## The Nameless 1801

Chapter 1801: Listening

Brady's expression was one of disbelief. Just a moment ago, he was preparing to take Kedar's life, but in an instant, the situation had flipped, and he still couldn't understand what happened.

Dyon, however, just smirked, leisurely eating his fruits as though nothing had happened. Even if everyone else in existence didn't understand what happened, how could he not?

He noticed immediately when Kedar's perception of time slowed down. This was a sign that his soul qi halo had subconsciously activated, allowing his thinking speed to quicken by a considerable degree.

What was interesting though was that no halo appeared above Kedar's head like it had for Dyon, Clara and Little Alauna. After some thought, Dyon believed that this was due to the fact Kedar didn't have an Innate Aurora. Maybe only those who could form golden arrays manifested the halo phenomena when flooding their brains with soul qi.

'I might have to change the name from soul qi halo then...' Dyon thought to himself. '... The name doesn't make much sense if only some can evoke the halo.'

Following this, Kedar blasted Brady away from him without even touching him. Dyon understood this phenomena the most, even more than his soul qi halo. After all, he almost killed him own wife and daughter because of this.

When someone with their Mortal Clan's special meridians fuse their qi and blood for the first time, it's incredibly difficult to control. That lack of control created an energy field around the body that repels anything around you and could potentially be quite dangerous.

Kedar in his agitation had accidentally crossed this barrier. Of course, this made sense. To now, he had been taught conventional cultivation, which means that he had been avoiding mixing his blood and qi. This education had caused him to subconsciously place barriers in front of his own power, thus limiting himself.

Finally, that barrier had been lifted.

Kedar hardly even realized what happened as he became to rain attacks upon Brady's pitiful figure.

'There definitely needs to be a special training program for those born with mortal meridians. The awakening process is too dangerous, and the method of cultivation is too different...'

Dyon feared that he might not be getting the most out of his special constitution. It was very much possible that by following conventional cultivation paths, Dyon, Clara, Alauna, and everyone like them could be placing figurative chains on their potential.

As things stood now, Dyon was cultivating his body and his qi separately, before fusing them in battle. But, what if he wasn't meant to cultivate this way any longer? What if the optimal method of cultivation for him and his people was to cultivate them both at once?

Dyon had not a single clue of where to even start on a problem like this. And, even if he solved it, could he really abolish his cultivation? After all, cultivating in a new method would require at least that much.

Shaking his head, Dyon sighed. He knew he couldn't afford to do such a thing. Before, Dyon had planned to be the figurehead, using his mind to guide the Mortal Alliance forward. But, things had changed.

Right now, Dyon was the strongest fighter his Mortal Alliance had outside of Granny Celest – of course, not including Luna. In fact, it was doubtful that even Granny Celest could be his match currently after he broke into the Dao Realm. It would be fine if he hadn't grasped this power, but now that he had, it wasn't appropriate for him to let it go.

After experiencing just how domineering Faith was, Dyon couldn't afford to take a step backward.

But... That didn't mean he couldn't pave the path for others. If he took the correct next steps, there might be a day in his lifetime where his little girl was even more powerful than himself.

Thinking to this point, Dyon stood from his seated position and turned to leave.

"None of you are allowed to leave until either all of my true geniuses are dead, or all of you commoners are defeated. Do keep in mind that I'm watching, so follow the rules as I've laid them out."

After creating a few sets of weapons the clan geniuses could choose from, Dyon left, leaving the sight of Kedar beating Brady black and blue.

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"Researcher Lei, I have a keen interest in your Hive Mind, I wonder if you'll hear my proposal out." Dyon smiled toward a short woman with stocky features. She looked like what one might expect an attractive dwarf to appear like.

"I wonder what Leader Sacharro has in mind?" Researcher Lei responded respectfully.

"You've been working on creating the perfect battle puppet, correct?"

Researcher Lei's research was surrounding creating a hive mind, or an artificial intelligence. Her original goal was to use a special branch of formation theory to create an intelligent machine capable of learning and adapting.

Dyon found her research to be dangerous, so he deviated her path. Initially, she was a bit saddened by this, but quickly found Dyon's ideas to be revolutionary beyond compare.

Currently, she was working on fusing the Mortal Library of the Mortal Network with her hive mind. When it was complete, she would be able to attach her hive mind to battle puppets, essentially allowing them to battle with countless techniques from the Tower Quadrants in mind. Should this be successful, she would create the greatest battle puppets to ever exist.

So, when Dyon asked this question, she nodded enthusiastically. But, Dyon's next words somehow made her even more excited.

"I have an idea that will take your battle puppets to an unprecedented level..."

"This humble researcher is willing to listen." Lei responded with bright eyes. "Though, Leader Sacharro, if you took up researching yourself... I believe you'd find more success alone than we ever could."

Dyon smiled lightly. "I appreciate the kind words, but I don't believe myself to be so infallible. A good ruler should trust the talents around him, and I believe in your talent."

Lei subconsciously felt a welling of pride. Maybe if Dyon asked her right now, she'd gladly run through a brick wall for him.

Chapter 1802: Lei

"My idea won't deviate your path too much. In fact, I believe it will only improve upon it further... Make it more perfect, if you will."

Dyon's spatial ring flashed, revealing two sentinels standing at just over 20 meters tall. They shimmered with moon and star jades, glistening in black, silver and gold as it released the oppressive auras of a Higher Dao Expert.

This was none other than the puppet that once guarded the Elvin Tombs. Though Dyon had grown too powerful to need it any longer, he would never forget how many dangerous situations these two guys had gotten him out of. Though they were inanimate, he still felt a sentimental attachment to them.

Lei's eyes shone. "What exquisite battle puppets..."

"Do you see what's special with them?"

"This Lei has spent the last few years researching battle puppets of all kinds. I do have to thank Leader Sacharro for showing me those segments of the [Dao of Array Alchemy]. I was raised to believe that alchemy and formation theory should always be kept separate, I couldn't believe that they had such a profound effect when fused together as one...

"It's thanks to Leader Sacharro that my eyes have gotten much better at such things. These puppets are among a rare collective that are able to gather energy from the atmosphere and 'cultivate' themselves.

It also seems that they've been fused with Moon and Star Jade, making this energy gathering process hundreds of times faster than normal.

"In just another few months, they'll break into the peak dao realm and continue upward before final reaching the very peak of the dao realm. Excellent puppets! Even without the control of an expert, their strength should only fall by one minor stage. That's unbelievable."

