course. Once you get the basic stage of that skill down, you can exchange it. The Crushing Mountain Sect doesn't make any disciple stick with a skill that is unfit for them. We only require that they at least give an honest effort to trying to learn it first."

"Thank you, Elder. Thank you, Sect Master Cain. I will return to my quarters and work on my new skill then. I promise to do my best and make it work before the week is up."

A few more Disciples looked like they would like to ask a question, but with the two high-ranked cultivators sitting together, they didn't dare to interrupt their conversation. Both of them took it as a sign of good character, and after seeing which ones were earnestly trying to learn their skills while watching the matches for inspiration, the brewer eventually called one up to them for instruction.

"See that skill the big man is using on the far side of the arena? The downward strike with the side of the fist? That's the skill book you've chosen. Look at the diagrams. They show you how to move the energy. Try it again, and I will guide you." He offered.

The boy still seemed lost, but after the Elder demonstrated slowly, describing the process as it activated, he started to get a general idea and understand the diagrams.

"I think the major issue is that no one understands how the diagrams work. They're all looking at the basic instructions we are giving, and they still can't understand." Cain sighed.

"They can't be blamed for that. The diagrams are mostly thousands of years old, faded, and intended to be supplementary for someone who can actually read the text.

We have tried to translate them before, but it was a mess. They never come out right, and the readers get even more confused. What we usually do is have the older Disciples help them out since they already know the skills to some degree.

There simply aren't enough Elders to teach every skill to every Disciple, and we're all working on ourselves. Not exactly the optimal method for teaching, but unless we give up on reaching Divinity and spend all our time running a training academy, there's nothing to be done for it."

Cain thought about that for a moment and nodded. He had a point. The journey from Immortal to Divinity could be a touchy one for them, and getting sidetracked teaching others things that weren't on your path could totally derail your own cultivation path by introducing foreign elements that you had taught to others.

"Perhaps we could have someone teach just how to interpret the diagrams? Not the actual skills, but the fundamentals behind the diagrams, so everyone could understand by reading them, even if they didn't really know what they were supposed to manifest?" Cain suggested.

"Do you understand them that well? I don't." The Dwarf shrugged.

"I do, actually. Why don't I start teaching seminars here in the Crushing Mountain Sect while I'm here? That kind Divine Elder from the Seaside Sect offered to take me straight to my destination when she leaves, so I've got the time."

A lyrical voice came from behind Cain, and a pair of delicate arms wrapped around him as the Divine Elder in question arrived in the arena. "What a wonderful idea, Sect Master. Both of our Sects would be forever in your debt if you could teach our students to read the energy flow diagrams in the lost languages."

She gave Cain a kiss on the cheek, and he was certain that he heard Luna growl at her, but the Elder paid her no mind and moved to sit beside Cain, leaning up against him.

"And I suppose you would like to sit in on the classes as well?" Cain asked.

"Unless you have a better idea? I have a good idea of how they work since I know so many skills, but there is still something that is getting lost in translation, and I'm sure that I could learn faster if I could find it." She agreed.

"That shouldn't be a problem, but there is a faster way," Cain told her with a smile, and then transferred the full knowledge of the diagrams, their symbols, and the instructions, much like the key to a map, that told the reader which specific forms and levels of energy in what order was intended to be used.

"It's so simple. How did I miss this the first time? Yes, that is exactly how it should be." She exclaimed, wrapping her arms around Cain in joy.

Even the Dwarf laughed this time, having never seen her this excited about anything before.

"If the key to the diagrams gets you that excited, I wonder how you would react if I started teaching you a new language?" Cain suggested, giving her a wink as the Elder began to calm down.

"Perhaps we can talk about that later."

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 685 685 Professor Cain

Word got around to the Elders of the Crushing Mountain Sect quite quickly that Cain was not only proficient in the lost art of the Cultivation diagrams but also in the lost languages in which the skill books were written. All of them were interested in learning what he had to teach, so they began to work on a plan to get him to hold more than one or two lessons about the subject.

"We could always sacrifice the Divine Elder to him. I don't think that she would object." One of the Elders suggested with a smirk.

"I get the feeling that she already managed to get the knowledge of the diagrams, at least, from him. She looks way too happy right now, and they're just watching the Disciples practice and drinking Ale with the brewery Elder." Another one pointed out.

"I have never seen her flirt before. It's both adorable and somehow disturbing." A female Elder with gray hair pulled into a tight bun added with her lips pursed in a tight line of disapproval.

"Come on, Elder. Surely you're not that adverse to public displays of affection." The first man to speak asked her.

"It's not that. It's just some harmless flirting, but they're both Divinities and not even from the same species, should there not be some level of decorum?"

"You always were a stickler for the rules. But that Sect Master, he's hard to anticipate. He might do it simply because one of his Disciples wants to learn the skill, but he might limit the audience on a whim as well." The first Elder sighed.

"Bah, just ask and offer something fun in exchange. I will go talk to him about the subject." The big Elder, who Cain had made an ax for back in the city, replied, then strode out of the room, leaving his startled compatriots behind.

"So, they sent you to negotiate? Now the Divine Elder owes me a silver coin. She thought that hanging off me would be enough to have them send a honey trap to do the pleading for them." Cain laughed as the big man flopped in the seat in front of him.

"They talk too much. I gave up on waiting and came to ask." He shrugged.

"We already agreed that I would teach the Disciples until it was time for me to head out. The Elders are welcome to sit in on the lesson, of course, but I think for the first week, we will keep it to the older Disciples so that we don't influence the applicants too much. Critical thinking skills are part of the test, and if we just teach them everything they need to know to pass while they're still doing the entrance exam, what is the point of testing them at all?"

Well, that's good news. I would let the others know, but I'm sure they're eavesdropping already." The big man chuckled.

"Of course they were. We only blocked the room they were in from our senses for the sake of our wager. They've been able to hear us all along." The dwarf laughed.

"You were in on this as well? What did you wager on us picking?"

The Dwarf drained his Ale and set the mug aside before replying. "The Divine Elder wagered that it would be a honey trap, Master Cain thought it would be one of the strongest in the room instead since the room was full of meat heads, and I wagered that someone would get impatient and leave to come to talk to us before they decided, so both of us won the wager."

"You know us too well. But how is your brewery coming along? I heard that you were making a new ale to go with the new whiskey that you shared with the Elders."

The dwarf shook his head. "The new brew mistress Cain summoned has gone into seclusion with the lead blacksmith, so we have to wait to make new brews until they return."

"Hmph. I knew that man was a bad influence on the Elders. Everyone just goes off snogging and shagging and forgetting that they have duties to perform." The Elder with the tight gray bun grumbled in their room back in the Elder's quarters.

"I hear he can make physical changes permanent. Perhaps you'd be less grumpy if you were young again?" One of the other Elders asked her.

"It's a lack of discipline. My love life has nothing to do with this." She complained, making the other Elders chuckle.

Nobody mentioned her love life, just her strict and matronly appearance, but they all knew it was a sore spot with her, as she had gone gray very young in life.

When Cain and the others finally left the arena with his Disciples following them, all of the Crushing Mountain Sect Elders decided to tag along, just in case he was going to teach a lesson right away.

"Since you're all so eager, how about we hold a special preparatory session so that all of the Elders have the knowledge to answer the questions of the Disciples after I start to teach them? There is little doubt that all of you, who have much more experience in cultivation, will pick it up quicker than them, so one lesson tonight should be enough to get you out ahead of the students, and then you can sit in on the ones starting tomorrow to brush up on anything you missed and help the Disciples?" Cain suggested.

"That's an excellent idea. How about we use the small auditorium in the Elders section for tonight? It's nice and quiet, and the Disciples know not to bother us while we're holding discussions there." One of the Elders suggested.

The Elders led the way while Luna and the Divine Elder of the Seaside Sect fought for the spot closest to Cain's side, each finding ways to sneak between the other and the Sect Master.

"You do know that he has two sides, right?" Penny asked Luna when she lost the spot again.

"But he always carries me in the right arm. If I'm standing on the left, how will he pick me up?" Luna whispered back.

Penny was about to point out that it wasn't correct, Cain picked her up with whatever arm was closest, but they looked like they were having fun, so she let them go at it all the way to the auditorium.

Once they arrived, the Divine Elder gave up on the game and took a seat in the audience, bringing a notepad and pen out of her storage ring and getting ready to properly take notes.

Cain had transferred all the knowledge to her, but interpreting it wasn't always as easy as simply knowing the facts, and she was determined to gain all of the knowledge that she could tonight.

For her part, Luna simply took the victory and climbed into Cain's lap when he sat down to begin the lesson.

"You're not going to join us, little one?" One of the Elders asked as the other Disciples took their seats for the lesson.

"I already know how they work, and I speak most of the Forgotten Languages, so I don't need to take notes. I can just sit here and help the Sect Master demonstrate." Luna replied.

"In that case, you'll need chalk because there are a lot of diagrams to put up on the board." Cain reminded her.

"You're no fun at all. I just got my spot back." She pouted and moved to sit between Penny and Divine Elder Mariel.

The Elders all chuckled at the upset Disciple but got their notebooks ready for the lesson as if they were the newest of students.

Cain began the lesson with a simple demonstration of the diagrams and all of the usual diagram keys that were used in the skill texts. There weren't all that many of them to begin with, so that part of the lesson was only really an introduction, but it was a great revelation to many of the Elders present.

Then Cain began on the practical demonstrations, using the [Crushing Blow] skill as the basis of his lesson and going through every diagram that was in the skill book, including all of the advanced notations on how to properly alter the skill to use it at Awakened levels up to Spirit Rank.

It was a skill that most of the Elders already knew, or at least had thought they knew until Cain began getting in-depth with the details of the skill book and adding in some of the notations that they had never been able to read that gave pointers on optimizing it to their own particular physique, since [Crushing Blow] could be implemented in so many different ways, unlike a less versatile and specialized single attack.

By the time he was done, it was getting close to morning, and the Elders had written half of a skill book each in notes and copied all the diagrams, including their keys, in ways that they personally could understand more easily than the way they were written in the texts.

"Now, do we have any more questions, or does everyone thoroughly understand how to implement the [Crushing Blow] skill? As the Crushing Mountain Sect, it's only right that all of the Elders should be able to use that skill to perfection, even if they're more of a tradesman than a combatant." Cain asked.

There were no more questions, not even from Sabbat, who had dutifully made notes on how the diagrams worked but couldn't possibly use the skill they were demonstrating due to her class restrictions.

"Excellent, then we should all get some sleep, and I will begin lessons for the Core Disciples after lunch today. The Inner and Outer Sect Disciples will begin lessons at a later point, once the Core Disciples and Elders are all confident enough to use the diagram knowledge to teach their juniors new skills." Cain announced, ending the night's meeting.

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 686 686

The Core Disciples of the Crushing Mountain Sect were mostly in the early Immortal Realm, with a few being promising youngsters still in the Spirit Realm. They were also a proud lot, having been told for most of their careers that they were the future of the Sect, then its backbone, and now that they had reached Immortality, they saw little reason to listen to others.

Given time, they would hit a bottleneck and start to grow out of their arrogance, but when Cain began the lesson just after lunch that day, only six of the two hundred and some Core Disciples had decided to attend.

"Sect Master Cain, should we delay a moment while we fetch the others?" One of the Elders asked politely.

"No need. Opportunity comes when it comes. If they miss the session and it could have helped them, that's their fate." Cain replied with a placid smile.

In order to preserve some of their dignity in front of the juniors, the Elders had not come here with their notebooks today. Though a few were in direct attendance, most had chosen to remain upstairs in a private room and listen to the lecture or watch using a remote viewing ability.

That was fine by Cain. Teaching only six people would be much easier than teaching a whole room with a whole room worth of questions.

"What path have you six followed? What skills are you working on? The method is the same either way, but making it relate to a relevant skill can make things easier for the students." Cain asked the small group in the front row.

"All of us are the stalwarts of the Core Disciples. We all train the Sect's cultivation method, and Earth Skills, though we have all specialized since entering the Core Disciples in order to set our own path." One of the older men in the group responded.

"So a reliable faction within the Core. That is good. Tell me, what do all of your current paths have in common?" Cain asked.

"Physical enhancement. We are all working to advance through skills that strengthen the body."

Cain nodded and thought about all of the various skills that had that effect and then narrowed it down to the ones that were from the Earth Element.

"Do any or all of you know [Mountainous Endurance]? It comes from Granite Elementals originally, and I think it would be suitable for today's explanation." Cain waited, but they all shook their heads. They might know it under another name, given his experience with the newbie and the book of [Backhand], but if they didn't know that particular fortification ability, it would be perfect.

"Mountainous Endurance is a passive skill that increases your stamina and grants you a large amount of damage reduction. We will start with the legend that lets you understand the diagrams in this and most other Skill books." Cain began.

The lecture went until near dinnertime, and all of the six had managed to learn the skill well enough to activate the passive ability, though not nearly at its maximum potential.

"Just keep working at that, and you can raise it all the way up to the Spirit Rank and increase your body's durability by a few more times compared to where it is now. I don't think you'll be a soft target anymore, though, it really is a potent skill, and you are quick learners." Cain commended them.

"Thank you, Sect Master Cain. To think that the secrets of the Skill Book Diagrams were so easy to decipher once you had the key." One of the disciples sighed.

"Sadly, if we had been able to read the skill books, we would have known in advance that the forgotten language was so complex that the meaning of runes couldn't be interpreted by something so simple as an alphabet. But even knowing this much of the language is enough to make great progress in any skill we try to learn.

Might I ask you, Sect Master, how is it that you came by this sort of Divine Knowledge? We watched your ascension, were you granted it at that moment?" One of the Spirit Rank prodigies asked.

"No, I already spoke the languages. I know you couldn't see what went on from the Compound, but all of the Elders are aware that I am not a human but a World Dragon." Cain explained.

