

Vile 511

Chapter 511 Zero Gravity Session P3*

“That was great... Master!”

Dianna spoke and surprised herself a bit. But she was too exhausted to process the emotions she was feeling. Eren took the array disk from her hand and controlled it to bring them down.

The two were soon submerged to waist level once again. The springwater started churning around them, giving them the freshness they needed at the time.

As the rejuvenating water worked on Dianna, it imbued her body with the right mana. Eren quickly realized that the space element array was supported by a lot of other array variants at the same time. The beast animation array was one such support array. The other was the healing array.

Eren caressed Dianna’s back while holding her in his arms. She had gotten rejuvenated once again, thanks to the spring water and healing array’s effect.

“Eren... something has happened to me, isn’t it? Why do I feel such a deep connection with you? I am willing to listen to your every command without worrying about its consequences.

This can’t be because of the intimacy we shared just now. You... you have done something to me, right?”

She had a puzzled expression on her face as she realized the emotions and the state of her mind. The butcher wasn’t surprised to hear her question. He had anticipated such a reaction after the way he had used his Sins Series ability after all.

Using Sin of Lust on Dianna was too risky because she was Eren’s teammate. Her obedient behaviour towards him might have been a red flag for him. Therefore, he never intended to use the ability the way he had used it on Sharon and her two assistants. It was also a form of the experiment to see whether he could pull it off.

Even if Eren could ask her to behave normally, he was sure that those who had been marked by him had their level of normalcy skewed. Listening to his advice and following his commands would have been her new reality— making it normal behaviour for her.

This was the reason why Eren had decided to tweak the effects of his ability a bit. He had decided to keep Dianna’s pre-brand self and consciousness as least affected by his ability as possible. During his use of the ability, he recited the desired effects in his consciousness.

As a result, Dianna retained most of her pre-brand self even after she got branded. She still started seeing Eren as the most significant figure in her life that she should do everything in her power to please. But she also retained the reality of her earlier self, making her recognize that her change wasn’t normal.

“Are you complaining?”

Eren asked with a smile on his face as he started stroking the lower part of her back. Her hip-length wet hair that was sticking to her skin as well as the back of Eren’s hands, masked his advances.

“No. I just asked because I wanted to confirm, master. I... I mean, Er... Eren.”

Eren narrowed his eyes as he felt the struggle Dianna was having in dealing with her new reality. She was stuttering because of the conflict she was having in her head. He sighed and concluded.

‘No matter what I do, the effects of this ability would be apparent one way or the other. Plus, I don’t know how it can affect anyone as a ranker. I better not use the ability on anyone I can’t or won’t want to get rid of.’

Still, I’m happy that I was able to control the ability to some extent. Practice makes a man perfect. I’ll just try different things with different new partners.’

Eren thought to himself as he groped Diana’s butts. Frankly, he could convince Dianna to help him attend the auction just fine without having to use the ability on her. But he didn’t want to attend the auction.

Eren had plans of his own when it came to attending the auction. And Dianna’s absolute loyalty was needed to execute it to perfection. That’s why Eren decided to use the ability on her while tweaking it a bit.

“Well, that’s terrific to hear, Dianna. Although I’d prefer you to call me Eren, you can call me Master when we are alone. Your call. However, keep in mind to greet me by my first name when we meet in public and during our missions. Is that understood?”

Eren whispered in Dianna’s ears as he gave a firm press to her mushy buns. By now, his stroking and pressing of her posterior had started to turn her on once again. She was even glad of the fact that Eren had decided to get intimate with her again. With her psyche slowly settling and adjusting to her brand-new reality, the ranger replied in a low voice that she had been asked the question.

“Yes... yes, master. Don’t worry. You won’t have to face problems because of me.”

Eren could confirm that even though her original personality remained intact, Dianna was able to understand his intentions like his monster slaves did. He felt glad that even if he couldn’t prevent Dianna from totally acting normal, he could make it work while keeping her loyalty steadfast.

“Alright then. Hehe! Let’s relax and enjoy ourselves first. I’ll tell you what I need you to do afterwards.”