Research Lei looked up toward Dyon. "Does Leader Sacharro want me to make more puppets like these? Truthfully speaking, the potential of my current projects are even beyond this. Though these sentinels can display peak dao formation realm prowess, it's only the equivalent of a third grade expert. If all goes well, my battle puppets will be able to match second grade experts at the worst, and Ordered experts at best."

Dyon shook his head. "I only brought these puppets out as a... proof of concept, let's say. What I want Research Lei to do is recreate puppets capable of cultivating."

Researcher Lei blinked in confusion, not knowing what Dyon meant.

"Researcher Lei... What would you say the most difficult part of cultivation is?"

"... Comprehension?" After thinking for a bit, Lei answered with this.

Though gathering qi and diligently cultivating was hard, there was nothing more difficult than comprehension. There was a reason why comprehension Wills, Intents and Daos provided such a massive boost to one's individual prowess.

"And what would you say hinders that the most?"

Researcher Lei's frown deepened. "Often times, even if your comprehension is high, it's impossible to sustain this comprehension without a stronger body, so one must cultivate. But, cultivation is slow and is impacted by numerous bottlenecks.

"Some have poor meridian talent, some don't have qi rich environments to practice in, some don't have cultivation techniques suitable for themselves... The problems are endless."

Dyon's smile deepened. "Now, what would you say if someone was capable of eliminating many of those weaknesses for you? Even if they couldn't improve your poor talent, what if they could provide you a cultivation rich environment? What if they could pick the perfect technique for you?"

Researcher Lei's confusion was instantly washed away with shock.

"What I want you to create is a hive mind capable of restructuring any and everyone's body into a battle puppet. I then want the hive mind to be capable of cross referencing every technique stored away within the Mortal Library before setting an optimal path for this cultivator.

"What do you think?"

Researcher Lei trembled. "You mean using a battle puppet to simulate the potential paths a human could take... Then figuring out in advance whether said path is of detriment or not... Laying the best path out for a cultivator even before they take a single step down the road of cultivation..."

If Lei's heartbeat didn't quicken, could she even call herself a researcher? This was... Unprecedented!

Dyon's goal was clear. He had no idea if there was a better method of cultivating for those with his body type or not, and he would definitely never use his daughter for such an experiment.

That was when he realized something. In his mortal world, didn't they allow computers to handle anything too dangerous for real humans? Why not bring such a philosophy here?

Maybe if enough techniques were compiled into the hive mind's database, it would become capable of forming new cultivation techniques from scratch, perfectly tailored to an individual!

"Researcher Lei, I'd like you to get in contact with the software engineers of the my mortal clan, they are very aware of the theories surrounding artificial intelligence and they will be of great help to you."

"Understood." Lei nodded seriously though her mind was wandering through all the possibilities.

"I'll leave it to you then. If you succeed, there's no doubt you'll earn your spot on the Arc of Humanity alongside Researcher Ton."

"I'll do my best!"

Nodding with satisfaction, Dyon turned to leave, his goal being yet another researcher.

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"Researcher Fara, Researcher Aimoi."

Dyon had appeared within yet another lab, this time before a researcher who focused on cloning. He greeted both with a bright smile, his appearance warm.

Originally, Dyon had redirected Fara's research toward helping Researcher Curie and Kline recreate the celestial hamsters. But, after that experiments overwhelming success, the process no longer required Fara, so she returned to her true passion.

In truth, with Dyon's helpful tips and the database of information from his mortal world, Fara had improved by leaps and bounds. For her, cloning was already a non-issue. The only problem was that the clones had a pitiful lifespan. This was where Researcher Aimoi came in.

Chapter 1803: Do You Dare?

Researcher Aimoi focused on aging, believing that the heavens placed artificial arbitrary caps on age. Her reasoning for this was simple. Why was it that a third grade celestial lived the same 10 000 year period a second grade celestial did? Logically speaking, shouldn't the latter live longer? After all, they filled more meridians with celestial qi.

Though these thoughts were intriguing, Dyon didn't believe them to be very useful. So, though he allowed Aimoi the same benefits as the other researchers, he wasn't as keen to look into her progress. He mostly did it to save her face and just in case her research really did turn up something interesting.

Dyon never could have expected that she would find her place here helping Researcher Fara to be rid of her clones' fatal flaw.

"Leader Sacharro." They both bowed respectfully.

"I have an interesting proposal for the both of you, though it might be difficult, the experience could be rewarding."

Aimoi had the most lukewarm feelings toward Dyon, mostly because she had been neglected, so she didn't have a great reaction like Lei did before or Fara did now. But, out of respect for him not blatantly disrespecting her, she still listened courteously. Plus, the database of Dyon's mortal world had allowed her several breakthroughs as well.

Dyon's spatial ring flashed, this time revealing a small exquisite black-gold vase-like container before removing the lid.

The lab was suddenly filled with an intoxicating fragrance, the two women felt as light as air.

"Jade Queen Bee honey!"

The two researchers recognized it immediately. This was a treasure of untold value. In fact, many Star Grade Herbs couldn't match it.

Dyon had long since gotten used to the Jade Queen Bee honey and even took it for granted, but it seemed others new well of its value. It was practically priceless.

To allow anyone to raise their meridians by an entire grade with just a single drop was unimaginable. But, Dyon was no longer surprised by it. After all, if the Tower could reward him Little Yang and Yin, not to mention the Lightning Willow Mask that had saved his life not once, but twice, from tribulations, this honey almost seemed plain next to them.

The two women trembled, understanding Dyon's ask of them.

Honey needed to be catalyzed by the enzymes within a bee's stomach in order to properly form. For a special honey like Jade Queen Bee honey, the process was even more labor intensive. It was said that after producing a single drop of her honey, a Jade Queen Bee would pass away after giving up her whole essence.

A supreme grade beast... Gone... Just like that.

What did this all mean? It meant that the Jade Honey itself contained the DNA of the long extinct Jade Queen Bee!

If they could extract the lingering DNA from the Jade Honey, they might be able to allow the Jade Queen Bee to appear in this world once more!

But...

"It's... It's too precious..." Fara and Aimoi shook. What first had been excitement had become fear.

What if they failed? Even if Dyon was nothing but kind to them until now, how could anyone stand the loss of something so precious without any results?