It still felt strange to say that, as he had just gotten used to being an Ancient, and now he was supposed to be some sort of Divine Dragon.

[They come from the same place. The Creators formed both to take care of their worlds, but in different ways.] The familiar voice in his head informed him.

[How so?] Cain asked, wondering if he could sneak an actual answer out of the voice.

[The Mortal Species needed a guide and caretaker, so they were gifted the Ancients. The Immortal Dragons and Divine Beasts need no such level of coddling, so the World Dragons were adapted to take care of their planet and ensure that they didn't accidentally destroy their own home in their exuberant embrace of life.]

The Dragons and Divine Beasts were in danger of destroying their own planet because they had so much fun. That simple fact shocked Cain, but at the same time, it was completely expected. He had seen the power of the Dragons, and the image of the first World Dragon setting things straight and fixing the planet they were on, clearly, the one next to where Cain had been transferred, appeared in his mind.

The planet wasn't intended for that level of abuse when it was formed, and the Creators had actually moved the whole star system at some point in the past as part of their effort to shield it from the other Greater Gods that they had upset, placing it somewhere where the energies would help sustain the world more efficiently.

Cain's world was at the lower end of the Mortal Realm in power, but the world of Dragons and Beasts next to them was far more advanced, a phenomenon that Cain wondered about but would have to wait to understand until he could find a spot where he could find real answers and not just guesswork.

[So there were no World Dragons before that?] Cain asked.

[Yes, but also no. There were Divine Guardian Dragons in charge of worlds, and Life Dragons, who are very much like World Dragons, and both are called World Dragons due to their Divine Duty, but the actual species is a Hybrid.]

[You're much more talkative than usual.] Cain noted.

[Your power is finally becoming stable, so it is much easier to communicate. Plus, it's almost time for you to come home. We have checked fate a thousand times to make sure, and before long, you will be back with our creations and your beloved children for the greatest and final surprise of your Class Progression.] The voice replied, then burst into laughter at the memory of what it had seen.

[There is more to my Class Progression?] Cain asked, confused. He was completely certain that he had already selected all the skills in the tree and hadn't found any more hidden skills.

[The last reward for bringing your whole family back together. But that can wait. We are looking after them for now, and you won't miss the most important moments with that Divine Elder nearby.

She's kind of cute, though. You should bring her back here for me.]

The voice had taken on a slightly lecherous tone that made Cain roll his eyes.

[And if I turn her into an adorable child first?]

[I'm a patient man. Of course, I could change her back, and she could do it herself, but if she prefers it, she can sit on my knee and sip tea. That is good as well.]

Cain's laugh was out loud this time and startled the cultivators who were still in the room.

"Sorry about that, mental communication. It was funnier than expected." Cain explained.

"One more question Sect Master. Is it possible for us to learn those forgotten languages? If we could read the whole skill book, it would be so much faster to completely understand the skills that we are trying to implement to forge our path." A Core Disciple asked.

"It is possible but not easy. I don't have training materials here to help you, and it's unlikely that I could teach it to you in any sort of reasonable timeframe without them." Cain sighed.

The language books were different from skill books, and he didn't have a base copy to duplicate them from, so he would have to either perfectly recall them for himself or make up a whole new textbook for learning a forgotten language, which sounded like way too much work.

"It was worth a shot. Please do guide us again in the future if you get the chance." The Core Disciple replied, then bowed deeply and left the room, intent on rereading all of the skill books he had in his possession to see what he had missed that was keeping some of his skills at lower levels.

The others left soon after, and the Elders filed in from their hiding spot upstairs to get a more detailed look at the diagrams and writing on the board so that they too, could gain the last bits of knowledge about the [Mountainous Endurance] skill and advance their own cultivation a little bit more.

"Divine Elder Mariel, I have a request to pass on to you. Please come to see me alone when you have a moment." Cain informed her when the woman came to look over the skill on the board.

"A request to pass on? How curious. I will see you later this evening, then."

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 687 687

Cain was having dinner with his disciples that night when Divine Elder Mariel showed up to hear what message Cain had to relay to her. The moment that she came in the door, Luna climbed from her seat into his lap, claiming her spot in no uncertain terms and glaring at the Elder.

"I think I offended you with my game earlier, little one. I'm not trying to steal your spot. You can relax. I even brought a peace offering." Mariel told her, holding out a piece of candy.

"It's ambrosia honey candy from the Divine Planes. I am certain that you've never tasted anything like it before."

Luna's eyes went wide as she popped the candy in her mouth, and she totally forgot that she was in the middle of dinner.

"Oh, this is amazing. Apology accepted. But you still can't have my spot. Take his other side."

Mariel laughed and sat down on Cain's left in an open seat, waiting for him to finish eating so they could talk.

"I don't think it matters if the Disciples hear this. It's not that big of a deal, just not for the public. A certain Greater God that I know would like to meet you. He is waiting on the other side of the portal in your Sect Compound, and he is quite certain that he has knowledge that will help you." Cain explained.

"One of them? I understand that they are Greater Gods, but would they really be willing to teach me something that could help me advance? That's taboo in every pantheon." She replied.

[Why do you think we're exiles? Because nobody else sees the benefits of building up all your friends.] A female voice spoke in Cain's mind.

"Yes, I can say for certain that they would definitely be willing. It is also one of the reasons that they are so unpopular with everyone else because they don't view it as a

competition but as more of a country club. Everyone they deem worthy or entertaining is invited if you understand my meaning."

Divine Elder Mariel thought about that for a moment. "You know, back when I was still a young cultivator, barely into the Immortal Realm, I met a strange man in another world during my travels. Everyone insisted that he was nothing more than a Demon Cultivator who gained and applied all sorts of knowledge without thought for the moral implications of what he was doing.

But, after I spent a few weeks with him, it seemed more like he was simply bored. I got the feeling that though he was an Immortal like me, he had done it all before. You get that feeling a lot with the Avatars of Greater Gods who have regained some of their memories, a sense of ennui, but he was still working toward his goal, just in an unconventional way.

He also thought that knowledge should be shared and that the world would be more interesting if there were more than a few Greater Gods in every Plane fragment."

Cain smiled at her description and wondered if it were really the Laughing God's Avatar she had met at some point in the past. It certainly sounded like him.

"Sometimes seeking entertainment alone leads you to do strange things. I heard a number of stories about the sort of things that Immortals who have been alive too long get up to, and by the standards of the Mortals, they would be nearly unthinkable. Perhaps it's simply the thought process of a more advanced Cultivator who has experienced things we haven't?

Take me, for example. I'm not even fifty years old yet. At least, I'm pretty sure I'm not yet, I forgot to count at some point, but that's irrelevant. I couldn't fathom the level of boredom that an Immortal could get to in a thousand or ten thousand years. Maybe some of the more eccentric so-called Demon Cultivators are just misunderstood because nobody around them has the knowledge that they do?" Cain suggested.

"Wait, back up. Did you make it to Divinity in under fifty years? How is that even possible? Just the transition from Spirit Rank to Immortality usually takes longer than that after you start reforming your body." Mariel exclaimed.

"Well, I wasn't exactly human at that point, and my body was already Immortal, so it wasn't a big deal. The Immortal advancement took me under a minute since I only had to reform my mana storage. The Divine Tribulation took longer.

The one who wants to talk to you is the one who taught me how to do it and helped me along."

Mariel thought about that for a while and then nodded. "I think I can agree to come with you. My Sect Master might not be happy about it, but I know my way around the Planes

pretty well, and I shouldn't have a problem coming back home if I am not interested in their proposal."

"Well, that makes things much easier. Maybe I should set up a puppet with the knowledge to teach the Crushing Mountain Sect the basics so that I don't have to do it myself, and then we can do something fun before we have to go."

"I'm sure my Disciples are tired of just hanging around training every day, no matter how much fun they are having sparring with the others."

Cain's question perked up all the girls. They were having fun here, but there were many more fun things to do in the world than train their combat skills.

"Why don't we go see the beach? Auntie Neffie said that the beach is amazing, and there are sea monsters to pet and merfolk and the sailor elves." Luna cheered.

"I hate to be the bearer of bad news, but that was an entirely different world. This one doesn't have pettable monsters or Elves, and the Merfolk are all savages." Mariel informed her.

"Fear not. I know the trick to petting almost anything. You just kill the mean one and summon a replacement." Luna informed her proudly.

"She's right. Summons won't attack allies without orders, no matter how ill-tempered they are." Jen agreed.

"Plus, we can go swimming and for a run on the beach. Do you know a good spot, Elder Mariel?" Penny asked.

"Well, my Sect is on the ocean, so there are lots of spots like that in our territory, but I need to be here for the next week while the new Disciples take their final tests. The ones that I brought will go back where they started if they fail unless they want to stay here at Crushing Mountain Sect to keep trying." She explained.

"Well, I suppose that we can wait that long. But in the meantime, can we make a better arena? This one is too fragile for Carnage to go all out." Jen asked.

"You know what, that gives me an excellent idea. A gift that I can leave the Crushing Mountain Sect with." Cain agreed.

If he carved the runes to cast the Seraphim Arena into one of his Dragon Scales and gave it to the Sect Master here, he could use it as an artifact to cast the spell, so they could have it long after Cain left. It would also save Luna from having to waste the mana to keep the Arena active.

Cain transformed one arm into a dragon paw and plucked a small scale, then carefully engraved it with his claw, covering almost every square millimeter with a delicate script before changing his hand back to normal and inspecting it for errors.

"It looks perfect. Now, to find an appropriate sucker, I mean gracious host, to activate the new Arena for the Sect." Cain declared, making Mariel laugh.

"You're seriously not going to just make a permanent arena for them? You're a World Dragon. How much effort would it take to make an arena and enchant it?" She asked.

"More than this, I'm pretty sure. Plus, who doesn't like to receive Divine Artifacts as a gift? Nobody, that's who."

"You do have a point. They could display it in the Elder's abode, put it in a warded case for everyone to see, like the shining Golden relic of a benevolent Deity that it is."

She was trying her best not to laugh, but Cain's smile only grew.

"I should have picked the scale from somewhere better than the back of my hand. They would never know, and it would be there for everyone to look at forever."

"I can imagine it now, hosting some Dragon dignitary a thousand years from now and watching them realize that you pulled a scale from your butt cheeks to make their most precious artifact." Mariel laughed, making all the Disciple choke on their dinner.

"Don't encourage him. He really would do it now that he's thought of it," Penny warned her.

"We should go find the Sect Master and give him the gift. You can honestly tell him that you just finished custom-crafting it for him. You're invisible to divination spells, so he couldn't have watched to see what you were doing or how long you worked on it for." Mariel suggested.

"I'm invisible to Divination?" Cain asked.

"Not precisely invisible, but the spell splits into a hundred thousand parts when anyone tries to watch you, and it's impossible to tell which version is the real one and which are the alternate possibilities you considered."

"Again, don't give him ideas. He's already enough trouble." Penny sighed.

"Don't worry. I will behave myself. These are friends, and it would be rude to have fun at their expense. We are just going to find someone new to keep the arena active."

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 688 688

The Sect Master was sitting up on the reconstructed mountaintop along with a small group of Immortals who were basking in the intense Divine Energy that Cain had trapped in the stones after his tribulation.

It would take thousands of years for the energy to disperse, and every Cultivator who trained there would extend the time, adding their own energy for the Divine Energy to absorb and convert in its final attempt to continue the tribulation.

"Sect Master, while I had some free time, I created a gift for the Crushing Mountain Sect to show my appreciation for your hospitality and the lovely spot you provided for my Tribulation. Please accept this small token with my thanks." Cain greeted the group.

"And what might that be? Some sort of artifact made from a Divine Dragon Scale?" The Sect Master asked, looking at it with great curiosity.

"Exactly right. It will create a Divine Grade Arena for your Sect members to train in, with the same benefits and functions as the Spirit Grade one that my Disciple has created for your Outer Disciples to train in.

As long as they are not above the Immortal Realm, there shouldn't be any fear of damage to the building or death of the contestants within the arena made by this token." Cain informed him, passing over the scale.

All of the Immortals gathered to look at the Runic Inscriptions all over the scale and admire the Divine Aura coming off of the small scale.

"This is a truly incredible treasure. Are you sure you wish to part with such a thing so easily?" The Sect Master asked.

"Don't misunderstand. It's not a treasure I found somewhere. I made it for you specifically. I think a Divine Arena will be an excellent conversation point when you entertain guests in the future." Cain informed the Sect Master.

"That is hard to argue with, Sect Master. Not many Sects can boast that they have an Arena of this nature, much less one of Divine Realm quality. The Crushing Mountain Sect could safely host Immortal Realm tournaments in the future with such a treasure." Divine Elder Mariel agreed.

"Then I thank you for the gift. Your knowledge truly is prodigious to be able to create an artifact like this. I can't even read the Runes on it." The Sect Master replied with a sigh at his failure to decipher the creation technique.

Part of that was due to the fact that Cain had inscribed the runes in three dimensions since they didn't all fit on one surface, so looking at it from any direction didn't always place them in any coherent order, but mostly it was just that the language he used had never existed in that world.

"How about we have your Disciple take down the existing arena, and we place the new one? Will it be the same size?" One of the Immortal Elders asked.

"It can be, or it can be much larger or smaller. Whatever you have space for will be fine." Cain shrugged.

"Why not inside the mountain? We have hollowed out a huge cavern that we haven't yet assigned a purpose. It would hold four of the other arena, enough people that it would put the great arenas of the City of Knowledge to shame." The lead blacksmith suggested, stroking his beard as he thought.

"Inside out of the elements would also make the training grounds more pleasant to watch from since the arena is open topped. It even provides its own light if it's the same as the other arena in that aspect." A Human Elder added.

"Then, inside the mountain, we will put it. Just make sure that we are all finished with the work in the area since the Arena will be staying there. Does the arena need any other attached facilities we should build before placing it?" The Sect Master asked his Elders.