Eren said to Dianna. The latter just nodded her head softly. The smile on her face returned soon afterwards. She looked at Eren before holding his face in both her hands. The next step didn’t have to be taken by her. Eren did it for her by kissing her on her lips.

“Ummmmm!”

Dianna’s body started to feel a distinct form of joy as Eren kissed her. She responded to his kiss by hugging him even tighter and rubbing her pussy over his soon-to-be-erected cock.

As Eren operated on the disk, both of them took pseudo flight once again. But this time, he didn’t go that high. He just made it so that their bodies levitated just above the surface of the water. This made it look like they could walk on the water and stay there without casting any spells.

Eren started kissing Dianna on her neck and made her turn around in one swift motion. He then started rubbing his cock against her butt crack, which he had woken up from its slumber.

Dianna's cunt rebooted the production of love juices. The ranger reached out to her pussy with one hand and started stimulating her clit. In the meantime, she started to pinch her erect nipple with her left hand.

"It's time I claimed your other hole, Dianna. Hehe."

Eren smiled and said to his partner in a voice that reeked of playfulness.

Chapter 512 Zero Gravity Session P4*

"It's time to take things up a notch."

The butcher smiled and said to his partner in a voice that reeked of playfulness.

Eren helped her in her endeavours with his freely exploring hands while making her feel the presence of his cock. He then dipped his fingers deep inside her pussy to coat his hands with the natural lubrication. After coating his dick with the same, he had another random thought.

'It's ironic that I need lube to give my lady an anal even when I'm a slime half-blood, huh! I need to figure a few things out about myself.'

The butcher thought the half-blood ranking technique he was practising might allow him to dig deep into his potential as a slime half-blood. But that would come in the future. Right now he needed to focus on the task at hand.

Eren grabbed Dianna's waist with his left hand after a while. Then he took hold of his dick with the other before pointing it right at Dianna's rear entrance.

"Master... Eren... go... go slow."

Dianna made her concerns known to her master. She wasn't sure she had allowed him to breach her ass today. But she knew that she couldn't say no to him in her current state. The realization made her happy and stressed at the same time. But the butcher's next words made her stress vanish.

"Hehehe! Think of it as my revenge for you throwing water on my face. Your ass is mine now, Dianna. Brace yourself."

Eren said with a bit of a chuckle added in. Dianna's stress was replaced with a pout on her face. Her pout soon broke into a look of surprise when she felt what had just happened to her virgin rear canal.

"Aaaaaaah... master... you devil... owooooo!"

Eren had penetrated Dianna's ass before he could finish saying his warning. of surprising and comforting her at the same time. Dianna moaned and cursed her master for continuing his streak of surprising her with his moves.

At first, Dianna felt like this was the most inconvenient way of having sex. She felt her asshole stretching bit by bit as Eren drove his dick deep up her ass slowly but surely.

Eren understood Dianna's mental state with the connection he shared with her. So he decided to be easy on her. He first brought her on her fours before making her stretch her legs and open up her pelvis by pushing it towards him. He then grabbed her waist with both hands before concentrating on his task.

Eren summoned another bunch of mini water creatures that climbed on Dianna's body from her legs. They were about five centimetres in length and looked a lot like his mini Fledglings of Flames.

They climbed up Dianna's legs and headed straight to where the action was taking place. They used their tongues to soothe the painful penetration effects Dianna was suffering through.

Dianna started feeling a bit better when the water creatures started working their magic. She then channelled her mana throughout her body to get rid of the rest of the fatigue she had been accumulating.

When Eren reached deep inside her ass and felt the warmth his dick was wrapped in, he felt that he was missing out on anal a lot. He decided he would change that about himself in his future endeavours.

Eren wasn't sure his partners would share his enthusiasm save for Nina. But he could always make them get used to it. Diana also began to enjoy the activity.

"Aaaaah... mo... more. Go a bit faster, Eren." *paada e*

Dianna said as she felt waves of pleasure replacing the small bouts of pain inside her body and psyche. She reached out her hand behind her back and looked back at her master who was slowly starting to pound her ass.

Eren grabbed Dianna's hand with his own for support and slapped her butt cheek with the other. He gradually started increasing the speed of his thrusts as Dianna cooperated with him.