Even if the DNA of the Jade Queen Bee remained, it would be in incredibly small amounts. Plus, because a single bee could only produce a single drop, that meant that each piece of DNA would be from a different Jade Queen Bee, making the task even more difficult. This didn't even mention the amount of time that had passed since these drops were collected.

Looking at the small vase in Dyon's hand, their shaking grew fiercer. Though this was a great opportunity, they didn't dare to take it.

"Ah, you two are mistaken." Dyon scratched his head awkwardly, turning over his hand to pour out the honey into his mouth. The two researchers looked on in shock, their hearts seizing. "NO!" They both screamed at the same time. Everyone knew that you could only take 1 drop of honey a day. Though it wouldn't kill you to take more, it was incredibly wasteful! Dyon chuckled as several mouthfuls were practically inhaled by him under their shocked eyes. "This vase might look small, but its inner space is the size of a small ocean. I couldn't even tell you how many single drops there are in there." Looking at them, he smiled, smacking his lips. "Now do you dare?" The two women looked at each other, then looked back at Dyon. ""YFSI"" Though Dyon didn't have an exact amount of drops stored within the small black-gold vase, he did have a good guess. If the number was truly infinite, his request would seem useless... On the surface at least. From Dyon's recollection, there was a body of water known as the Great Lakes in his mortal world. Though it had long since dried up thanks to Matriarch Niveus' vile actions, in their prime, despite their

This seemed like a lot, but was it? After taking control of so many universes, Dyon suddenly had trillions of individuals under his rule. Even if he only gave everyone a single drop, not even 1% of the population would be able to benefit.

grandiose name, the lakes could be filled with a total of 20 billion drops of water.

From Dyon's estimates, the inner space of the small vase was about double to triple the size of the Great Lakes, but even then, that was only about 50 billion drops of Jade Queen Bee Honey. How could that be enough?

For those elite Clans, this was more than enough. In their eyes, 50 billion drops would last their Clan countless generations because they hide and store away the benefits for themselves and their elites. However, Dyon had no intention of doing such a thing.

He needed to conquer the mortal plane as quickly as possible and there were only two ways to do it. Either he became all powerful, or his Empire did.

The easier choice was obvious. While the former might never be accomplished, the latter was relatively easier for the simple fact that Dyon had confidence in raising the standard of his people.

Chapter 1804: Moist

The Hive Mind project was just step one. The second step was this Jade Queen Bee Honey. And the third relied on Eli and the Array Alchemy Association.

Within a hundred years, before the Ancient Battlefield descended, Dyon wanted to raise the standard of his people to inconceivable levels.

At the same time, he sent a 20% clone into his constitution's world and set him on a conqueror's path once more.

Though it was only a 20% clone, due to Dyon's advantages within his constitution's world, he was actually more powerful than Dyon was at full strength here. Also, thanks to Luna, Dyon didn't have to rely on his own connection with the Ancient Battlefield, meaning he wasn't limited by his Golden Silk Body.

Normally, because Dyon had just entered this stage, he would only be able to enter with a percentage strength equal to his percentage completion of his current stage. Since Dyon had only refined a single percent of his Gold Silk Body, his projection would only have 1% of his strength.

But, Luna's portal skipped over this, allowing Dyon to effectively cheat. Considering how often the Heavens had tried to ruin his life, he gladly took the opportunity.

"Reviving the Jade Queen Bee isn't your only task." Dyon spoke again after the excitement of the two women calmed.

"What does Leader Sacharro have in mind?" Fara asked.

"You might not know this, but the Jade Queen Bee is only one aspect of this ancient race..."

Dyon looked toward the vase as he continued. "In addition, creating this honey isn't the only ability of the Jade Queen Bee either."

The two researchers looked on in interest.

"Jade Queen Bee. Jade Warrior Bee. Jade Worker Bee. These are the three designations of this race.

"The one you two know, the Jade Queen Bee, has the most recognizable ability. Still, this honey isn't produced until the end of her life. Jade Bee's live for a few months, and at the end of that few months, they form their best work yet.

"However, during her life, a Jade Queen Bee gives off a unique aroma capable of controlling all insect type creatures, she is very strong in illusions and many Star Lords of the past have died to her prowess.

"Her second ability is related to the first, but she is the only one capable of controlling Jade Warrior Bees. She also happens to be the core of a few unconventional formations.

"The Jade Worker Bee has an equally miraculous effect. Their pollination ability can trigger hidden evolutionary capabilities of plants and aid them in raising their grade. If placed under the control of Monet, it will cut Eli's work down by at least 80%. After all, he is still not completely familiar with his abilities as a Heaven's Child.

"Finally, there is the Jade Warrior Bee. They battle like sacrificial warriors, only have a single stinger to their names. Because of the short lifespan of Jade Bees, it could only be this way if they wanted to protect themselves.
"Still, an Elite Jade Warrior Bee can kill a Higher Dao Formation Expert with a single sting. A Peak Dao Formation Expert would die after ten.
"As for regular Jade Warrior Bees, they're practically invincible within the celestial realm."
Dyon smiled. "Do you understand why I am telling you all of this? Though the Jade Queen Bee will most definitely have the greatest number of DNA strands to be found, it's impossible that the DNA of the other Jade Bees won't have influenced such a large amount.
"Even if you can't find Jade Warrior Bee DNA, considering Jade Worker Bees do most of the leg work, I'm almost 100% certain that you'll find traces of them.
"Can I trust you two?"
""We'll do our best Leader Sacharro!""
Nodding, Dyon left the vase with them. Maybe only he could casually invest 50 billion drops of Jade Queen Bee Honey without blinking an eye.
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"Mm"
Clara's hands ran through Dyon's hair. Despite the near indestructible nature of their strands, they were soft beyond compare. She basked in it the feeling of bringing his head so close to hers that they could almost melt into one another, the feeling of the deep, strong valleys and peaks of his broad back, the

feeling of his warmth... It had been too long.

Dyon had come to tease her while she was working in the Soul Palace's office, trying to get some matters related to the Association in order, but somehow their playfighting had turned into a make out session that had already lasted several hours. Starting such a thing when both were cultivators who had no need to breathe for extended periods of time was most definitely a dangerous affair.

Yet, as though he was teasing her, and though his hands wantonly roamed her perfect figure, Dyon hadn't taken off a single article of her clothing. If it wasn't for the spear threatening to rip through the fabric of both his and her lower garments, she would almost be afraid that she wasn't attractive anymore.