"Not really. It has an underground staging area and a recovery room as well as the stands. The mountain is on the edge of the Sect, so it is a short walk to anything they might need, and under a minute for the Core Disciples and Elders whose homes are closest to the caverns."

"Since it will give off Divine Energy while it is active, perhaps you should make some meditation caves off to the sides for guests to spend time in while they wait or for Elders to Meditate in? Then they get to go to the arena and beat each other senseless when they get frustrated about not reaching epiphany?" Cain suggested.

Most of the Elders laughed, but the largest of them spoke up. "Don't dismiss it so fast. That's actually a very good idea. Being able to smash something without killing it when I'm frustrated would be an excellent release."

"Then perhaps we should add an additional feature to it? A sparring partner, for times when someone wants to train individually?" Cain suggested.

"And how would we do that?" The big man asked.

"That's the easy part. It's a Divine Artifact. Divine Level spells are never so simple that they can't be adapted. Once it is active, I will convince it to add a sparring option." Cain offered.

The Immortal Elders spread out after a silent order from the Sect Master, who was still holding the small Scale in both hands and looking at it reverently. Despite also being a Demigod, this sort of crafting was beyond him.

For one, he wasn't a Dragon or any sort of magical creature, which made it impossible to use his own body as materials for enchanting, and he didn't know the art of Runecrafting or Spellcrafting, so he couldn't inscribe such a technique even if he had a suitable base for the artifact.

The Immortals were hard at work creating more caverns inside the mountain and preparing the entryway for the arrival of the new Arena. It was a mine that they had been extracting metals for the smithy from before they decided to make a larger cavern for a future indoor endeavor or expansion to the Sect compound, but they hadn't finished working on it yet.

The three Divine Realm cultivators waited atop the peak while the Immortals used their Earth Elemental skills to carve a hundred new small caverns inside the mountain, all around the perimeter of the cavern, and then enlarged the entrance so that a portion of the arena could be viewed from outside, giving a visual teaser as the contestants approached.

Usually, only humans would be here, but the large entrance felt much grander than the small mine entrance had, and the sight of the Arena walls would certainly build anticipation among the Disciples making the trip up the hill, so it was decorated by the dwarves with the rough outline of statues and pillars to come, once they had time to really work on them and create a worthy masterpiece.

"It seems they have the basics ready. We can go down and place the Artifact." The Guild Master announced, leading the way down the hill.

Cain and Mariel flew along behind him, happy to play along with his show of reverence and refusing to acknowledge that Cain had plucked the scale from his arm and made it on a whim because the other arena was too weak for the stronger disciples to go all out.

They were also ignoring the fact that the artifact would need to be refilled with energy at regular intervals because it wasn't really their problem, and the Sect Master could do it in an instant once every few years, or every Disciple who came here to train could add a little, and it would be full all the time.

"This is a good cavern. I like it. Needs more fire, though. The arena gives off its own soft white light, but caverns need fire and heat, or they just don't feel alive." Cain sighed.

The humans looked confused, but the Dwarves understood right away.

"I think we can fix that. Give me a second." One of the Dwarven Elders called out and then ran out into the Sect, returning a few minutes later with a bunch of enchanted torches.

He placed one between every cavern mouth until he ran out of them and looked around with approval.

"Once we have them on all three levels of meditation caverns, it will be perfect. The cave will be properly lit with fire, while the Arena's lights will give an ambient glow to the center of the room."

The Sect Master didn't seem to understand, but he played along anyhow and focused on placing the arena in the middle of the room, leaving twenty meters on every side so that visitors to the area could walk easily around it and see the full majesty of the building from the walkways in front of the upper-level caverns.

This one was very much like the one Luna made outside. Only there were more Dragons on the carvings, and the bleachers had a serpentine theme to them, being made of warm silver scales instead of cool metal.

"Now, I will make the minor change so that it will work as you wish it to. Referee, might we have a moment of your time?" Cain called out.

"What can I do for you, World Dragon." The referee, a silver-skinned Seraphim with six wings on his back, asked.

"I would like for you to add a function to the Arena. If someone comes along and asks for a sparring partner, please create one for them at either their Realm of Cultivation or the power level that they request." Cain replied politely.

"That won't be a problem, as it's well within my abilities as long as they're not Divinities." The referee agreed.

"Marvelous. Some of the Immortal Realm Elders have frustrations to work out and lack a sparring partner."

The Seraphim smirked at Cain, who winked back at him. The Immortals would get a sparring partner alright, but there were no promises that they would win the fight.

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 689 689 Cain The Merciless

The big Immortal Elder got a certain gleam in his eye once the arena was ready, so Cain gestured him forward to request a sparring partner from the Arena.

"Can I use all my might and my weapons?" He asked.

"Go ahead. Unless you think you can shatter a Divine Realm Seraphim's barrier, you can do what you like." Cain agreed.

"Thank you, Sect Master."

"Referee, could you make me a sparring partner at my current level of progression through the Immortal Realm, please? No, make that one small achievement higher." The Elder requested.

"Of course. Please enjoy your training." The referee agreed, and a Human General of the Holy Legions appeared in the ring, holding a halberd and wearing shining golden armor over a simple white Toga.

The contestants saluted each other and took a ready stance for a split second before they both charged. The halberd flashed forward and deflected the mighty axe, sending the ground sundering effect off to the side, splitting the ground all the way to the arena wall, only for it to instantly self-repair.

Multiple smaller attacks whistled through the air as they fought to get the upper hand on each other, fighting to a momentary stalemate. The Elder looked incredibly pleased with this outcome for almost an entire second before the General attacked with a flurry of Holy Light Blades, forcing him onto the defensive, and then crushed his shield with an overhand swing of the Halberd, sending him directly to the recovery room.

"Oh, right to the face. You know that one hurt." Cain chuckled with a wince of sympathy on his face.

Only a few seconds passed before the Elder was back out with his customary smile back on his face.

"Best two of three."

The General didn't hold back this time, going straight for the weak spot in his defenses that had been found during the first fight, forcing him to adapt or die only seconds into the fight.

The battle was predictably short and bloody, but this time the Elder landed a hit before being eliminated, leaving a deep wound in the General's side, which bled Golden blood onto the sands of the arena.

"Not bad. You actually landed a hit on me that time." The General informed the Elder politely when he returned, but the look on his face said that the polite words were a pure and open taunt.

"Again."

Ten times they clashed, and ten times, the Elder was sent to the recovery room in a different way.

"Fine, I admit it. I can't beat you, General." The big Elder sighed, but all of the other Elders could feel that he had made a breakthrough and was currently on the same level as his opponent.

"Did we forget something when we made the sparring partner?" Mariel asked.

"Nope. If you ask for a training lesson, they will show you how to fight them, but if you want a sparring match, they don't hold back. It works very well. Only one match of ten rounds, and he made a breakthrough." Cain replied with a smile that reminded Mariel a lot of the one on the face of the General in the ring.

"If we are done testing the new Arena, perhaps we should call in some of the Disciples to have them spar with each other? They need the practice more than anyone else since there really aren't many places where they can go all out to test their new skills." The Crushing Mountain Sect Master suggested.

"I will grab the Ale and snacks." The Brewmaster agreed, marching out of the arena toward his brewery.

The Sect Master took out a golden slip of paper from his robes and focused energy for a second, after which the whole Sect started to move as they roused themselves from meditation and training to come up the hill and see the new arena.

"Look at that. It's not just an arena. It's a whole new training area. Can you feel the energy in the cavern? It's so dense, better than the Core Disciple section of the compound." One of the Disciples gasped as he entered the chamber.

"If I count right, there should be almost a hundred training spaces here. I don't know what we will have to do to earn time, but it will be totally worth it." The Disciple beside him agreed.

[Come up the hill with the other Disciples and see the new toy we made for the Crushing Mountain Sect. It will be pretty busy, though, so you might not get to train in it today.] Cain informed all his Disciples at once.

Soon, the entire Sect Compound was at the new arena, taking in the aura of power and the pure grandeur of the new facility, while a few of the Core Disciples took the opportunity to settle grudges with each other in a setting where they wouldn't get in trouble for fighting each other.

That might actually be the biggest gain of having a full-time Seraphim Arena available. With the ability to heal the Disciples before death, they could go all out to settle disputes and grudges between each other, and the referee would enforce any wagers that they made on the match, at least for the time that they were in the arena.

The Crushing Mountain Sect was enthusiastically waiting for their turns to get in the arena and go all out, so the Referee adjusted the spatial magic and expanded the arena to hold a full twenty rings, then called more contestants to the floor.

"This is the greatest thing ever. Look, that's the skill I picked to learn." One of the new applicants was telling the disciple beside her without taking her eyes off the match.

Few ways were more effective to learn a skill than to actually see it in use. As long as you understood the basics, you could rapidly improve your understanding if you saw it over and over, and the Disciple had picked a relatively common skill used to block energy attacks.

The Brewmaster came back with the snacks, and the Elders all settled in on the upper level in the VIP boxes so that they wouldn't be in the way of the students. Their presence always came with a respectful bubble around themselves, so having all of them on the main bleachers took up a lot of seating that could be better used for the Disciples to spread out and work on what they were learning from the matches on the sands below.

Three hours later, the first of the applicants came to speak to the Elders, confident that he had understood his chosen skill well enough to make the cut.

"You say you can do it? Prove it." The Elder laughed, then unceremoniously tossed him into the arena, landing on an empty floor where a match had just ended.

"Someone go down and have the applicant prove that he really does know the skill he has been learning." The Elder called, and a pair of Core Disciples hopped down onto his section of the sand.

"Go ahead, junior. If you can actually perform the skill, I'll put you back in the bleachers. If you can't, I'll put you in the recovery room to rethink your standards." The Disciple told him with a smile.

A number of the Disciples chuckled at the obvious bullying, but it would only be a moment's pain and some indignity if the kid failed. That was a big improvement on the beating the applicants usually got when the Disciples decided to mess with them.

The boy let out a vicious shout and swung the training ax in his hands toward the senior Disciple, who caught it in one hand and took a good look at the coating of Earth Energy on the head of the weapon.

"Well, your combat skills are absolutely atrocious, but you did manage to activate the skill to a standard I would call complete, if weaker than the average wild dog." The Senior Disciple informed him.

"So I passed?" The boy asked.

"You did, and I will inform the Elders of your accomplishment. Now, you can take the shortcut to the bleachers. Through the recovery room."

The Disciple flicked him in the head, and the boy vanished, stepping out onto the steps from the Recovery room only seconds later with a sheepish look on his face. He had dropped his weapon on the sand when the Core Disciple flicked his forehead.

"That's one passed. Well, two, if we count the prodigy that gained so many skills from the first test. This batch is looking particularly promising." The Sect Master laughed while sipping Ale on the couch in the VIP box.

"I've never seen them so happy. We should make a grand tournament part of the monthly schedule." An Elder suggested.

"Why not make it every other month and call it a ranking fight? You know they keep track of each other's progress anyhow." Mariel offered.

"Oh, that's not bad, and it gives them more time to prepare for the next one. Cultivation is a long process, and we can make the gap even longer at the higher levels. Once a year is still pretty often for Immortals, but annually is good for the Mythic Realm." The lead blacksmith agreed.

"Why do I get the feeling that I'm being stuck with the planning?" The big Immortal sighed, looking around for someone who wasn't silently volunteering him for all things tournament related.

"Fine, I will set it up as well as the trips to the City of Knowledge for the matches there. Next time around we just might win the whole thing."

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 690 690

Over the course of the week, the Arena slowly became the most popular spot to spend any time that wasn't needed to absorb materials or work on other skills. Most of the Disciples chose to meditate in the Arena, while the Elders and a few chosen Core Disciples got the premium spots in the alcoves along the wall to absorb the abundant energy in the room.

The reasons for this were twofold. Partially it was because the energy levels were so high that it was better for their cultivation to be in the Arena than their own dorms, but primarily, it was because the initiates were slowly finishing learning the basics of their first skill, and it was the perfect opportunity to establish the pecking order between the old and new Outer Sect Disciples.

The last batch had been here two years already and made significant progress for the most part, and they didn't want the newbies to be getting ahead of themselves and thinking that everyone was on the same level just because they were all in the same ring of the compound.

Cain thought it was more than a little petty, but then his Disciples didn't follow the same path, and they had level rankings to let them know how they were doing. They did gladly join in the matches, though, giving the Inner Sect Disciples a new challenge to fight against.

Finally, near midnight on the seventh day since the final trial began, an Elder took to the ring to make an announcement.

"All applicants have either completed demonstrating their newfound technique or have forfeited and returned the skill book, returning to the outside to pursue their futures on their own." Congratulations to this admission's batch of new Outer Sect Disciples."

It was short and straightforward, but the speech immediately produced protests.

"Elder, there is one left sitting here who hasn't officially shown her skills." One of the Disciples called, indicating the girl who had received the highest honors in Cain's sorting.

"She demonstrated her [Crushing Blow] skill the first night during the room selections and has already become my Personal Disciple." The Elder announced.

The protests didn't stop, so the Elder gestured for his Disciple to join him on the sand.

"Which of the Outer Sect Disciples would like to verify her skills?" The Elder asked with a smirk.

She had fought more than once already, but not with the whole Sect watching in the new arena, but that was just an excuse the Outer Sect Disciples were using to try to put her in her place.

There was no way they could know that [Mana Transformation] could have caused her to increase in power so rapidly that she had already overtaken most of the junior Disciples.

The Elder hadn't pushed her level any higher and had instead focused on teaching her the most brutally efficient ways for a Berserker to fight. The change was obvious when she jumped into the ring with a Great Axe slung over her shoulder and a smile on her face.

"Hey, isn't that a replica of the one that Carnage uses?" Penny asked, being intimately familiar with the brutal weapon.

"It certainly looks like it, but only in design. It lacks any sort of extra enchantments." Cain agreed.

"I should make her a new one before we go. Elder Mariel was showing me all the cute faces that weak boys make when you bully them, and she should see them too." Luna suggested.