It didn't take long for her to become comfortable on her knees just like Eren was just above the surface of the spring water. Then she guided Eren's hands onto her tits as she exited her pussy with her hands from the front.

"Aaaaah... Aaaaah... Aaaaah! More master. Fuck my ass! Aaaaah. It's all yours. Make me yours and only yours forever."

Dianna voiced her feelings while she was experiencing a sexual high that she had never felt before. She had now come to realize that she would ask Eren to do anal with her herself in future.

Eren grabbed Dianna's tits and gave them a firm squeeze every time he rammed his dick deep inside her ass. He also made her turn and kiss him as if what they were doing was not enough.

"Aaaaah... Eren... I'm coming."

It wasn't long before Dianna's body jerked all of a sudden as she released all her vaginal juices at once. In the next moment, her knees felt weak, and she almost fell flat on the surface of the spring water. But she was held tight by Eren from behind before she could fall.

"Let's... let's rest for a bit, Eren. Let's get a massage before we get started with our session."

Dianna suggested in a low voice while resting her head against Eren's chest. He nodded as he picked up the princess and carried her in one swift motion. Carrying the ranger, he started walking outside the spring.

The attendants had disappeared from the scene. They presented themselves to Eren and Dianna a few moments after learning that the pair had come out of the spring water.

Eren and Dianna were then led to two massage tables by the unranked female attendants. They were inscribed with arrays and runes on their surface, making them ranked items.

Eren and Dianna soon felt the bliss of being massaged by elemental hands. The elemental hands were made of fire, wind, water, earth, lightning, snow, and various other elements. They would operate separately on the duo's bodies at various places. By penetrating deeper than the skin, they would stimulate the rankers' mana points, enabling them to relax and enjoy their massage.

The elemental hands were spectral, created by condensed mana of the particular element. They were generated by the array after considering the rankers' bodies that were inside the array eye. The female attendants were just there to activate and shut off the arrays when the patrons demanded.

Eren and Dianna resumed their Zero Gravity Session soon after feeling revitalized by the massage. This time, Dianna led Eren into the spring water. She took charge of their play, the way she wanted. The butcher happily obliged.

The next day.

Eren and Dianna emerged from the subspace they had explored thoroughly. Their relationship had changed a lot since before they entered the subspace. For both of them, especially Dianna, what had begun as a casual fling had soon developed into a non-separable bond.

With Dianna's loyalty ensured, Eren could now ask for her help in the designs he had for the Remus auction.

Chapter 513 Titus Tournament Begins P1

"Good day, everyone!

Dear mortal guests and respected rankers, please feel at ease in your positions. I, Gladius Red, welcome you all to the final round of the Titus tournament."

Gladius Red started his speech with his loudest and most cheerful voice. His enthusiastic speech was accompanied by the sound of musical instruments playing in the backdrop.

Today was the day of the Titus tournament's final round.

There were 32 contestants in the final round. This was the event that pitted one of the most talented competitors the Arangar Colosseum had produced throughout the year against each other after all.

The colosseum was packed with people. People of all kinds of backgrounds had been summoned under one roof to cheer for the competitor they had been rooting for throughout the year.

There were loads of spectral screen panels of all sizes showing various things to their viewers. Some showed the previous battles of the competitors that were taking part in the final round of the Titus tournament. Some screens compared one competitor with another, making crowds of people argue over what they were seeing.

Some people in the audience would call stats bullshit. Some of the nerds would even venture ahead and develop their own version of statistical analysis to make predictions about a certain competitor.

The betting houses were busy. The food vendors were even more so. There were even merchants selling doll-size replicas of various competitors. The event spurred the city's economy to far higher heights than previously estimated.

The reason for that was simple. This year's competitors were exceptions among exceptions. Each of them had its own fanbase by now. Each competitor had its own fan booths in the colosseum where its most loyal fans would gather around. Novice rankers and mortals would hoist the flags bearing the name of their idols or the effects of their signature spells. The fan booths had created their chanting style and songs too, which would highlight the competitor's feats they supported and discourage their competitors.

There was silence in Tuan Aag's room, making him feel removed from the clamour of the colosseum. This was the waiting room he had been given to use before the game.