She sat on the edge of her desk, her thighs tightly clamping around Dyon's hips as though to invite him in, but his lack of action left her feeling frustrated. Maybe it would make sense if he was running low on time, but he had already been kissing her for almost three hours, would a person low on time do such a thing?

Her plump bottom scooted forward, ramming into the protruding rod below Dyon's waist. But, before she could do anything else, she blushed in shame. Though she tried to hide it, how could it escape Dyon's senses?

The sound the desk and the bottom of her dress made as she slid forward sounded decidedly... moist.

"You heard nothing!" Clara bit Dyon's bottom lip so hard that she would have drawn blood if not for the fact his body had entered the dao realm.

Looking into her ruby eyes, Dyon blinked innocently. "I have no idea what you mean..."

Just when Clara thought Dyon was going to be tactful for once, he smiled a devious smile.

"... By the way, Lady Sacharro, did you accidentally spill some water? No... It must be some exotic juices. Your desk, I must say, smells very good."

Chapter 1805: Talent

Clara's small fist slammed against his chest before quickly hiding her embarrassed expression in Dyon's collarbone. She quickly found her position to be quite relaxing, especially because of Dyon's cinnamon and pine scent.

Because she was a celestial, much of the mortal impurities had long been washed from Clara's body. Her body wasn't capable of producing a foul smell even if she tried. So, she could only admit that Dyon was right... The smell really was too... fragrant.

"This is your fault." She mumbled. "Now I'll have to replace my dress. Aren't you supposed to be the Ruler of 131 universes? Do you have time to tease your wife like this?"

Dyon smiled, taking a lock of Clara's hair and sniffing lightly. He felt that his entire body was comfortable. Spirit bodies reached a realm of perfection most humans could not, so of course Clara had such an effect with both her wind and fire spirit bodies.

"Of course!" Dyon said confidently. "I'll always have time."

Clara shook her head, relaxing her thighs' grip on Dyon's hips as her fire will vanquished her 'fragrant juices' to another realm. In fact, it took her dress and undergarments along with it, but the beautiful sight of her perfect body vanished in an instant as she used an array to form a new dress.

It was actually quite impressive. Despite having her true constitution for less than a year, Clara had already charged all the way up to the 8th Fire Intent Realm. And that was without relying on Dyon for dual cultivation and wasting four months watching Dyon fight. Those with Fire Spirit Bodies were truly unmatched in this vein.

This wasn't all either, her cultivation speed had reached another level. Just about a year ago she was still a first stage celestial, now she was on the verge of entering the fourth stage.

Interestingly enough, this was accounting for her slowing herself down as well. After knowing the truth of her qi talent, Clara was taking the time to diligently train her body to have it catch up. Only then could she display her true strength.

Dyon pouted. "Hours of hard work gone..."

"Fuck off" Clara almost growled, clearly sexually frustrated. But her pouting expression only made Dyon's grin widen.
"Did you really only come here to frustrate me? I have work to do, you know."
"I can't check on my wife without any ulterior motives? What kind of man do you think I am?"
Clara glared at him.
"Okay, okay. I just wanted to tell you that a few researchers have big projects I've set them on, so it's fine to allocate some more funds to them."
Clara frowned. "With the explosion in the population and the hundreds of renovations we have to do across 98 universes, even the 30 universes worth of resources is being pushed to its limit. At this rate, we'll be broke in half a millennium."
Dyon grinned. "Look at you, worrying about something that will happen 500 years later. Plus, with 98 universes come 98 more universes worth of resources. It won't be a problem with Researcher Ton's maps."
"How much more?" Clara rolled her eyes, not responding directly.
"Triple their budgets."
Black lines began to form on Clara's forehead, but in the end, she sighed.
"Come fuck me, pervert. I'm not doing any work until I'm satisfied."
Somehow, Dyon found he quite liked Clara's vulgar language. His clothes disappeared in the blink of an eye as he stood at attention.

A man ready to accomplish his solemn duty.

"Mother! You're looking quite beautiful today."

Dyon smiled brightly. He had taken to the habit of calling Kawa, Ri's mother, mother as well. Since she insisted, he might as well.

Considering how strained his other parent in law relationships were, it was good to have at least one by his side.

Amphorae's mother was dead and her father was practically his mortal enemy. Clara's parents were dead largely because of him. Ri's father had a strained relationship with Dyon because of various complex reasons. After all, how could a man who called himself King feel comfortable around the young man who saved his Kingdom after he was incompetent?

Finally, there was no need to mention Madeleine's parents. Whether foster or biological, Dyon had had a falling out with all four of them. The former pair tried to kill him, while the latter pair was god knows where, disappearing after Dyon gave them a scolding.

In the end, only Kawa gave Dyon any real warmth.

After becoming a true Celestial Fox, Kawa had become quite the beauty. Though she was already beautiful before, it had been greatly enhanced.

Her blue hair and eyes had become a cascading, almost silvery white. Her body gave off far more vitality. And, more important, she could enter her human form once more.

With the speed of cultivation of celestial beasts, and the fact Kawa didn't have to face any tribulations, she should have already reached the celestial realm. But, since she was practicing Dyon's [Inner World: Sanctuary] technique to become one of his Demon General Vice Commanders, she was still currently in the meridian formation realm.

Luckily, because of Dyon's Martial Saint Pill, and the fact she took his advice of training up her soul before activating this portion of the technique, it would only be another year at most before her cultivation unsealed.

There was another reason it would be so quick as well. Recently, Dyon had enlisted Luna's help to give her a portion of his Mortal Clan's talent!

Because her body cultivation and qi cultivation were now connected, Kawa could greatly speed up the breaking of the seals by training her body.

"Ah! If it isn't my favorite son-in-law." Kawa smiled deviously, she truly looked like a beautiful fox.

Currently, they stood in the Elvin Clans' lands. This castle was lived in by Ri's parents, and Ri herself would stay here whenever she had work to accomplish.

Dyon feigned hurt. "You have more than one son-in-law? This is devastating."

Kawa walked to Dyon, pinching his ear. "If you keep neglecting my little girl like this, I really might have to get me another one."

Dyon bowed solemnly. "Yes, mother. I promise!"

Chapter 1806: Probationary

"Hmph." Kawa nodded in satisfaction though Dyon was smiling bitterly inwardly.

When had he ever neglected Ri? More accurately, she had thrown herself into raising the Elvin Clans back up so he took a step back and played the role of supportive husband. In the end, didn't he see her everyday?