Cain gave a raised eyebrow look at Divine Elder Mariel, who turned away, making an innocent expression and whistling while the Forbidden Treasures Sect Disciples laughed.

"She already picks up the strangest things. Please don't deliberately teach her strange things. You might give her a fetish." Cain admonished the other Divine Realm cultivator.

"Might? Have you not met your daughter? She's already got some strange things going on in that brain of hers. A bit of dominance isn't going to make a noticeable difference." She eventually responded when Cain didn't give up on glaring at her.

"Fine, we've got time to keep her sorted. Just don't go overboard."

"So that means I can make her a new axe, right?" Luna asked.

"Yes, you can make her a new weapon as a farewell gift before we head to the beach. It will be a good test of how your Runecrafting skills are coming along as well." Cain agreed.

"Bonus. It's going to be the greatest one ever. Well, the second greatest one because the one Carnage has, is really good and personalized."

A young man from the Outer Sect had jumped into the ring to face the Berserker, smirking and waving at his friends as he walked.

"He might have a chance if he plays his cards right." Elder Mariel noted, looking over the boy with a sensory skill active.

"He might have. At this point, he's already lost, though." Cain replied with a smile.

"How do you figure that?"

"His friends are shouting out all the skills that he knows as they cheer for him to defeat her. Unless he's hidden something from those idiots, he can't take her by surprise, and he still has no idea what sort of techniques she has learned other than [Crushing Blow]."

Elder Mariel nodded thoughtfully. "I often forget how slow the children are to adapt to new situations. You are right. He will likely be defeated before he even realizes his mistake unless she chooses to toy with him."

Berserkers weren't exactly known for toying with their opponents. Once they were further down their path, many of them were actually incapable of it, as they totally lost themselves in the fight, and even remembering basic strategies was difficult, with their instinctive combat affinity making up for the lack of conscious thought.

This one wasn't that far gone, and she seemed to be going down the path of focused rage, blinding her to outside threats and hyper-fixating on a target. It was an excellent style for Cultivator battles, and if she also learned a generalized rage state, she could still be safe while fighting multiple opponents.

"All uninvolved people, please leave the arena." The Referee declared, looking at the Elder, who could only shake his head and comply with the Divine Realm Seraphim's orders.

"Combatants ready? Fight."

Both fighters went at each other with two-handed axes, clashing twice and ending with a haft-on-haft battle of strength. A battle that the much larger challenger was clearly losing.

The Berserker Class gave bonuses to strength, and her level was a bit higher to begin with, letting her drive him back and begin another flurry of attacks.

This one was familiar, not a Sect technique, but a favorite combination of skills that inevitably led to Carnage kicking someone in the groin.

She wasn't quite as good as the giant demon was, though, and her opponent escaped the painful final strike but still took a solid blow to the shoulder that left one arm hanging limp in its socket.

He grimaced and switched to a single-handed sword while jumping away to give himself some space, then tucked his broken arm in his robes so it wouldn't flop around and cause more pain. It was a trick that most Disciples learned early on after entering the arena. The damage would be repaired, so you only had to limit the pain and continue fighting.

He didn't get much time to rest, though, as she was coming again, using [Charge] and [Crushing Blow] together to smash the blade from his one remaining hand.

The strike sent him spinning, and the follow-up blow hit him squarely in the back, slamming him to the sand before he vanished to the recovery room.

"Winner, Ali. Now you may come down and support your Disciple, Elder Murg." The Seraphim announced.

"Excellent work, Disciple. We will work on your combination stringing skills later, but you put on an exemplary show for a new Disciple this time. Have this as a reward."

The reward was just a small mana crystal, and even the newest Disciples got a dozen of them a month to cultivate or buy materials with, but anytime you could get a free one was a benefit worth taking, especially for the newest members of the Sect.

"Thank you, Elder. Your generosity is always appreciated."

With the show over, the Disciples relaxed back into their seats to digest the new information they had gathered from the fight. It wasn't the fighting style that most of them used, but if you ignored the rage, it was similar enough, and the skills were all familiar ones, so they could learn a lot from seeing them used well by others.

"Alright, everyone, get some sleep. We will leave with Divine Elder Mariel for her Sect in the morning so we can go play at the beach. You will want to be as well rested as you can be since there will likely be some sort of event or questioning and challenge when we arrive.

Every Sect seems to like challenging themselves against visitors, and you won't be able to enjoy the beach until you have satisfied the junior Disciples." Cain informed his girls.

"You have an uncanny way of seeing the essence of things. Every Cultivator strives to reach the highest levels and live forever, so they take every opportunity to better themselves, even if it inconveniences others. We're so used to it that it is part of the culture." Mariel told him with a curious smile.

Cain could sense that she was actually wondering about his true background, but he would keep that to himself for now. She could find it all out after they were through the portal and away from easily upset human cultivators.

"But it does keep things entertaining. It's better than having them be obnoxiously friendly and fake to your face just because you're a high-ranking visitor." Cain agreed.

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 691 691 Seaside Sect

Elder Mariel opened a portal directly in Cain's room early the following day, so they could leave without the usual hours and hours of parting speeches, meals, parties, and such that Sects liked to throw for Divine guests.

The portal took them directly to her own suites in the Seaside Sect, an airy bungalow that was built on stilts over top of the crystal clear ocean. Despite being a dozen meters deep under her abode, the sea floor could be clearly seen, including the swimming fish in every color of the rainbow.

"So pretty. Are they edible?" Luna asked the moment that she noticed the fish.

"Unfortunately, no. The Dragon Carp is beautiful, but they are inedible. That is their greatest defense against being hunted to extinction since their scales are precious crafting materials." Mariel laughed.

"Can we swim in the water?"

"Of course. Everyone in the Sect loves to swim in the ocean." The Divine Elder agreed.

"Sweet. Dad, teach me how to swim right quick. I want to swim with the fish."

All of the Disciples burst into laughter while Elder Mariel facepalmed at the overzealous girl.

"You're that excited about swimming with the fish, but you can't even swim? What was your grand plan once you got into the water?" She asked.

"I'm still working on that. They're pretty quick, so I will need to learn good swimming, or I won't be able to catch them. But since I can't eat them, maybe I don't need to. I could just swim around and watch them. Is the water warm?"

Elder Mariel looked at Cain with a smile. "She really is related to you, isn't she? Just making it up as she goes along and somehow still alive."

"I will have you know that survival is my forte," Cain replied with a level of dignity that didn't help calm the Disciples' laughter.

"Well, we should go say hello before the Sect Master starts to think that we are deliberately snubbing him. Come along, everyone, we will take the walkways this time, and then we can teach Luna to swim by the shore after we have met everyone." Mariel directed before leading the way out of the bungalow.

Two more Divine Realm Cultivators and a few hundred Disciples were waiting on the slopes of the shore for them to arrive, gathered into a carefully orchestrated clash of robe colors that looked like one of the Dragon Carp they had seen in the water.

"Welcome home Divine Elder Mariel. It is good to see that you found a home for all of the aspiring cultivators. Might I know who these esteemed guests you have brought with you might be?" The Sect Master asked.

"This is Sect Master Cain and the Disciples of the Forbidden Treasures Sect. They are a rather unique bunch in that every Disciple follows a completely different path. Cain, this is Sect Master Mooney of the Seaside Sect." Mariel introduced them.

"A Lycan with a Divine Bloodline? What a rare treat. It is a pleasure to meet you, Sect Master Mooney." Cain greeted his host, who cocked his head in a very Canine way before responding.

"You could tell at a glance what I was? Interesting. You smell like a human, but you don't feel like one. Are you perhaps transformed?" Mooney asked.

"Indeed I am. Traveling in my natural state would be a massive inconvenience for both myself and everyone else, so I prefer this form. The World Dragons aren't exactly a petite species."

The Disciples all looked shocked, but the Sect Master managed to keep a straight face.

"My apologies for not coming to your ascension. I had a number of issues to deal with here at the Sect."

Cain laughed and waved off his concern.

"The skies were almost as full of Cultivators as they were of Tribulation Clouds anyhow. I am quite certain that I was too distracted to have even noticed everyone who did attend. It was a surprise epiphany, and we didn't have much time to prepare, so my memories of the event are somewhat scattered."

"I'm sure it had nothing to do with the size of the storm." Mariel chuckled.

"It wasn't that bad. We could still see the edges from the mountain temple."

Mariel looked to the Disciples, who all looked eager to get into the ocean, and then to the assembled Disciples of the Seaside Sect, who looked eager for a sparring match.

"Should we get the welcoming party started? If Sect Master Cain would be so kind, there is plenty of space for an arena in the shallow waters."

"Oh, that's an excellent idea. I think knee-high water would make the matches much more fun to watch. Especially for the lightning users." Cain agreed, then cast [Seraphim Arena] in an open spot near the beach.

"Is that the Arena that you were trying to explain to me last night? It is incredible. Who would like to assist our Disciples in learning a new way of thinking?" The Sect Master asked.

"If I go first, will someone just teach me to swim already?" Luna pouted.

"Win or lose. I will teach you to swim, cutie." One of the men replied with a leer on his face.

"That's the Sect Master's daughter," Mariel informed him in a flat tone, then smiled as the man's eyes went wide, and he vanished using a rapid movement skill.

"I am the water skills instructor here at the Seaside Sect. I can teach you to swim in only a few minutes if you like." An Elder standing off to one side replied once the first man had left.

"Thank you. I really want to play with the fish."

Luna didn't know that the fish were an Immortal Realm monster or that they could move significantly faster than she could run on land, so she didn't understand the amused looks she was getting but assumed that they also enjoyed the sport.

Luna jogged through the doors of the Arena and hopped over the wall, landing in the water which was up to her mid-thighs, then frowned and summoned a Water Elemental into [Merger] with her.

That solved her movement issue, the Elemental could move freely through the water, as well as walk on it, but it also reminded her that she didn't actually need to learn to swim. She could cheat and use the Water Elemental's abilities to move through the water and not drown.

The Elder assumed that she was just using the [Water Walking] skill to stand on the water's surface, so the sudden change didn't surprise anyone, and her opponent joined her in the arena, splashing through the water.

He was big enough that the water wasn't a huge hindrance to him, and he was a Water Skills Cultivator, so the arena was actually an advantage to him over the traditional sand or gravel ones.

The Seraphim Referee appeared in the air and gave the arena a strange look.

"Are we concerned with cleanliness today? Whatever. Contestants, are you prepared to battle?"

"I am ready." Luna agreed.

"Yes, Master Seraphim." The Seaside Sect Disciple replied politely.

"Excellent. In three, two, one, Begin."

The Disciple summoned a giant whirlwind of water in front of himself, guarding against Luna's swords and keeping her away from him while Luna tried to decide what to do about him since she had no idea how these people fought.

"Carnage, please punch him in the head." She decided, speaking as she summoned the demon behind her opponent.

The Demon blew the waterspout away with a flap of his wings and then slammed the Disciple into the sands with one giant fist.

It wasn't enough to eliminate the man, but it did drive him deep into the soft sand and leave him spluttering as he used his water skills to pull himself up and avoid the running kick coming at his head from Luna.

"What do you call that style?" Sect Master Mooney asked.

"I think we call it [You're delaying my attempts to go swimming]. Fair and equitable are not words usually associated with Luna's combat techniques." Cain replied happily.

The Seaside Sect Disciple was on the run now, to the raucous cheers of his fellow Disciples, who were split between telling him to stand and fight or run away, so a Wrath Demon didn't eat him.

Finally, they got him cornered, and a proper fight broke out between Luna and the Disciple, matching his water techniques against Luna's Dark Elven Blade Forms, which threw dark energy at the water blades, breaking their cohesion and turning them into harmless spurts of water.

[Just wait there and let me test out the skills that I've been learning.] Luna ordered Carnage while she fought the overwhelmed Cultivator.

Carnage stood back and watched the fight for a while, hoping the man would forget that he was standing there and come into range since Luna had only told him to stay and not to stop fighting.

It was a bit hard for a ten-meter-tall Spirit Rank Demon to be ignored, though, and the fight quickly worked its way across the arena while Carnage waited with an annoyed expression on his face. He was summoned for the fight, but he only got to hit the guy once before being called off. That wasn't like Luna, and it wasn't nearly enough for Carnage.

The fight ended with Luna nearly chopping the man's head off and sending him to the recovery room. He came out a few seconds later, holding his neck and looking terrified.

"Oh yeah. The Seraphim won't let anyone die. There's no need to hold back. I feel like we forgot to mention that again."

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 692 692

Though his disciple lost, the look on Sect Master Mooney's face was pure amusement. The giant demon had only been there as a distraction, but his mere presence was enough to limit the Disciple's movement and drive him into a corner of his own making, where the tiny Disciple outclassed him from the Forbidden Treasures Sect.

"Why don't we take you down to a nice calm spot along the shore and help you with your swimming skills?" The Elder, who claimed to be their water skills instructor, asked Luna now that the match was over.

"You go ahead. We will catch up to you after our matches." Penny told her with an indulgent smile while Luna was already halfway across the arena and heading for the door.

"Thanks. I'll learn quickly so we can go swimming as soon as you're done."

"Does she actually think she can learn to swim in the next hour?" One of the Seaside Sect Elders asked Cain, who was overseeing the rock paper scissors competition, to see who went next.

"She does. But she's probably not wrong either. Luna has an uncanny ability to pick up new skills." Cain informed the Immortal.

"To think someone really made it to the Spirit Realm without learning how to swim. What absolute dedication to her cultivation. Perhaps our Disciples could learn a thing or two from her about single minded devotion." The Elder replied, not understanding Luna's personality.

Elder Mariel smiled at the misunderstanding. "Well, you're not wrong, but somehow you're also not correct. The only thing that Miss Luna is single-mindedly devoted to is food. That is followed closely by physical affection, but the food is the true devotion of her psyche."

"Using hunger to drive herself toward her goals? How admirably self-sacrificing for such a youngster."