"Tuan" wanted to smoke his Stellar Sativa. But that would break Tuan's character, so he controlled his urges. Instead, he drank to calm his nerves.

'This is going to be tough without me not having access to my lightning spells. Then again, sending real Tuan in would be no different than giving up on prize money.'

Tuan sighed as he thought to himself. He then drank Frostfoam straight from the bottle and looked outside the only window the room had.

Tuan had been given a waiting room that was located at the uppermost level of the colosseum, like every other participant. He could see it packed to its brim with a sea of people and couldn't help feeling a bit stressed.

He was stressed because he was going to act as Tuan in front of such a large audience. Plus, Tuan's dedicated fanbase was no joke. They would analyze his every move and compare it with the moves or actions the real Tuan had taken in previous battles.

The butcher had practised enough to get in Tuan's skin. Even taken tips from real Tuan by spectral calling him. Still, he wasn't sure everything that he'd do will jell well together. *paʔa ʔʔʔeʔ*

'I need an act. Something that can justify any flaw that I might show.'

Tuan said to himself and looked at the bottle of Frostfoam in his hands. He then thought of the real tragedy that had struck Tuan and thought of an idea. The butcher within him couldn't help but flash a cunning smile after finalizing the idea.

“Ladies and gentlemen, now’s it’s time to move on to introducing our competitors. They will all enter the grounds with an aim to win this year’s Titus championship trophy awards.

So it’s your job to cheer them and show your support for their goals as I call out their names. The first name on the list is... Drin Dawn.”

A young man in his 20s suddenly appeared right in the middle of the colosseum’s battle ring. The runes of the spatial array were lit up around him.

The fireworks were released as soon as he arrived at the scene. They soared high in the sky before bursting in the most eye-catching way possible. The explosion of multi-illuminance light depicted a short scene of Drin winning over his opponent before dispersing.

Drin had been teleported to the scene. Spending Extols on a spatial array and unique alchemical products just to have a unique visual appeal for the competitors was akin to burning money away for a bit of warmth.

But the organizers of the events knew this was all worth it. For today’s event, they had already warned the audience about not using the audiovisual artefacts to record the fight scenes. The colosseum’s security had already confiscated a lot of those artefacts that the rankers had tried to slip into the colosseum with as well.

This was so that the organizers could see the recordings of each fight on a separate array disk. The fights would be spectrally recorded, allowing the viewers to relive the fight as it happened through lifelike spectral projection.

Pre-booking money for the fight recordings had already been collected from all over Edinburgh. And with seating tickets ten times more expensive than normal, the colosseum’s administration was practically swimming in the pool of Extols and Eddies. A bit of expenditure on fireworks, array operation, and other visual effects was no biggie.

Drin was a solid-stage Ace ranker. With a medium build and a stature that was neither tall nor short, he looked insignificant and lacked overwhelming presence in the ring. But his 20ish something appearance attested to his talent as a ranker.

“This is troublesome. I could have entered the place normally.”

Drin sighed as he walked out of the spatial array. Although he was trying to walk normally, he could feel that his centre of gravity had been a bit altered. His body felt heavy. And his blurred vision was slowly returning to normalcy. These side effects were caused by the spatial array.

The side effects were only temporary and would wear out after a couple of minutes. But that didn’t mean Drin would like them. As a result of his mood, he didn’t wave at his fan booth. But that in turn made his fans cheer for him even louder.

Chapter 514 Titus Tournament Begins P2

“Drin Dawn has fought many battles and bested a lot of tough fighters to reach this place. Of course, you guys remember his epic fight with...”

Gladius began recounting the deeds performed by Drin in his journey to becoming the finalist of the Titus tournament. That made the guy even more stressed because he didn't enjoy being in the limelight or being fawned upon by the masses in such a manner. But then he remembered the prize money and decided to put up with Gladius' hype about him.

Drin was a human. His black hair reached to his chin. A loose bunch of hair on the side of his face. The rest of his hair was tied in a ponytail. He had black eyes and a slender, square-shaped face.

Drin had worn a black coat and brown cargo pants that looked like a mortal apron but weren't. He was wearing long boots that had runic details over them, enabling the onlookers to realize that they were ranked artefacts.