Aiya, it really was too difficult when you cared about your parent-in-law's opinion. Maybe he should estrange himself from Kawa too, he thought jokingly.

In reality, Kawa was just a bit frustrated by her own husband and was projecting their problems onto Ri and Dyon though they didn't exist.

It was no wonder King Acacia, or rather, Patriarch Acacia, was feeling a bit inadequate. Actually, even that title was incorrect. He had handed his title off to his younger brother, so right now, Uncle Acacia was the current Patriarch of the Acacia Clan.

In the meantime, Dyon's father-in-law had been training like a mad man. According to Ri, he had abolished his cultivation over 7 times already, searching for a new path for himself.

In the end, he abolished his cultivation for an 8th time and entered the Epistemic Tower, hoping to gain some insight through the True Empath trial. How could he rely on his own daughter and son-in-law to improve? He felt that it would be a blow to his manhood.

Obviously, in all this time, he had neglected his wife.

"Don't worry mother, Edrym will find his path. Just give him some time."

Kawa paused at these words before smiling lightly. She really was satisfied with this son-in-law of hers. Despite knowing she was being unfair, he didn't complain and instead helped ease her mind.

"Mm. Come, Little Alex will be happy to see you." Wrapping her arm around Dyon, she pulled him forward, chatting with him despite knowing that with his senses, Dyon already knew exactly where Ri was.

But, considering how lonely his mother-in-law had been, Dyon didn't want to disappoint her, so he purposely walked slower, feeling a slight warmth as Kawa's smile deepened.

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Within the depths of the Epistemic Tower, a tall blue haired man stood in a black fog filled world. Though to the outside, there was nothing but himself, he still trembled and sweat profusely.



The elves hadn't participated in the battle in any large capacity. They were one of the most powerful fighting forces Dyon had at the time, but it was impossible for them to contribute. Currently, their bodies were still undergoing changes under the influence of the World Tree, so they couldn't bring out their true strength.

eyes became filled with reverence.

In the end, Dyon made the choice of allowing them to remain here, thinking that he would soon be attacking the 99 universes anyway. But, now that he had decided against such a rash action, he was faced with a dilemma.

Of the probationary 1st Tier Clans, the Pakals, the Guatama, and the Jafari were the only Clans who gained enough merits to become official 1st Tier Clans.

The Guatama Clan, led by Alidor, absorbed what remained of the Uidah, effectively taking it over. The two Clans had very close blood ties to begin with, having only diverged a few generations ago, which was why their two Clans had once been very close.

With the contributions of Alidor and the Sons and Daughters, not only did they accumulate enough merit to become 1st Tier Clans, they were well on their way to becoming a 2nd Tier Clan.

These matters gave Dyon quite the headache. Though he wanted to favor his wife, it was impossible to do so under these circumstances. He couldn't just arbitrarily give the elves status when they hadn't earned it.

If the merit needed could be covered by Ri alone, it would be fine. But, the way Dyon and Clara constructed the system, a Clan must meet a total merit goal as well as meeting a total contributors of a certain threshold goal. Meaning, a single person couldn't carry a Clan to great status.

All of this resulted in a situation where the Elves might very well lose their probationary status as 1st Tier Clans. Should this happen, Dyon would be forced to rescind much of their territory.

If he really followed through with such a thing, what had been his mother-in-law projecting her poor marital status upon him might become closer to the truth than he'd like to admit.

Luckily, the Federation gave Dyon a great escape from this. If the World Tree had as great of an effect as it should, then that would mean that Dyon could allow the elves to accumulate merits by 'conquering' universes through the Federation's system. Then, the problem would be solved.

Dyon didn't mind sending a clone to handle these matters. After all, a single clone of his would already be stronger than any of the youths below 1000 years of age. At least in the Tower Quadrants, that is.

## Chapter 1807: Shriek

But, Dyon had to play these matters of the Federation correctly. Even if he could sweep through all of their missions in an instant and claim every universe of the tower quadrants for himself, it would be nothing short of foolish for him to do so.

If he acted in this way, how would the other Clans react? Some might accept it out of fear of the Sacharro Clan's strength, but many would not.

Those who joined the Federation, despite knowing they weren't as strong as the best Clans, only did so because they had a faint light of hope. As for the strongest Clans, they were confident in their abilities to profit from these matters.

But what if Dyon overbearingly snatched all those hopes from them? They would definitely react violently.

Therefore, Dyon had to be tactful... At least in the beginning. He would allow the geniuses beneath him to shine. In this way, the other Clans would stand a chance and the backlash wouldn't be as severe.

When the time was right, he would spring forward, righteously claiming lands for himself. Even if they complained at that point, it would already be too late. Dyon's power would be consolidated. Once he succeeded, there was a chance he might be able to conquer the tower quadrants before the battlefield descended.

In order to accomplish this, he of course needed geniuses. The Mortal Clan geniuses weren't ready yet, but he had the Demon Generals and the Elves. Plus, in about another ten to twenty years, he'd be able to create another batch.

Of course... He had his wives as well.

That said, though Dyon had indeed come here for serious matters related to this, he most importantly came for something else entirely... And that was, of course, to tease his wife.

Under the reverent gazes of the elves and with his mother-in-law chuckling by his side, Dyon flashed forward, silently appearing behind Ri's meditating figure.

That day, the shriek of an Elvin Queen shook their territory.

Watching Dyon carry Ri's delighted figure away, Kawa shook her head.

"What are you all looking at, back to work!" Kawa scolded the once meditating elves. "You're all so slow, you've lost face for our Elvin Clan. Everyone fought but you all, aren't you ashamed to rely on your Queen to maintain your position?!"

Hearing these words, a fire burned in the belly of the elves. They had a legacy of running for so long... A once mighty race, the ruler of an Era, crushed under their own progress. It was time for them to rise up once more!

Seeing that they focused on their task at hand once more, Kawa nodded and left to her own training. Before her seal was undone, she had to train her body to the celestial realm. If she couldn't do this even with the talent of the Celestial Fox and the resources Dyon poured into her, she would be too ashamed to raise her head.

Kawa sighed. 'Husband... I hope you find your path...'

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"Look at you." Dyon's eyes greedily raked over Ri's body.

"Stop looking at me like that." Ri's tails suddenly appeared to whip at Dyon's forehead.