"No, that is even more incorrect. The mere thought of missing a meal would put her into a panic. She loves to cook and eat. She doesn't starve herself for motivation." Cain explained.

"Then how did she keep motivated enough to progress so fast?" The Elder asked, confused.

"Bribery. Making her favorite foods as a reward, letting her cuddle the Lycan while she sleeps, you know, the sorts of simple things that all youngsters like." Cain shrugged.

"You know what, never mind. I'm even more lost now than I was before. I have no idea how a Lycan relates to cultivation motivation."

Mariel laughed and looked over at the Sect Master. "Perhaps you could ask him to let you cuddle one of his daughters in lycan form for an evening to test the solution?"

"You forget, I've been here long enough that I actually know them. That would not be in any way relaxing or motivational, and that is even before their husbands found out that I had asked."

"Why don't we hold a group match? Four on four?" One of the Seaside Disciples asked after seeing how small the group Cain brought was.

His thoughts said that the sooner they finished the ritual part, the faster they could get to trying to convince Cain to leave the Arena up for the duration of his stay so that they could fight here.

After seeing a nearly decapitated fighter rescued and fully healed in seconds, they were willing to try almost anything for the chance to test their skills against their chief rivals within the Sect.

"I don't have an issue with that. Pick any four of your friends, and we can spar." Jen agreed.

The group arrangement was far better for her skills, and she really wanted to join Luna in the water before she had completely mastered the muscle coordination necessary to swim smoothly.

Awkward Luna wasn't a sight that they got to see very often, after all.

The Disciple grabbed three of his friends, and they hopped down into the water, ready to begin the match.

Cain looked into their thoughts and saw the true intentions behind the plan. The Forbidden Treasures Sect wore white robes made of light silk in this heat, with a transparent peach outer layer, and they would be fighting in the water. There was no way they could know that the robes were magical armor and wouldn't turn transparent when wet, so the Disciple had picked all students who specialized in water skills.

"Not a bad plan, but I don't think it's going to end the way they were hoping for." Cain chuckled as he listened in.

"They have a way around it? I don't need to read their minds to know what they are up to." Mariel asked.

"The robes are enchanted. No matter how wet they get, that silk won't turn transparent. It was a good plan. They were just missing vital information." Cain replied with a smile.

"To think that Sect Master Cain, lover of practical jokes, would make Disciples robes out of white cloth that prevents accidental slips. Perhaps your Disciples have a more reliable mentor than I had thought." Mariel joked.

"Or I just have a specific taste in practical jokes. But if they try, they could wear the outer layer as a beach wrap over their swimsuits, so the boys might still luck out once we're at the beach." Cain replied.

"I think that's on everyone's mind. Either to see Luna learn to swim or just to get to hang out with your Disciples. We have a fair number of women here, far more than Crushing Mountain does anyhow, but it is still less than a fifth of the number of men, and we haven't taken in too many in the past few decades, so the ones that are here are mostly Inner Sect Disciples or Elders." Mariel replied.

"How do you even decide who moves to be an Elder and who moves to the Core Disciples?" Cain asked.

"Either they reach their potential and choose to teach instead of going on a journey to find an opportunity to improve, or they earn enough respect in the Sect as a whole that they are given the Elder title. The Core Disciples are simply the most powerful of the ones that aren't Elders." She explained.

"I thought you would be out watching your daughter learn to swim." One of the other female Elders asked as Mariel finished speaking.

Cain opened the viewing spell he was using to watch for the others to see, showing her splashing in the water with the Elder holding her hands as she built up the coordination to swim on her own.

She was already halfway there and given another two hours, she would likely be swimming on her own, without relying on the skills of the Water Elemental to help her, though she was likely still taking its advice to speed up the process.

"Remote Viewing. I should have realized that you wouldn't let her out of sight." The Elder said, realizing her mistake.

"Watching her learn to swim was too important to miss, even if I needed to stand here to show my support for the rest of the Sect." Cain agreed.

As a Hatchling World Dragon, he could view thousands of places at the same time without any issue, and each would feel like he was seeing them with his own eyes, so where his physical body was didn't make any difference to the experience. To his mind, it was as good as standing there. He could feel the sun, smell the breeze across the ocean, and see Luna working on her swimming technique with mild frustration on her face as her body didn't perform in the way she intended it to.

In the arena, the two teams squared off against each other, with Jen in the lead of the Forbidden Treasures Sect formation and Sabbat in the rear. Even Solara had joined them today. Though she was at a much lower level of cultivation still, Cain had granted her Mana Transformation, so she had increased her level quite a bit and was already back to Mythic Awakened by using her own stored materials.

She was only level 150, though, so the Awakening wasn't enough to bring her on par with the others, only enough to keep her from getting squished right away.

"Oh, this is going to be good. See the little Alchemist in the middle, the one who clearly can't fight? She's got a most excellent prank prepared for the Seaside Sect Disciples." Cain chuckled as he saw her plan in his mind.

All of the nearby Elders turned their attention to her, and as soon as the Seraphim started the match, she threw a potion in the water near the enemy team, spreading quickly through the Seaside Disciples' side of the arena.

For the first second, the effect wasn't obvious, but the Seaside Disciples were moving strangely, and their Uniforms fit somewhat strangely.

"She didn't." Mariel laughed.

"Better believe she did." One of the other Elders giggled as Jen used [Shield Slam] on the water to drench their now female opponents.

They were soaked, and the thin, ocean-blue robes were clinging to exaggerated curves. The sight made Sabbat's eyes narrow, but she was glaring at Solara and not the enemy team.

"Trouble in paradise?" Mariel asked.

"Solara didn't tell Sabbat that she had a way to increase an A cup to what are those, triple F? Sabbat has always been a bit annoyed about her excessively slender figure, but I haven't relented and agreed to change her body shape since she's not fully grown yet." Cain explained.

The confusion among the Seaside Sect Disciples meant that they were eliminated in seconds but refused to exit the recovery room for some time after that.

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 693 693 Bonus Beach Scenery

"Get out here and join the team for the beach, or I'm coming in to get you." Sect Master Mooney yelled down to them.

"But Sect Master, we can't remove this curse, and the room isn't drying our robes." The Disciple complained.

"Just change and get out here, or should I send Divine Elder Mariel in with a change of outfits?" Sect Master Mooney called.

"Divine Elder Mariel, could you help us out?" A timid voice answered while Cain and Mooney hid their laughter.

Other than the Sect Master and one other Divine Elder, the others couldn't see inside. The Disciples' spare robes were cut for muscular young men to show off their physique. With a more curvaceous figure, they didn't cover any of the essential upper parts that a uniform should cover, and the pants wouldn't make it over their hips.

Mariel flew into the Recovery room and came out a few minutes later with four red-faced young women in Seaside Sect dresses.

"How long does that potion last?" One of the Disciples asked Solara as they passed, following the Divine Elder.

"Not more than two days. It's a Mythic Rank potion, but it was diluted through the water, so it might wear off tonight."

The Disciples looked relieved and began to turn toward the shore and their dorms.

"Where do you think you're going? We are all going swimming, as a Sect. Why did you think I gave you a swimsuit to wear under the uniform? Now everyone, follow me, and we will go see how Miss Luna is doing with her swimming lessons and prepare for an evening beachfront feast."

"Are we being punished?" One of the Disciples who lost the match asked.

"For thinking that you could soak the Forbidden Treasures Sect uniforms and sneak a peek? Of course not. But you know the rules. If you're not injured or on a mission, you participate in Sect events. The other Elders are currently gathering those who snuck out early from today's matches so that they are all at the beach." Mariel replied.

The Disciples looked defeated, so she must not be lying, but they didn't look too enthusiastic about going swimming.

"Just think, you still get the view you wanted, but from your own close friends. How much better is that than having to sneak a peek from strangers?" Cain asked them.

"It's not the same, not the same at all. No matter how fantastic they are, I really don't want to see Dave's tits." One of the Disciples whined while the Elders burst into laughter.

"Then be glad that the Alchemist was merciful. Ingested directly, that potion lasts for years, and it is nearly impossible to dispel without high-ranking cleansing potions." Sect Master Mooney told them.

Sabbat pinched Solara, who pointed at Cain as if to say her grievance was misguided.

The real reason that Solara hadn't made the potion for her before now was actually due to pure pettiness. Cain had put Solara in a child's body, and Sabbat was the tiebreaker

between childish and flat-chested figures and curvy women. If Solara changed her, it would be three to three, and there would be one more to be envious of while she waited for her body to grow up.

Once they started walking, the female Disciples of the Seaside Sect moved to guard their temporary sisters against harassment. Well, harassment from Disciples who weren't them. There were a lot of "Unintentional" Brushes and nudges that kept the four self-conscious all the way to the water, where the girls turned expectantly to wait for them to strip out of their robes and show off the swimsuits that Elder Mariel had picked.

"Fine, we will go first." One of the girls laughed, shrugging out of her robes to show off her bikini, followed by the others.

Cain's Disciples changed into swimsuits in an instant, simply by equipping them instead of their uniforms. They had picked a number of them out while they were shopping in the city, and they were sure they had the very best options available.

Most of the Seaside Sect wore trunks in the same blue as their robes and ran out into the water to stretch their muscles in preparation for an afternoon full of games.

Divine Elder Mariel had been kind to the pranked Disciples and had selected Sect color one-piece suits, the same as most of the girls were wearing.

"Why didn't the gender-bending potion change the girls to boys?" One of the disciples whispered to Cain when he noticed that they were nearly alone now that everyone was running for the water.

"It's not a gender change potion. It's a disguise potion that changes face and body shape. They're not real girls. They're traps. It loses effectiveness quickly if diluted, and the girls were too far away for it to make them match their opponents." Cain explained.

If anything, the Disciple's eyes got even bigger at that news, and he only gave Cain a quick bow before running to find Solara. He had better be able to fight as well as he brewed potions, or he might not survive playing that prank now that the Sect had seen it before.

The Elders were setting up a number of volleyball nets along the beach, and there was an existing swimming course marked out in the water with buoys and ropes. Those seemed to be the favorite pastimes of the Sect, and as soon as the nets were up, the volleyball came out of storage rings, and the disciples started picking teams.

Even Luna, who had convinced her tutor to let her take a break from learning to swim, was quickly snapped up for the games, and everyone but the targets forgot all about the previous prank the girls had played.

"It looks like they're getting along well." Cain smiled, watching the volleyball games go from a casual event into an intense competition as elemental skills were introduced into the battles.

"The balls are warded against damage. You can attack them, and it will just bounce them in the desired direction." Divine Elder Mariel shouted out so that all of the Forbidden Treasures Sect Disciples could hear.

That was a relief. They had been afraid to use skills in return since they didn't know the trick to move the ball without damaging it.

Luna, in traditional Luna fashion, was going all out, using the Water Elemental's skills to keep up in a match with the Inner Sect Disciples. You weren't allowed to attack the other team or across the net, but blocking the activation of their skills was fair game, and the Water Elementals were very good at dominating water control.

Her trick was making it hard for the Disciples to successfully get skills off, while Luna was happily using water blasts and pillars to let her team dominate the match.

"Ha, I knew the little one was the right choice. She's a summoner, and her Water Elemental alone is wrecking you." One of her teammates laughed.

"That's got to be a foul. Too many players on the field. Outside interference." The losing team's leader complained.

"All you need to do is find it and prove we cheated." Luna's team leader gloated while he used an air skill to spike the setup that Luna had placed for him.

The matches went to twenty points, then they switched opponents, playing until they were all exhausted and dinner was ready.

While practicing water movement to play the game, since most of the games were in deep water due to space limitations along the shore, Luna finally mastered the coordination to swim a little on her own and didn't have to use the Water Elemental at all to get back to shore.

It was a big accomplishment for her, and all her friends, plus most of the Seaside Disciples, were there to cheer on her struggle while she slowly made her way back after she released the Water Elemental from [Merger] to give her advice.

"You're right. She is a quick learner. I bet tomorrow she will be among the many competent swimmers here in the Sect." The Elder who had been teaching her told Cain, who was watching her progress with great pride.

"She must get it from her mother. She is exceptionally good at adapting to new situations." Cain replied.

Like the Shadowed Blade, the Seaside Sect was proficient with Mystic Cooking and had created a seafood feast for everyone to enjoy when they got back to shore.

Luna raced up to the cook with a smile, then began to frown as she poked him.

"What is it little one?" The Divine Elder asked.

"I was trying to record your cooking skill with one of my memory skills, but it won't let me," Luna explained simply, making the Demigod laugh.

"I'm far too powerful for you to be stealing my skills as your own, Miss Luna. Why not try one of my students?" He suggested.

"Well, I suppose, but they're not as good as you are."

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 694 694

Luna's understatement had the whole Sect laughing. The Divine Elder had mastered Mystic Cooking over a thousand years ago and had progressed the skill to levels unimaginable by most Cultivators, even creating foods that had more potent magical effects than most of the potions that Mortals could create.

To think that any of the Disciples could possibly match that was ridiculous.

But they had come a long way and could create a number of dishes with impressive effects on the diners, a not-so-secret advantage that the Seaside Sect had over others when cultivating.

Eating with the Divine Elder and his direct Disciples was a great honor in the Sect, and events like this, where they would cook for everyone, were very rare.

It made all the Disciples very glad that they hadn't ditched early, no matter how much they thought their other pursuits were more important than volleyball on the beach and meeting their visitors.

Luna recorded every other Disciple in the kitchen area and found that all of them could be recorded without issue, and one of them even had Mythic Cooking Skills that were

actually in the Mythic Rank. In theory, that was the limit of the technique, but the Divine Elder had taken it further than its original design.

Cain knew. He had recorded him while the Divine Elder was distracted by Luna's attempts.

He was having a relaxing conversation with a few of the Elders when a vortex of energy began to swirl in the area, signaling that someone was making the initial breakthrough from Spirit Rank into Immortality, where Immortal power would replace their mortal energy.