Even though he had Dawn in his name, Drin gave aloof vibes, making people realize that sometimes names don't tell the complete picture about a person. The guy kept his head down and his hands behind his back. He stood seriously while he waited for Gladius to finish talking about him.

"Now let's hear a word or two from our championship contender's mouth. Drin, please tell us, how has your journey been so far. And are you looking forward to winning the championship?"

Gladius invited Drin to speak up and address the crowd. He didn't have to move anywhere or raise his voice. An array had appeared where he stood. This array was designed to project his live spectral image over the colosseum's aerial space, which was ten times the size of his original. His voice was also set to get amplified so that the audience could hear him loud and clear.

Drin felt this was such a drag. He sighed and looked above him at the bright sky that seemed void and empty to him.

"I... I thank all of those who have supported me and cheered for me all this while. I am not as glorious as you might think I am. Sigh! I'm just a man looking to win prize money for my own reasons."

Drin looked blankly at the sky and spoke. There was a certain air of loneliness that surrounded his visage, which was felt by the audience and the organizers alike. But Drin did not pay attention to the mood of the audience. He looked straight at the booth that was dedicated to his fanbase before speaking up once again.

"The battles I won so far were all due to my persistence. Still, I'm grateful for the support you have shown me so far."

Drin looked like he had remembered something and smiled mirthlessly to himself. He carried on with his speech while maintaining that same smile that wasn't a smile.

"This is the first time any of my deeds have received encouragement and support. Frankly, it would have been the happiest moment of my life if even one person was cheering for me. That's how desperate I was for recognition.

So you can imagine my surprise and disbelief at the fact that so many of you are calling my name with such excitement. It is gratifying and scary at the same time. Scary because I fear I might disappoint you."

Drin said, and suddenly his face turned stoic. He bowed a bit in front of his fan booth and said his final words.

“No matter what happens in the finals, I’ll always keep this memory safe inside my head. Also, I’ll try to live up to your expectations with every shred of bone and every drop of blood left in my body. Please give me strength through your cheers. Thank you.”

Drin said and stood straight. It took him a while to realize that the ever-noisy Colosseum had grown quiet in the middle of his speech, after listening to his heartfelt words.

Clap!

Then one clap was heard from somewhere. It was followed by another series of claps somewhere else. Soon the entire Colosseum became even wilder than before.

“Drin Dawn! Drin Dawn! Drin Dawn!”

Drin’s name was heard all over the colosseum. Not just his fan booth. Drin looked at the audience while turning 360 degrees in his position. He pursed his lips and waved his hands at the people waving at him.

Drin realized that he should have stuck with the “Hello and thank you” that he had planned previously. The limelight he so abhorred was shining brightly on him because of his speech.

Drin took a long breath after he realized his mistake. He shook his head and wished that the audience would shift their focus to someone else.

Drin’s wish soon got fulfilled. Because Gladius summoned another participant. The same procedure was repeated.

Every participant that was introduced afterwards received the same kind of treatment. Each of them was welcomed with enthusiasm by the crowd. Since Drin had set the bar for speech so high, the rest of the participants followed in his footsteps and poured their hearts out in front of their audience.

It wasn’t long before the 16th participant’s introduction was over. It was now time to introduce the 17th participant, that was Tuan Aag.

Gladius did his part and spoke volumes about Tuan’s achievements in the tournament. He set the right atmosphere for Tuan’s epic entrance and activated the spatial array that was in his control.

A distraught-looking man appeared at the center of the battle ring. He was holding a bottle of booze in his hand. His eyes appeared dead. His expression looked like he was lost on his way and was about to ask for direction from someone else.

Tuan had put on a pair of ranked shoes with the symbol of Phoenix etched onto them. Long yet baggy cargo pants he wore carried runic symbols that made them compatible with the fire element mana he cast. The loose and frail sleeveless jacket he wore for his torso did a poor job of covering his chest.

Gladius was a bit stumped looking at Tuan’s condition right now. However, he carried on with his duties and concluded his introduction with the appropriate words before asking Tuan to speak.