"Ah..." Dyon rubbed his head. It seemed his wife had stepped up her forehead flicking game. He actually felt it that time. Usually, he feigned it to make her feel better.

"Hmph. You interrupted me while I was at an important stage and made me lose face in front of them all. You can forget about whatever perverted thoughts you're holding in that thick skull."

Ri pouted, her petite figure spinning to look away from her husband.

Dyon couldn't help but grin. Because of how Ri matured, he almost forgot that she was the very same girl who once dressed more like a man than a woman. Her demeanor was just as fiery as Clara's if you got on her bad side.

"Oh, come on, it was just a little prank. Plus, do you think I only come to see you when I have perverted thoughts? Your husband is a very wholesome man. I have no such thoughts."

"Oh yea? Then why did you bring me to these bedchambers instead of the elders' gathering room?"

Dyon touched his nose awkwardly. "Coincidence. Pure coincidence."

Dyon couldn't help but laugh internally. She looked so happy just a moment ago, but now everything had changed.

Still, he understood why. Ri was of course worried about her father and her parents' relationship. Though he understood this, there really wasn't much he could do. Though Dyon didn't think himself to be a bad leader, it wasn't within his capabilities to help someone gain confidence in themselves. In fact, if he tried to help Edrym, it might have the opposite effect.

Dyon stepped forward and wrapped his arms around Ri's waist. Though she was facing away from him, he could still read her expression of worry.

"He'll be fine. Don't forget, he's one of the rare True Empaths to ever be born. No one is in a better position than he is to understand his own truth."

Ri subconsciously leaned back, sighing lightly.

"I don't agree with what he did..." She said softly. "... But I can't blame him for it either..."

"Some things are wrong no matter what path you take. If I had to leave Little Alauna to save you, would I do it? I think I would have to."

Ri trembled before smiling lightly. "You're just trying to butter me up. I won't be spreading my legs for you today."

Her hand slapped away an evil hand preparing to slide up her petite body.

"Don't tell me you want a family too?" Dyon said deviously. "If you ask nicely, I could magnanimously put a baby in you. It'll be trying on my wholesome identity, but whatever makes my wife happy."

Ri scoffed. "Where did you get that idea from? Also, if you ever dare to leave Little Alauna to save me, I'll never forgive you. Wait until she's grown up."

Dyon could tell that Ri meant these words. Though her parents came back, just like him, she understood the pain of them disappearing.

Chapter 1808: DO NOT UNLOCK

The violent storm around Ryu raged. It was a furious tempest, the kind that could pull apart the seams of space even without the reliance on Soul Nature, or maybe it was precisely because of the passive effect of his Soul Nature that the result was so exaggerated.

The Birthed Phenomena that appeared high in the skies seemed to blink into and out of existence. What destabilized them wasn't Ryu's inability to control them, but rather because they seemed to be somewhat hesitantly fusing and yet were still incapable of taking the final step.

Even in this weird half fused, half unfused state, the power that was coursing through Ryu's body threatened to roar out on its own. The nine pillars within himself barely managed to contain it, but even

then, every time his Birthed Phenomena partially fused, a thunderous power would awaken and nearly shred them apart.

Ryu could feel that it was already madness to take things this far. The strength of his body right now wasn't just a few times stronger. He felt like he could rip mountains apart with his bare hands, like a single stomp could create a river the split a single continent into two, like he could pluck stars from the skies and plant them into the earth below.

It was like his foundation had finally awakened and his body realized just how much power was hidden within it. The Bloodlines all synergies into one and their output would already be too great to imagine if it was just a sum total, but the reality was that every time they hesitatingly fused just a small bit, they would erupt with strength beyond themselves.

Ryu realized after a moment that what was limiting him wasn't the wording he had chosen, nor was it his Bone Structure. No, what was limiting him was the actual strength of his body. His Bloodlines still had an air of self preservation, if they truly fused, he would be ripped apart from the inside out.

When Ryu was originally born, the Heavens had only allowed his existence because his Bloodlines were whole but separate. Not only were they separate, but they also weakened certain aspects of one another, not allowing any particular single entity to display their full might. This was why when Ryu opened his Body Pulses and Body Vessels, each of his Bloodlines took a hit in the amount of power they should have been able to provide him even in Sacrum.

But now, he was trying to circumvent those limiters, and in doing so, he was taking on a strength that was beyond him.

Even so, Ryu grinned and the chains he had latched onto his Bloodlines began to release.

The moment they showed the slightest inkling of doing so, he coughed up a mouthful of blood, one of his shoulders imploding into a rain of blood as though a bomb had gone off inside him.

Ryu coughed and his smile was still a bloody grin. He was confirming something and it seemed that he was correct.

This power he was experiencing now, it was a mere fragment of what he truly had access to.

He suddenly slammed his hands together and his Birthed Phenomena began to blink out of existence one by one until there was nothing left but a roaring red dragon.

In the past few moments, his Birthed Phenomena had been mostly illusory, their true strength being unable to shine through properly. But now, with just a single remaining, it was so solid that it almost looked as though Ryu had summoned a true Fire Dragon, its scaled a dense ruby red with a hidden black flame dancing within each one.

"Take Form and Burn the Heavens."

BOOM!

Ryu's body exploded with red scales, his height growing from over two meters to over four. Claws grew out from his hands and a pair of scaly wings wreathed in black flames took shape.

His Rage Flames returned as he took a step forward, clawing at the air.

Burn could mean multiple things. It could refer to flames alone, kindling under the power that fuelled it. It could refer to a cycle of death to lead back to life, in much the same way a forest would grow back more vibrantly after devastation. Or... it could refer to an internal, undying will, one that could even be passed on generation to generation or turn the bounds of time to ash and echo through all layers of reality.

Ryu unleashed his Dragon's Claw talent, dividing the skies into six and tearing menacing holes into space.

"Take Form and Command the Heavens."

His body shuddered, the corporeal Fire Dragon in the skies became a towering Lightning Qilin radiating a sapphire, royal blue light. The skies boomed with thunder and arcs of blue descended.

Ryu's Storm Talent brewed as every strike split space apart, leaving craters so large in the ground that the continent was devastated.

Command could mean multiple things. It could refer to leadership and the responsibility that came with it. It could refer to a cruelty, an imposing malice that forced those under your thumb to bend to your will. Or... it could refer to a final word, a resounding and final judgment that could bend even the skies to bow.

Ryu's Tribulation Lightning Seed thrummed and a whipping kick flew out like a scythe, splitting a line in space that crackled with blue lightning around its edges.