It was a long process and would go on for days or weeks, according to Elder Mariel, but the initial stages were sensitive, so the area around them was cleared, ensuring that they weren't disturbed and that the revelation that had caused the breakthrough wasn't lost in a distracted mind, stunting their growth.

"Your cooking really is amazing, Divine Elder." Cain congratulated him.

"Well worth the effort. Like your penchant for passing skills in an instant, my cooking has been enough to move the Seaside Sect from an average one to one of the faster-growing Sects on the continent." The Elder replied.

Even Cain could feel the effects of the energy stored in the food spreading through his body. At his rank, it wouldn't have much of an effect, but it was enough to at least make him notice the effect and increase his energy flow a little.

If he were actually competing against an evenly-matched Demigod, that could be enough to be the critical difference, but here on the beach, it was the most amazing meal that he had ever had the chance to enjoy.

While everyone else was eating, Sect Master Mooney was examining the Arena in great detail, trying to work out the method of its creation so that he could learn the skill. Mariel had told him all about the one he had made for the Crushing Mountain Sect, but the Lycan was determined that he would manage to learn the skill for himself so that they could not only have one at the Sect but also implement one wherever the Sect went.

They were already considered an up-and-coming power since he had ascended from a Demigod to a Minor Divinity, and having an incredibly useful skill like this would give them an edge on the other comparable Sects that they were competing with for new Disciples.

It was clear that Cain wasn't interested in creating a large Sect anytime soon, so the matter of Disciples wasn't a big deal to him, but to Sect Master Mooney, it was the most important part of establishing his Sect's spot in the hierarchy.

The Sect Rankings were important to humans, but they were much more than that to Lycans. Strength was considered one of the most important parts of worthiness to lead in their instincts and culture, so if he wanted to draw more of his own people to his Sect, he had to prove that he was better than their other options and not just rely on being a Lyncan.

That had drawn a number of other Lycans to him, but only the weakest ones, for which he was the strongest option they had available. To get the loyalty of more talented Lycans, he needed to have better opportunities.

"How is the attempt progressing? Would you like for me to show you the basics?" Cain asked after he finished his dinner.

"I think if I had a year or two, I could manage it. How much time do you have?" The Sect Master asked.

"A matter of days. I'm not sure if Divine Elder Mariel has informed you, but my wife is on the other side of one of the portals you guard, and I need to get there before she gives birth. The time flow has given me a lot of leeway, but I'm starting to run short, especially if she goes into labor early." Cain explained.

"Yes, she did explain the situation. I also understand that Dragons keep strange company sometimes, so I won't cause a fuss. It's not like they're coming here to invade or anything. You're just going to see them." The Lyncan agreed.

Cain wondered for a while why the Human Gods had a Lyncan guarding such an important portal, but he couldn't find a way to ask that didn't equate the species in some way to dogs due to their intense loyalty and devotion.

"Here, it's the creation method." Cain offered, mentally linking the Elder and flipping through the pages of the skill book in his thoughts.

It wasn't as effective as the other methods he had available, but it was also unlikely to trigger a System activation, which would be a hard thing to explain to a Divine Realm cultivator who had a large pool of knowledge about both other worlds and what had happened between the Human Gods and the Ancients.

The chances that he knew about the System were low, but not zero, so it was better not to risk it.

"Hmm, I see. Now, if I, no, that's not right." The Sect Master mumbled as he assimilated the knowledge.

After a few minutes, he opened a small pocket dimension and started attempting to cast the skill inside.

With time flowing a hundred times faster in the pocket dimension, it only took him six hours to manage a working version of the skill. It was only at Immortal Realm power, but that was better than any of the failures he had before that point.

It also wasn't a Seraphim Arena, and the referee appeared to be a Lycan, but when Cain inspected the safety wards and the recovery room, they were both fully functional, meaning the basic arena usage would be the same.

"A few more tweaks and you can decorate the outside as well, so everyone who sees it knows it belongs to your Sect." Cain reminded the Sect Master before he could decide he was done.

"Good point. How are my Disciples doing out there?" Mooney asked.

"They're having the time of their lives fighting in the arena. I think the ones my Disciple transformed might be traumatized, though. The ladies of your Sect haven't been going easy on them in the arena, and they're still not fully used to those bodies.

I think they'll be back to normal soon enough, though. I analyzed the potion, and it wasn't particularly powerful." Cain explained.

"It's good for them. I can't think of a situation where they will have to fight in an unfamiliar body, but if they lose a limb in combat, the effect can be nearly the same, putting them off balance." Mooney dismissed the bullying as simple training.

Luna had worn herself out swimming after dinner and was asleep on Cain's lap, but the other Disciples were still watching the matches.

"The Sect Master is doing an incredible job on the new arena." Mariel greeted Cain as she sat down, lifting Luna's lower body to steal the sleeping girl from Cain.

Luna didn't notice at all. She just adjusted her position to curl up into Mariel's arms and continued to snore softly.

[Strong motherly instinct and a natural with children. Good news, good news.] The Laughing God's voice spoke in Cain's mind.

[You really are interested in her, aren't you? How long do we have before we have to go?] Cain replied.

[Not more than a day or two if you're going to be on the safe side. You should leave a gift for the Seaside Sect, though, something to earn some goodwill in case you want to return to this world in the future.]

[That's an excellent idea. They're learning their own method of creating the arena, but I am sure that I can come up with something that they would enjoy.] Cain agreed.

[Why not go with something simple? A direct buff to Lycans would gather a lot of the Sect Master's people to him, and it would give him enough of a pack that they could participate in the mating game if someone found an Immortal Bride.] The Laughing God suggested.

[The Mating Game?]

Cain sensed the amusement on the Creator's side before he answered. [I will tell you all about it when you get here. But for now, pick something that will give him an edge in gathering Lycans.]

Cain felt the mental link disconnect and returned his thoughts to the real world, where the fight in the arena was just ending, with the winner being sent to the recovery room for blood loss only a few seconds after the loser.

"You were distracted. What's on your mind?" Mariel asked.

"An appropriate parting gift for the Sect. I'm almost out of time in this world."

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 695 695 Parting Gift

"There really aren't that many things that the Sect needs, though. We're set up pretty well. We have comfortable dorms, warm, clear ocean waters, and plenty of monsters to hunt if the disciples travel only a few days away." Mariel replied.

Cain thought for a while about things that could attract Lycans here and realized that he didn't actually know a whole lot about the species other than they preferred to live in groups, respected power as a sign of authority, and were rather fluffy when transformed.

In short, he should likely talk to Penny.

Unfortunately, Penny was nearly asleep against his left side, so all discussions would have to wait for morning. Instead, Cain created a Pocket Dimension, added a small Pagoda filled with pillows and blankets, and moved all his Disciples inside.

Mariel pouted for a few seconds before Cain winked at her. "I can put you in there as well if you aren't averse to being cuddled half to death."

"No, I suppose I could help you with the parting gift for the Sect instead. At our level, a few nights a month is plenty of sleep, so spending a whole eight hours in bed is just a weird thought." She replied.

Cain thought about what the Sect might need, and then he recalled the Divine Lycan who came to visit him once in the past with the Celestial. He was wearing an amulet that gave off the aura of authority, giving the impression that he was a leader and projecting the feeling of his innate power.

Sect Master Mooney was a Minor God, but he only felt powerful and holy. He didn't have that aura of authority to him. His aura was more benevolent, and Cain wondered if that change in feeling was what differentiated the strong from the leaders among Lycans.

Cain thought about that for a while and then decided to make the Sect Master a trinket while he made a separate parting gift for the Sect itself.

The first thing Cain did was compare Mooney to Penny to see what they had in common that separated them from the Humans. There had to be something other than an ability to change shapes that made the difference.

It took a while, but there was a slight difference in the energy created by their bodies that made all the difference. It was weak in both of them, as Penny was mortal, and the Sect Master was a mystic cultivator, but it was uniquely Lycan.

If he enhanced that, it should increase the physical quality of their bodies, allowing them to shrug off lower-level attacks without even reinforcing themselves with their cultivation. Cultivation energy would run out in a long battle, but a higher-quality body would remain impervious to weaker attacks for life.

That should attract more Lycans to the Sect Master, for sure.

Since it was Lycan-specific, it would be best as a trinket for the Sect Master and not an item for the whole Sect, who were mostly humans.

"Did you think of something?" Mariel asked.

"I think a trinket for the Sect Master, which increases the density and quality of the Lycan energy in his body, would be a good start. It might be a bit personal, but I can make something for the Sect in a hurry. They'll be easier to impress.

"Do you really think you can do that?" Mariel asked.

"Sure, I've seen something similar before, so I can try to duplicate it now. It might not be the same, but I think it will be good enough to at least attract more Lycans here, which is what the Sect Master said he wanted.

I think he's a bit lonely with so few Lycans here in his Sect. So if I can help him out with that, I think it would be the best sort of gift that I could give him."

Mariel looked pensive for a while and then nodded. "I think you are right. Lycans need family, and his own is long gone. Penny has the other girls, so you wouldn't notice it, but given time, it would likely become noticeable with her as well, especially if everyone went their own way."

"Then I will find a way to attract more Lycans for him. But what should we leave for the Sect?" Cain asked.

"Seaside Sect does a lot of Alchemy, Inscription, and protective wards thanks to their role as guardians of the Portals. Something that helps them with that, or some new recipes might be a good gift." Mariel suggested.

"Sorting through everything that they already know would take forever, though. Actually, I have something that they could really appreciate. They are mostly Mystic Cultivators, right? Are there any Mage-type Cultivators here?" Cain asked.

Mariel nodded. "At least a few dozen. They tend to end up with the Inscriptionists since they are so good at turning Inscriptions into spells that they can use."

Cain took out his Inscription Desk, then began to write. He wasn't going to make them a spell book, at least not right now. He was going to copy out the first chapter of Spell Crafting, which would let them alter and completely create the simplest of Pre-Awakened Realm spells.

Healing spells were much later in the book, but barriers were among the easiest things to create, so they were at the start of the book, along with modifying attack spells for versatility.

He also decided to add the most basic resurrections spell to the end of the book as a bonus chapter. They could use it as it was, or they could use what they had learned in the first chapter and try to dissect it into various healing skills for the Sect.

It would take them years, or even decades, to work through it all, even though he had written it in the common language and not Ancient, as the proper book was. He knew he had likely missed a lot of the nuance from the original that made it easier to grasp, but Cain was quite certain that this would at least get someone started on the path of Spellcrafting.

"A book is your gift to the Sect?" Mariel asked in confusion.

"The first chapter to the lost art of Spellcrafting. If they learn everything that is in this book, they will be able to create brand new skills for the Mortal Realm cultivators and even raise the recently dead." Cain explained.

"You're giving them the gift of skill creation? That will have them all so overjoyed that the Inscriptionists of this world might never forget your name. Where did you even learn that?" Mariel asked.

Cain gave her a meaningful look but didn't say anything.

"Seriously, him again? I really need to meet this guy." She muttered.

"The Sect Master's gift is actually going to be the harder one to create since I've never done it before. Compared to that, translating a lost tome is child's play." Cain sighed.

Cain and Mariel worked together until breakfast time before they completed the Amulet for the Sect Master and woke everyone up to head to the kitchens.

"Food" seemed to be the magic word of the day, and the simple mention of heading to the Elder's compound for breakfast was enough to get the weary Disciples up and moving.

Swimming worked entirely different muscles than they were used to, and none of them had thought to heal themselves before sleeping, so they were all stiff and sore when they first woke up and Jen activated a healing aura.

The Sect Master was overseeing the morning preparations when they arrived. He had decided that his mastery of the Arena spell was complete enough that he would create one for the Sect, so they had spent the night clearing an area for the new facility to be placed, including making new walkways and relocating trees from the surrounding forest to create a proper, if extremely sparse, forest around it, giving visitors somewhere to put their camps where the Elders could have shade.

"You could have asked, and I would have had it done in seconds." Cain greeted the Sect Master.

"How so?"

Mariel giggled, sounding much younger than she really was. "He's a World Dragon. Creating a new forest and some walkways would take him all of five seconds even if he were in the middle of the desert."

"I should have thought of that. It might have turned out better that way, but this should be sufficient for our purposes. I will put up the new arena after we eat, and it will fill in a lot of the empty space and add a bit of ambiance." Mooney replied.

"On that note, I made you a small parting gift that will help you with your future endeavors, such as impressing other Cultivators with your new arena," Cain informed him, holding out the Amulet for the Lycan to examine.

"I can't read these inscriptions. What does it do?" He asked, taking the gift from Cain and holding it up in front of his face as if proximity would let him learn the Ancient Runes.

"Put it on, and you will understand. It's a gift specifically for a Lycan worthy of leading his kin." Cain told him with a wink.

Mooney looked curious but placed the amulet around his neck and waited patiently as it began to take effect.

The amulet took a few seconds to acknowledge him as its bearer, but when he added a bit of Divine Energy to the small metal object, the rate of change began to increase to the point that everyone in the area could tell it was active.

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 696 696 Through The Portal

For the Elders who didn't know what to expect, it took a few seconds to notice that the Sect Master's aura was changing, gaining more of a primal sense of authority to go with his power. For the Divine Realm Cultivators, it was clear that the amulet was actually changing his body, increasing the potency of his bloodline so that he was slowly moving from an ordinary Mortal Lycan toward the Immortal bloodline that the more powerful of his species possessed.

That bloodline was extremely rare in this world, mostly reserved for the few most powerful Royal Packs, but in the Divine Realms, it was the basic standard to be considered an actual person and not an intelligent insect.

Divine Realm visitors weren't completely unheard of here, and the Sect Master was often the one to greet them, so having the bloodline to get a bit of respect for more than his cultivation would be a pleasant change.

"We also have a gift for the Sect as a whole. Where are the lead Inscriptionists?" Cain asked.