"Take Form and Forge the Heavens."

BOOM!

Ryu's body erupted with golden flames. His Rebirth Flame, tinged with the majesty of both creation and emperorship echoed through the surroundings. Even the slightest hints of Fire Qi were forced into submission and corralled into the embrace of their lord.

Forge could mean multiple things. It could refer to a persistent will to rid one of impurities, the time and effort one had to spend in wringing an ore dry of its worse parts and helping it to achieve the shine it always deserved. It could represent an iron will, one tempered through countless years of hardship and the evil whims of the Heavens and Fate. Or... it could refer to a forceful change, a commanding blaze that would not be stopped, a lack of care for Fate and the whims of the Heavens and a willingness to take what you were given and mold it into a treasure...

To Create something from nothing.

The call of a phoenix left Ryu's lips. A cyclone of golden clouds appeared above the shredding apart the thunderous clouds of the Lightning Qilin before it and blazed with a fire that seemed to bless the world around it.

Countless Heavenly Patterns appeared, each one doing so naturally as though Ryu didn't even need to think or consider before they manifested, as though they came to him as naturally as they possibly could.

The swirling patterns of the Dark Phoenix. The sharp edge patterns of the Ice Phoenix. The delicate feather patterns of the Fire and Emperor Phoenix.

They swirled in a mass of profound creation that echoed across the skies.

The power was intoxicating, and for the very first time in his life, Ryu felt that he could truly sense the power of his Bloodlines. This was the strength that he had been born with, strength that was ripped from him, hidden from him, strength that he had unearthed himself and strength that he would continue to empower.

That was the beauty of the balance he had struck.

The Heavens had bestowed this upon him and it wasn't as cruel as he had once thought it to be. He was a naive boy, enraged with the world, and demanding that it owed him more... but it didn't. All it owed him was the chance.

He was bestowed strength in one part, and he took strength in the other. He both created this strength and was bestowed this strength. This was the beauty of the Heavens, this was the freedom of what it meant to live, it was why he strove to reach the pinnacle of all things, to test his mettle against those that dared to create strength as he had.

And there was still far more to gain, far more to take.

Ryu smashed his fists together and his heartbeat echoed into the surroundings. He felt good, better than he ever had in his entire life, as though the world itself was in the palm of his hands and it could escape unless he allowed it to.

However, he knew that there was still more he had gained from this second round. These benefits were the ones he had taken with his own hands, benefits that he had forged with the treasures already within

his body. But, there were external treasures that he had yet to benefit from, only that way would the cycle be complete.

His thoughts wandered the Diamond Protector Spirit and the insights that it had passed onto him. These would be the new benefits that he gained from the Heavens, and one day he would create more power from it as well.

But for now, it was about time he found out what he had bled for.

Chapter 1809: Vacation

"That reminds me..." Dyon's eyes narrowed. "...There's a certain Kitsune Clan that needs to be taught a lesson."

A flash of rage swept over his gaze. He still remembered the day he learned what happened to Ri in his absence... Though he had turned three of their geniuses into useful puppets and had killed one of their Patriarchs, he wasn't satisfied.

Until he weeded out all those responsible, he wouldn't feel comfortable. Patriarch Heaven... Patriarch Jikan... They were complicit.

Though Ri was delighted at these words, she retracted her excitement.

"But... The Golden Flame Quadrant, didn't you lay down the necessary plans for it?"

"Yes, but the Federation is going to make those plans deviate whether I like them or not. If I attack them now while they're under the protection of the Federation, it'll be inconvenient. But, the Kitsune didn't participate in the first parliament, so I can be unrestrained in dealing with them..."

Hearing this, Ri nodded. At least Dyon wasn't acting rashly just because of her.

"I do have something to do first though." Dyon said righteously.

"Hm? What's that."
"Unrestrainedly tease my wives, of course. I'm on vacation."
Ri could hardly react before Dyon had swept her into his arms once more.
Dyon body laid straight upon a soft bed, his eyes looking up at a well decorated ceiling. But, he would be lying if he said he could pay attention to the intricate design and architecture of the curved wall above.
Every so often, his body would quiver, before seizing. Out of context, it almost looked as though the mighty Leader Sacharro was having a seizure.
A light giggling could be heard between his legs, causing Dyon's teeth to clench. His wives had always made fun of him for his odd leg twitching habit, but even with his control over his body, he couldn't stop it.
At that moment, the duvet that covered his legs up to his torso shifted as a petite mound rose. In the slight darkness, one could see two beautiful silver-blue eyes, blinking innocently. It wasn't until the covers fell entirely that a scene that could make any man or woman's blood rush could be seen.
Ri laid on her stomach between Dyon's legs, uncontrollably giggling at her husband's odd posture. He arms and legs were spread out like a starfish, his muscles contracted to their absolute limits. It looked like he was doing his best to control himself.
Ri, however, was having a grand time. Her small hands wrapped around her husband's shaft, delicately

pecking it with kisses in between her giggles. Her frame was so petite in comparison to Dyon's that one of her hands could only make it three quarters of the way around, not to mention the long shadow it

cast along her flawless face.

As if that wasn't enough to drive Dyon insane, her tails engulfed the bed, gently caressing his body. It felt as though he was floating on a cloud. With each passing moment, the heat emitting from his lower body grew.

Dyon's gaze shifted from the feeling, looking toward his wife's teasing expression, but the sight made blood rush to his nose. Every so often, her tails would shift just enough to reveal a plump bottom of soft flesh. Because her legs were waving back and forth cutely, slight ripples would cause it to undulate, causing Dyon's cock to grow another size.

Ri's small tongue snaked forward like a venomous viper, lightly tapping the mushroom shaped tip of Dyon's rod, not seeming to be in a hurry to do much of anything else.

"As long as you admit that you're a pervert, I'll let you do whatever you want..."

'This little vixen.' Dyon raged in his mind.

"I - ... am a wholesome man of character." Dyon said through gritted teeth.

He had expected to toss Ri into bed and have his way, but what would have been an easy task had suddenly turned into this torture session. He couldn't very well abuse his power to force his wife, now could he? In the end, he was too soft hearted.

"Ai, they don't see me as the leader of this household, they see me as nothing more than a toy to be used and abused. May the Heavens be my witness." Dyon shifted his gaze back to the ceiling, lamenting pitifully.

Maybe it was a coincidence, but when Dyon finished speaking, a crackle of lightning shone as thunder rumbled. A comfortable rain began to fell that made him feel quite cozy. In fact, he felt he had never been calmer in his life. Days like this were truly a blessing.

Though others might not like rain, it was his favorite kind of weather. As long as he was inside, that is.

In his youth, he would always stay inside, tinkering with his gadgets. Rain gave him an excuse for his seclusion other than loneliness. Even now as he matured, he still had that same feeling despite no longer being that lonely boy.

Ri giggled at her husband's words. Truth be told, she was only teasing him so much to enjoy the view of his tensed body. At the sight of his chiseled, well proportioned strength, an uncontrollable wetness spread between her legs.

At that moment, the doors of the chamber clicked open. But instead of being shocked or angry, Ri and Dyon actually smiled as a violet haired beauty walked in. Who else could it be if not Madeleine? Only Dyon and his wives could come to this place freely.

Madeleine's brows raised at the funny scene before her, before her expression settled into a light smile. Feeling a fire light beneath her belly button, her robes silently slipped to the floor before she crawled onto the bed to Dyon's side.

The heat emitting from Dyon's nether regions grew another level, his arm wrapping around Madeleine soft waist.

He wasn't going to allow these vixens to tease him any further. White flames burst from his body, coating every inch of the room. But instead of burning... it couldn't have felt more comfortable.

Chapter 1810: How About?

The breathing of his wives turned burdensome. Ri didn't have the heart to tease any longer as she crawled up from her position between Dyon's legs, a faint moan escaping her soft pink lips as she slipped his heated rod between her moistened lower pink folds.

Ri's petite body quivered before she could make it even halfway down. But, she had no time to rest as Dyon used his free arm to grasp her waist, piercing her completely.

A silver haired beauty on top of him, sharing his cock. A violet haired beauty to the left of him, sharing his lips.

He could only say that this vacation was truly comfortable.

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Beneath Soul Palace, there was a sight the peaceful atmosphere above could never imagine. Tens of thousands of young geniuses laid beaten and bloodied, unable to stand under there own power.

Under these circumstances, it would seem that the mortal clan geniuses had won. At least, that would seem to be the only explanation remaining. So why was it that the only one standing, seemingly unaffected, was a hook-nosed young man Dyon would hardly recognize?

On one half of the underground space, 36 mortal geniuses lay. On the other half, more than 50 000 young geniuses lay. In the center of it all, one youth remained.

Under Dyon's rules, the 36 mortal geniuses really should be dead. In fact, he hadn't interfered from start to finish, allowing them to fight as they pleased. But it seemed the hook nosed had had mercy.

Still, at this moment, he had a helpless expression on his face. If one saw the series of events leading to this, it would be easy to explain why.

As though something had possessed them, the mortal clan geniuses were spurred on. They fought valiantly, feeling like they would lose this feeling they had finally grasped after so long if they took so much as a single step backward.

Kedar especially, as though remembering the nonchalance and hint of disdain in Dyon's gaze, brought out his everything. However, in the end, it wasn't enough to defeat this young man.

This hook-nosed genius was the last to fight. He felt bad, in reality. By the time it was his turn, the mortal clan geniuses had already been worn thin despite taking turns. Though he was confident he could have defeated them all even without this advantage, it wasn't how things worked out.

He sighed. 'This Leader Sacharro probably wanted to bring out their potential. He'll probably be angry... But it's not in my being to lose on purpose. If he wants to kill me, so be it...

'... Whatever. He's already better than father in that he cares to raise those who have yet to display their usefulness. Mother's grave will rest well in his territory even if mine doesn't.'

Who else could this young man be if not the bastard son of Patriarch Raven, Pjisel.

"Hm?" Pjisel's head snapped, only to see Dyon casually standing far above his head, looking at the scene below.

Still, instead of feeling fear, his lip twitched. 'Did you really have to come here wearing nothing but boxers? You're a Dao Formation expert, shouldn't you have a bit more decorum?'

Dyon couldn't be bothered to care about such things. In fact, he would have flashed here naked if it hadn't been for Ri's quick action. The only reason why they appeared to be boxers was because Ri didn't managed to finish her creation array before he was too far away.

Anyway, everyone was unconscious but a single boy anyway, what did it matter?

If others heard his thoughts, he would definitely be scolded. He was the ruler of over a hundred universes after all, he had to care about his face a little bit more than that.

However, to Dyon, 1 universe, 100 universes, no universes, he was still himself.

"Interesting." Dyon smiled. "Pjisel Raven, I've read about you. I hear that you gained a human form as a Heaven Grade beast despite not reaching the celestial realm first. What an intriguing turn out."

Dyon descended, landing before Pjisel. He didn't bother with the injured mortal geniuses behind him, nor did he care that they lost. In truth, this was already more than he thought they'd do. After all, they were all saints while their opponents were all celestials.

Pjisel blinked. "... Yes."

This leader either has too much time on his hands, or has an exceptional memory, remembering things after seeing it only once. Pjisel suspected it was definitely the latter... Or...

Pjisel's gaze cast a weird expression as he looked toward Dyon's boxers once more. Maybe he really did just have too much time on his hands.

Thinking back to the women who embraced Dyon, Pjisel gulped. If you think about the difference between yourself and others too much, it really might make you just forget about life entirely. He couldn't find it in himself to disdain Dyon any longer, he just felt worship and jealousy in his heart.

Pjisel was never allowed to leave the Raven Clan's core universe. He was too talented, so his supposed father always kept tabs on him, suppressing him so that he was unable to rise up. Pjisel was certain that the day he tried to cross the dao barrier, he would be slaughtered.

In addition, according to Raven Clan law, he wasn't allowed to marry or copulate either. They didn't want their bloodline spreading to others, so he had never felt the touch of a woman in his life.

Thinking about this, he couldn't help but feel depressed. Was he really going to die a virgin? This was really too unfortunate.

"Just make it quick and painless." Pjisel mumbled, unwilling to meet Dyon eyes any longer.

Dyon raised an eyebrow, casually glancing around the large underground space once more. Of course, he had seen everything that happened from start to finish, so he knew the ins and outs. He too felt that even if the mortal geniuses weren't tired, they were no match for Pjisel.

'What an gem...' Dyon chuckled to himself. '... A bit too cynical though. It might be weird considering he's older than me, but...'

"How about it, Pjisel. Do you want to become my disciple?"