"They're likely in the library. That's where they do most of their work, and they are also in charge of the rare texts." The Sect Master offered, extending a hand to show that the others should follow him.

He also sent a mental message to the Inscriptionists, who met them out front of the library, accompanied by their senior disciples and a few curious onlookers wondering what the fuss was about.

It was uncommon for any of the Elders in the Inscription department to greet someone, much less for all of them to come out at once, so the spectacle had caught everyone's attention as soon as they started moving toward the door.

"Greetings Elders, it is good to see you all in one spot again. My travels are about to take me away, and I thought I would leave you all with a gift of goodwill to remember our visit by." Cain greeted them.

"You have already given the Sect Master such a wonderful thing. It would be too much to ask for more." One of the Elders replied politely.

"That was for him personally. This is a gift for the Sect as a whole. It's not as simple as touching this gift, though, you will have to put in the time and work to make the most of it, but I have confidence that you will eventually be able to make the most of what I am about to give you." Cain told them, then held out the book he had made.

They all looked at it curiously, as it was bound in unmarked leather with no title or ornamentation, but they took it anyhow, knowing that it would be an insult to the Sect Master not to accept his gift.

When they opened the cover to see what he had gifted them, their entire attitude changed in an instant.

"Introduction to Skill Crafting, Volume 1," One of them read, speaking in a reverent whisper.

"Is it true? This is the lost art of skill crafting?" Sect Master Moonie asked.

"Not all of it. In fact, not even most of it. This is the very first of over ninety chapters. Even I haven't obtained and mastered them all, but this will teach them the basics of how to craft new Mortal Grade skills individually to give to the Disciples.

I also included a small bonus at the end, the [Minor Resurrection] skill. As long as they are intact and very recently dead, it will bring them back to the land of the living, though not by much. But if you truly master the tome and the skill, you should be able to dissect it to create a few more healing skills for your Mortal Disciples." Cain explained.

"This treasure, how did you come across such a thing?" One of the Inscriptionists asked curiously.

"I was exploring the ruins of a lost civilization on another planet, and I found one of the original tomes in their library. This one is a translated copy of the first chapter of that

book since writing it in the original language would most likely only slow down the comprehension process." Cain told them with a smile.

That was true. Many magical tomes were innately resistant to being read and chose the ones that could comprehend them with great care. Or so the common sense of this world told them. Really it was a matter of compatibility and bloodline, since if it were written in Ancient, the books really would be enchanted so those without the bloodline would see gibberish if they tried to read them.

Only after much hard work and suffering could the truth of a tome in the Ancient Language be deciphered without at least a little bit of the Ancient Bloodline in the reader. Even Luna had trouble with some of the more complex topics, and she was half Ancient. Though, it was possible that the problem was due to her age and thought processes, not her ancestry.

"I think that should be enough to keep you busy for a year or two. Who knows, the next time I visit, maybe your disciples will all be a bit more like mine, with a number of personalized skills granted to them by their masters."

The pure absurdity of the notion made the Elders laugh. There were only a handful of them who had the level of knowledge necessary to even begin making sense of this book. Unless Cain were planning to wait a thousand years before he visited again, there would only be a few dozen out of hundreds of Disciples who could possibly have been trained with a fully customized suite of skills.

"I believe that your work here is done. Should we go gather your Disciples? They seem to have wandered away again." Divine Elder Mariel suggested.

"Give them a few minutes. I'm sure they just want one last swim in the ocean since we don't know where we will land after going through the portal. But once they are properly wet, we do need to get going." Cain sighed.

It wasn't long before the Disciples rejoined the group with wet hair and water dripping down onto their uniforms, looking the perfect picture of the innocent children that they could have been if they had been born into peaceful worlds with no cultivation.

It would be incredibly dull but possibly blissful.

"Is it time?" Penny asked, then did a double take when she noticed how much Sect Master Moonie's aura had changed.

Cain knew that she would be asking for a similar talisman soon enough, but that could wait until they were settled in the world that the Ancients called home.

"It is time. Elder Mariel, if you would be so kind as to lead the way, so we don't trip any defensive measures on our way to the portal." Cain asked politely.

"Of course. Sect Master Moonie, I will see you soon. There is someone that I simply have to see on the other side of that portal. I have the skills to make my own way back afterward, but I can't pass up that sort of learning experience." She replied, smiling at her Sect Master.

"Of course. You can't advance past the level of demigod if you always stay in one spot. You need to travel and learn. We will be here waiting for your return." Moonie told her with a wink, deliberately misunderstanding her intentions.

Mariel wasn't about to tell him that she was going to study under one of the most notorious Divinties that they knew of, so she simply smiled back and let the Sect Master assume that she was eloping to become Cain's mistress.

How the Lycan thought that would work out when his wife was waiting at the other end was a mystery best left unsolved, so she turned away and led Cain's group through the spells, walls, and traps that surrounded the portal that led to the Ancients' homeworld.

The portal itself was buried inside a large stone boulder with layers and layers of inscriptions on it to prevent anyone from accessing it in either direction. Twenty Immortal Realm guards were staring intently at the portal, watching for the smallest change that would indicate someone was trying to come through from the other side.

"Divine Elder, it is good to see you again, but this is a restricted area." The leader of the guards greeted them.

"We have permission from the Sect Master to exit the world through the portal. There is an opportunity waiting for me on the other side, and the Forbidden Treasures Sect is on a search for their Sect Master's wife, who is somewhere in that world." She explained, handing the guard a note from Sect Master Moonie.

As a pair of Demigods, they could have gone through by force or stealth, but it was much better to have permission, so there were no hard feelings when and if they wanted to return.

"Alright, I will lift the boulder so you can pass through. It will only be up for a few minutes, so be certain that this is what you truly wish." The guard reminded her.

"It's a chance to advance from Demigod to Minor God. I am certain." Mariel told him, and the man began to laugh.

"I can't argue with that. I won't ever make it to either unless something miraculous happens to me, so I can only envy your chance. Now go before I get all weepy at losing a drinking partner." The Guard chuckled.

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 697 697 Land Of Ancients

"I will go first, just in case something is wrong on the other side. It would be convenient if we could see the other side of this portal, but it appears to be totally black, so they might have blocked their side as well. I can deal with that, but don't follow until I signal that it is safe to come through." Cain informed the others.

He merged with Oath Breaker, whose teleportation ability was excellent for this purpose and would let him easily return to where he started if the far side was blocked so that he wouldn't get squashed against whatever was blocking the exit.

The guard lifted the stone for them to exit through the portal, and Cain stepped through, leading the way in case there was something unexpected on the other side. The portal was heavily guarded at this end, so there was no reason to believe it wouldn't be guarded on the other side.

Cain felt soft cloth against his face as he stepped through and into a completely black room. His vision let him make out the basic surroundings through thermal imagining, but it looked like he was in a basement somewhere, with smoothly cut stone block walls and no windows.

He created a simple light spell and looked around the room, realizing that there were centuries of dust on every square centimeter of the lavishly decorated sitting room.

All of the furniture had covers on it. Even the portal had a cloth draped over it to keep the dust off. Cain looked around carefully, searching for traps or signs of danger, but the room seemed perfectly normal, though the door was barred from this side, which was a bit odd, as it implied that whoever was here last either teleported out or left through the portal.

[It's an old sitting room, possibly in a basement, as it has no windows. It seems safe enough.] Cain mentally messaged both Luna and Elder Mariel at the same time.

A small body hopped through the portal a second later, then sneezed and cursed as the dust her arrival raised filled the air.

"Oh yeah. I can fix that." Cain laughed.

[Maid's Pride] was a cleaning spell known to the two Succubus Royal Maids that Cid had summoned as his Lieutenants, chosen by the system to help him try to keep Neffie

under control. It took effect in an instant and removed all the dust from everything, returning the room to a pristine state.

With that fixed, Cain collected all the drop cloths and checked the furniture, noticing that it all had preservation runes on it in the Ancient Language.

It was a good sign that they were in the right world, at least. The tomes on the shelves all seemed to be written in Ancient as well, so Cain sent a thought to the mostly inactive link to the Ancient Collective.

[Good Morning, am I in the right spot?]

The response was immediate, as the link reopened, and he was included in the main consciousness of the Ancient Collective for the first time. Luna's mind was right there with him, wondering at all the new people she could hear and all the books on the shelves she had never seen before.

With the lights on and the drop cloth removed, the others could see into the portal now, giving them confidence that they could safely cross between worlds. They hurried through, waving goodbye to the guard who made sure they were all safely on the other side before lowering the stone again, turning the portal black from the viewpoint of the group in the sitting room.

"This world feels strange. It's not an Immortal world. I don't think. But the energy doesn't feel like regular Divine Energy. Do you think the Ancients could have completely replaced the Divine Energy with Arcane Energy refined by them?" Mariel asked as she took a deep breath of the stale air.

"It could just be this room. They know that we're here since I said hello already, so if we wait a moment and open the door, someone is likely to come to see what we're up to. That would be easier than wandering around the place without a map or a clue where we are." Cain decided.

Penny removed the wooden crossbar from the door and cracked it open, finding an incredibly dusty and disused hallway on the other side.

"There are windows here. I don't think we're in the basement. It's just an interior room. Why don't you step out first and make sure there are no sneaky Immortal Realm traps waiting for us out there?" The Lycan suggested.

"Why would we trap our own hallways? What if someone forgot and injured themselves?" A soft voice echoed through the room from the direction of the bookshelves.

A petite Bunny girl appeared out of thin air or perhaps coalesced herself out of energy, which is what it looked like to Cain's eyes, and bowed to the group. Her feet didn't seem

to touch the ground, making no noise as she moved around the room, lighting lamps and activating a light spell set into the ceiling.

"They left me in charge of this place since nobody goes here anymore, and I am rarely in a solid form. Give me a moment, and I will tidy it up for corporeal beings." The strange Bunny began, then stopped suddenly and stared at Luna.

"Ignore her. That happens every time she sees something fluffy." Cain offered.

"No, not that. This child is one of us. Well, half one of us. Is this one of your daughters? Nyarla told me all about them, but I could have sworn she was supposed to be not a human." The Ancient in the form of a Bunny replied.

"Dad, can I change back now? This world isn't full of humans, is it?" Luna asked.

"We can change you back if you like. Your normal form should be fine, and Mariel is the only one who hasn't seen it yet." Cain agreed, changing Luna back to all of her Lamia Progenitor glory.

The moment he did, the four-armed serpentine body was launched at the bunny, wrapping the ancient up and rubbing her face against the Ancient's ears.

"Ah, that's much better. Good to meet you. My name is Luna." She greeted the woman she was wrapped around.

"Good to meet you, Luna. I am called Hera, short for Heraphonecia. Your scales are quite smooth. Transforming back and forth keeps them in pristine condition."

Mariel shook her head at the scene, then turned to the hallway, which was suddenly spotless and flooded with afternoon light from the now-open windows.

"Ah, that's better. This is a Divine Realm. You were right, Cain. It was just the room that was full of the unique energy of the Ancients." She sighed.

"You brought a random human who isn't part of your family?" Hera asked.

"The Laughing God wanted to talk to her." He shrugged, getting a shocked look from Mariel.

"Wait, the one you were talking about was him? I thought it would be one of the others, but since when does that one concern himself with mortal matters? The legends say he disappeared after the war and hasn't been seen since." She explained.

"There is a lot to that story, but he's been doing some things, and he was too busy for other concerns. But you caught his attention, and he wanted to see you."

"I am afraid that he is still preoccupied at the moment. Some issue with the dragons about a prank that he played on them, but he promised to come back as soon as he could so that he could meet you in person." Hera informed Mariel with a smile.

"You two aren't actually related, are you? Seriously, that sounds like the sort of excuse you would give." Mariel said, looking straight at Cain.

"Oh, no. We're not related in any way, but we've been in contact regularly for some time, and we tend to be on the same wavelength, so I can see how the misunderstanding would occur." Cain told her with a smirk.

Footsteps were coming briskly but evenly up the stairs at the end of the hall, signaling that they were getting multiple visitors, so Hera began to check out the room to make sure it was fit for company.

"You might as well take a seat. You'll be here for a while. We don't get many visitors these days, so everyone will want to come to say hello." The Ancient said, gesturing vaguely to the footsteps in the hall.

"I still have a quest to complete and a pregnant wife to visit, so I can't stay too long today, but maybe we can relocate?" Cain suggested.

"Not a problem. Nyarla will be along soon enough to see what the hold-up is. She's a real busybody, but she's the very best with children."

Cain realized that he could hear all of their thoughts through the link, though they were not intending to broadcast them. It was like being in a public space. The voices were there but quiet, so you had to make an effort to make them clear unless they wanted to be heard. The one known as Nyarla was deliberately blocking a whole building, but Cain could sense her excitement leaking through.

He took that to mean that she had a surprise waiting for him, and the building was only a few blocks away. That was a bit further than usual since all the buildings were made for twenty-meter-tall bodies, but at his level, it would only take him a few seconds to be at her front door.

Once this was all sorted out, he really did need to have a long talk with that woman about the courtesies involved in stealing someone's family from their bedroom.

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 698 698 Reunited

It was a good thing that they cleaned because it seemed that every Ancient in the area wanted to see the visitors the very moment they arrived. What sounded like a few sets of feet didn't account for the ones that were flying, the ones moving silently, and the multi-tentacled ones whose movement didn't make a traditional footstep-type sound.

From their thoughts, Cain could tell they didn't care that he had transformed into a World Dragon and that the system didn't count him as an Ancient anymore. In their thoughts, it was once an Ancient, always an Ancient. He didn't lose any of his abilities when he transformed, and he wouldn't lose any of the World Dragon abilities if he changed his shape back to that of an Ancient, so the point really was moot to them.

He simply was what he was, and the important part was that he was a father to a large number of half Ancient children.

Though the rest of Cyrene's children didn't have the powers that Luna did, they still carried on the bloodline, which made him a proper Ancient for eternity by their standards.

"Welcome to our world, Cain. We have been waiting and watching for so long that I almost thought you forgot about us." A woman with a body much like Luna's but with wings in addition to her four arms and shark-like teeth in her mouth greeted them as soon as she entered.

"Thank you all for the well wishes. Thank you all for looking after Misha for me." Cain replied, and the Ancients began to laugh.

"Other than chatting with her for a while, we really didn't do much. You have no idea how protective Nyarla is." The snake-bodied woman laughed.

"Even Hera couldn't get in to see her often, and she's the best at escaping detection." Another ancient agreed.

"Change shapes. You're making the humans nervous. They're Cain's guests, well, most of them. The Laughing God invited the Divine Realm one." Hera insisted.

As if to mock her, the room was suddenly full of Bunny Girls instead of enormous, monstrous Ancients, and Luna squealed in joy.

"This place is going to be awesome. I can tell already. We should do introductions. I am Luna, and the Lycan is Penny, and then we have Jen, Sabbath, Tena, and Solara, from largest to smallest. The one over to one side is Mariel. Don't let her fool you, she's only quiet now, but if you let her, she will steal your seat."

"One time, I stole your spot one time." Mariel laughed, making the Ancients giggle at the memory that Cain showed them.

"I see how it is. You have to be very careful little one. There are a lot of people here and even others with serpentine bodies. If you're not careful, someone might even wrap him." The female Ancient joked.

"You wouldn't dare. That's still my spot. Unless my mother is here, then I guess I will have to give it up. No, wait, I am stronger than she is now. That's still my spot." Luna declared.

Cain bonked her on the head to stop her ranting. "You don't get to call dibs on the spot. Cyrene was there long before you were large enough to be more than a bracelet."

"Well, it is good that you all made it here safely. Will there be angry humans following you through the portal?" One of the Ancients asked.

"No, they let us come through willingly. The Lycan that they have in charge of guarding the gate is a good guy, and he said as long as you didn't come through or try to attack them, he didn't mind if we left that way." Mariel explained on her Sect Master's behalf.

"That explains it. The cranky old guy is gone, and his successor is more reasonable. If we had known that, we wouldn't have had to keep someone stationed in the portal room for so long. It's a bit of a waste to have a Divine Realm Being simply floating around an empty building in case the humans go crazy again without anyone taking care of them." The Ancient replied with a hint of amusement and a glance at Hera, who had already stopped paying attention and was checking the books with Luna still wrapped around her.

"Now, do you think we can interrupt whatever Nyarla is hiding in her mind so I can go see my very pregnant wife?" Cain asked.

"Two more minutes until she said that we can go over there. She's getting everything ready for your arrival." Hera informed him, not looking up from the book she had found.

"You're flipping too fast. Haven't you done this before?" Luna asked, reading the book over her shoulder.

"I can't say that I have. Is this a thing with Lamia?" Hera asked.

"One Hundred Percent. If they're attached to you, expect them to take an interest in everything you do. So, if you're reading, they're reading. She will nod when she is done with the page." Cain told her.

"Interesting. I highly recommend this to everyone. The delayed reading pace is a minor inconvenience, but Lamia are quite warm and comfortable." Hera informed the others.

"Hmm, perhaps we can convince Cain's other children. There aren't enough to go around, though. Maybe we will need to make a schedule?" One of the Ancients pondered.

"Ancients really are an odd bunch, aren't they?" Mariel asked, looking between the identical forms of the transformed creatures.

"We had to hide here for a rather long time, and the Human Gods are still holding a grudge about the war, so we don't really meet new people. Plus, we can all read each other's thoughts, so we don't have many secrets. I am told that it might have led to a bit of an insular culture and a habit of oversharing." An Ancient replied.

"I can see how that might happen. If you hung around Lamia long enough, you would lose all sense of personal space, so being around only Ancients, it makes sense that the sense of privacy and personal information is near zero."

"Alright, two minutes are up, and everything is ready. Now we can all join the others at the Castle where Misha has been staying." Hera informed the room at the same time that Cain sensed Nyarla's thoughts enter the collective again, signaling that she had dropped the barrier around whatever she was doing.

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

- Chapter 699 699 Misha Returns

Chapter 699 699 Misha Returns

They made their way over at a very normal human pace, simply walking down the path instead of flying or teleporting, as almost everyone present was capable of.

Luna seemed to have adopted Hera as her mount of choice, remaining wrapped around her waist and asking a constant stream of questions about everything they passed. It was a relief for the other overwhelmed Disciples, who weren't sure what to make of this place, or the strange atmosphere that seemed to be filling them past their capacity and suffocating them for lack of energy at the same time.

They were all still in the Mortal Realm, and Mortal energy was sparse in a Divine Plane. Ancients could turn basically anything into usable energy, so Luna didn't really notice the change, but it was rather uncomfortable to the others, even during the brief moments when they forgot when the cute Bunnies accompanying them were actually enormous carnivorous monsters.

They had just rounded the final corner toward the entrance of the Castle when a white and red streak flew out of a second-floor window directly at Cain.

Cyrene wrapped around his waist as she collided with him and grabbed him in a tight hug.

"It's been so long. How was your trip? Wow, you're powerful. You smell like Dragon as well. It's nice, like grass after the rain. Oh, you found new friends. Or are they summons?" She asked in a single breath.

"The trip was great. I didn't know you were here. I hope you didn't mess up Misha's surprise. I will explain the rest later.

Everyone, this is Cyrene, Luna's mother." Cain replied.

"Oh, Em, Gee. She is adorable. But isn't she a bit young? I mean, maybe it's because she's a Lamia, but she looks really young to have a half grown child." Penny answered, then reached out to give Cyrene's upper body a proper human hug.

"Lamia grow up very fast. But I was a human to start with, and Cain transformed me to break a curse I was born with, so my appearance and my age don't necessarily match. Did he destroy a Sect and steal their Initiates or something, though? I mean, two of them are fairly powerful, but they're still just little kids and humans." Cyrene responded.

"Our story is about the same as yours. I asked Cain to make me cute, and I should have been more specific. Solara wanted a new start, but the result was the same, he made us both kids again." Tena explained.

They were still walking and almost to the front door, which stood open with a very pregnant Misha waiting in the opening with happy tears in her eyes.

Cyrene reached over to grab one of the other Ancients, moving herself to wrap around him while Cain moved to carefully embrace Misha, moving slightly to the side to get around the side of her belly.

"Honey, I'm home."

Misha looked overjoyed and enraged at the same time, then reached up and grabbed his ear, pulling him down to her level.

"All this time, and that's what you start with? Honey, I'm home? You couldn't do better than that?" She demanded.

"Sorry, I panicked. Don't pout. I'll make it up to you later." Cain replied, then picked her up with an arm under her backside, so she could lean against him instead of straining herself to remain upright.

"You had better. I have seen everything you have been up to while I was gone. Even though you left the Companions behind, you still collect women everywhere you go. I should have sent someone with you to keep you out of trouble, but Nyarla said I shouldn't strain myself trying to communicate with the other world until after the birth."

Cain frowned. "I still need to have a nice long conversation with that woman about stealing someone's family from their bed."

Cain heard a wave of giggles from the other room, and the rest of the children came out dragging a small Elven woman in a victorian Maid's outfit.

"I won't apologize. It was necessary, but I will admit that maybe I should have left a memo or a contact number or something." The woman shrugged.

Cain frowned at her a second before Misha began to plaster his face with kisses, making him forget why he was upset with the Ancient for the moment.

The Ancients led them back into the house and onto a couch in the main sitting room, where everyone present arranged them on the wide variety of furniture from dozens of different Empires and times.

"I was just about to go get you. Misha is ready to pop, and the twins are eager to come out and see the world. They were just finishing up the last of their development. Their minds are healthy and intelligent, at least as much as the Lamia were at birth, and they appear to be in perfect health.

The Ancient Genes have completely overwhelmed the Human ones in these twins, and they will be born as purebred Ancients, the first ones we have seen in centuries." Nyarla informed him.

"What are the risks?" Cain asked, knowing they should be low, given the number of healers in the room.

"Virtually zero. Since they're pure Ancients, they will just turn incorporeal when they are ready and leave directly." The nursemaid Ancient replied as Misha curled up on Cain's lap and fell asleep.

"It looks like the excitement was already too much for her. Ancients take a huge amount of energy as they grow, and she's still a Mortal Human. She made great progress thanks to the system, but she couldn't advance to Immortality while she was pregnant. It's not safe." Nyarla informed him.

"It's the same for all humans. Even making a breakthrough between Awakenings can be incredibly dangerous while pregnant." Mariel agreed.

"Well, then, all I have to do is wait. Where are the rest of my children hiding?" Cain asked while Misha began to snore softly and clutch at his robes.

"We are here. We caught a ride on the Ancients. Mom has it right. Riding on people is the way to go. You don't need to travel by yourself, and sometimes you end up in unexpected places." Remi, the Frost Mage among Cain's daughters, informed him from around the waist of one of the Bunny-transformed Ancients.

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 700 700 Just In Time

"Not even going to say hello?" Cain teased.

"From a distance. Misha gets mean if you try to take things from her." Remi replied with a grave dignity that belied her years, no make that year, since she probably hadn't seen her second birthday yet, even with the time differences.

"I think that only applies to food. Or maybe it does apply to dad too." Reika, the Cleric added.

"I've only ever seen her hold onto the bag of Chocolate Hazelnut bites that tight. It totally applies to him as well." Remi agreed.

"Why don't I get dinner before I get yelled at some more? I know Cain has been upset with having to go on a whole mission to complete quests before he could get to see his twins, but since that time is here, we should be prepared.

They are going to be hungry when they come out, and everyone else has had a long journey." Nyarla informed the room, then promptly vanished.

Cain could still sense her in the kitchen, grabbing prepared trays of food for a buffet that she had prepared in advance, likely in the last hour since their arrival, while she was keeping her thoughts hidden.

When she came back in, she had a whole party with her. Buffet tables, balloons, streamers, decorations, and more were floating behind her, arranging themselves all over the room. Most conspicuously, all the balloons were bright pink and blue, and there was still an enchantment on them, which Cain suspected was supposed to put a message on the surface but wasn't activated yet.

Pink and blue were a baby shower theme, not a welcoming party color set, and Cain rocked Misha gently in her sleep, expecting she would go into labor any minute now.

The Ancients had dozens of incredibly powerful seers in their numbers. There was no way they would get the entire theme of a party wrong, which meant that this was the time.

The Ancients brought around plates for all the guests, who looked somewhat stunned at their current surroundings, which were clearly adapted for human use in a building built for Ancients to comfortably move around in. It was a strange feeling like you were suddenly tiny, and all of the Disciples were unconsciously remaining silent and unintrusive like they didn't fully belong here in this strange place.

Cain set Misha's plate on the end table while he snacked on meat and crackers. He was about to pop a puff filled with peach jam into his mouth when the pastry suddenly vanished and appeared in the tentacles of a tiny naked creature floating in front of him.

"Yes, I got it, first try." The girl cheered in a gurgling voice, then spit a mouthful of fluid out of her mouth.

Cain reached out and wiped her down with a cloth from his inventory, then took her in his arm and settled her against Misha.

The second appeared only a few seconds later, landing on the end table with a victorious smirk and promptly tipping forward to nearly land on his face before he was lifted into the air.

"Sorry, I didn't see the second one right away," Nyarla whispered.

She placed the second child in front of Cain for him to clean him off right before Misha woke up, clutching her now empty stomach.

The firstborn reached out the dozen tentacles that made her two arms and pulled herself up Misha's dress to plant a kiss on her face, then slid back to her position, panting with exertion.

"That was harder than expected." She mumbled, as much mentally as out loud.

"Give it time. You're still getting used to your body." Cain assured her while Misha stared at her children in shock.

"Is that it? All this anticipation for them to teleport out of my body and steal snacks? They really are your children." Misha complained, still a bit delirious from her interrupted sleep.

"They're our children. I heard the thoughts about how you get when there are chocolate-covered hazelnuts around."

"What are these two lovely youngsters named?" Nyarla asked, directing the question to Misha.

"Cayla and Mikhail," Misha responded with confidence.

They were good names and a bit of a nod to their parent's names, using the first letters with the Genders reversed.

Cayla looked mostly human, except for the tentacle arms, but Cain noticed when she ate the puff that her jaw hinged all the way back to her spine, letting her drop things directly down into her stomach if she wanted.

Mikhail looked a lot more like Cain's ancient form, with facial tentacles, one normal and one tentacle arm, but he had blue-scaled legs and hooves as well as cute little blue-scaled wings.

The disciples were looking at the two with awe on their faces. The birth of an Ancient being wasn't something you got to see. No outsider had ever seen them before they were grown enough to be out in public and defend themselves, even before the war.

"They're adorable," Tena whispered, staring intently at the two who were now wrapped up in Misha's arms while Cain fed them bits of random stuff off the trays.

A few bites in, Cayla turned to Misha and opened her mouth impossibly wide.

"Milk, Please."

There wasn't much Misha could do with a child in both arms, and Cain was too busy laughing to help right away, so the infant closed her mouth for a moment, then contemplated her options.

"Wait, there is an instinct for this. Maybe a memory? I've got this." She declared, digging tentacles into Misha's dress.

"I will take these three to somewhere more comfortable than a couch surrounded by everyone, and I will be back in a bit." Cain managed between snorts of laughter, but he didn't forget to grab a tray of food when he picked them up.

"Is it just me, or was that the most surreal experience that you have ever had in your life?" Solara asked nobody in particular.

"It's up there, but we're fairly used to it. Our children can almost always speak when they're born. It's just that the Ancient bloodline messed with their human infant instincts

a little, so they had to think about what they were supposed to do to obtain food." Nyarla explained quietly to the group.

"At least they didn't take all the snacks." Luna shrugged, detaching herself from Hera so she could grab the full tray off the end table to replace the one she had already emptied.

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.