“Me? Do you want to hear something from me, a broken man? What can I offer you guys apart from empty words and a shit ton of my sorrow? Hahahaha!”

Tuan opened his speech with wild laughter that didn’t sound joyous at all.

Chapter 515 Spice

“Me? Do you want to hear something from me, a broken man? What can I offer you guys apart from empty words and a shit ton of my sorrow? Hahahaha!”

Tuan opened his speech with wild laughter that didn’t sound joyous at all. He then drank from his Frostfoam bottle till it was empty before breaking it on the ground.

“Mr Tuan, no littering on this sacred ground of warriors.”

Gladius said with a face that screamed he was not happy with the way Tuan was behaving in front of his audience. This event was going to get recorded. Its recordings were to be sold throughout the kingdom. He cared about the event’s image after all.

“Hahahaha! The sacred ground of warriors. No littering allowed you say. Adept Gladius, forgive me for saying this. But I don’t recall you calling someone out because they chopped off their opponents’ limbs.”

Gladius had a blue vein popped on his forehead when he heard Tuan speak. This was supposed to be an event about people fighting. Now because of one guy, it had turned into a moral dilemma.

“Mr Tuan, chopping off limbs and other body parts, spitting of blood, and other such instances wouldn’t be considered littering because they are part and parcel of the competition.

Your heavy drinking and breaking of your ale bottle, however, cant be considered part of the championship, can it? I suggest you join a drinking competition if you want people to celebrate the way you drink.”

Gladius spoke without any flinch in his voice. Tuan seemed to have been thinking a bit. He then hid his face behind his stretched palm before replying in a voice that sounded shaky, as if he was crying

“You... you are right, sir Gladius. I’m sorry for my rude behaviour. Guess, I’m just looking to vent these feelings of frustration I have.”

As he uncovered his face, Tuan said. One could see that his eyes had suddenly turned watery. His facial expressions also indicated that he was about to cry.

Gladius thought he should apprehend Tuan and possibly kick him out of the competition. The guy wasn’t steady. He was just beginning to walk in that direction. Just then, he received a voice message.

‘Gladius, don’t do anything, you idiot. This is a spice we shouldn’t miss out on. Do you even understand the entertainment value of such a scene?

The Extols we’ll earn this time will soar through the roof. Hehehe! Keep going. Oh! Even better. Make that Tuan guy talk more.’

Gladius stopped when he heard the voice. He sighed and returned to his position before speaking up.

“Tuan boy, I see that you are in a lot of pain. Although this battleground has witnessed many men cry and scream in physical pain, you are probably the first person I have seen that has been hurt by something much more profound.

None of us can help you deal with what's creating a mess in your head and eating away at your heart. But we can lend you our ears. At least I'd like to.

Dear guests, what are your thoughts? Do we lend this man our time and listen to his story or do we continue with our competition?"

As the host of events at the Colosseum, Gladius asked in a serious voice that no one had heard before. His voice was enough to do half the job. The other half was taken care of by Tuan's mind-blowing acting performance. *pa...da ...e*

"Tuan... we are here for you. Tell us what happened..."

"This Adept ranker promises you, Aag boy. If you were blackmailed for being one of the finalists of the tournament, I swear to..."

"Tuan, my heart breaks when..."

The audience started imbuing mana in their voices, addressing Tuan and showing their support. The mortals too cheered and made a cacophony of noises their way, that collectively sounded meaningless.

The competitors, on the other hand, have a variety of emotions. Some wanted to listen to what Tuan had to say. Some others were neutral about it. While some just wanted to get on with the competition. Introducing each participant and making them communicate with the audience had already consumed a significant amount of time.

Then some competitors wanted to listen to what Tuan had to say for their own benefit. So that they can use it against him if and when he is pitted against them.

Yet, no competitor came forward to stop Tuan from speaking up any further. They all looked at serious-looking Gladius and decided to reign in their reactions.

"Alright. That's enough. I, Gladius, in my capacity as the host of this year's event, thank the audience for showing its support to one of our tournament's participants."

Gladius's brief speech quieted down the restless crowd once again. The host of the event then looked at Tuan before speaking up.

"Tuan, you have about five minutes to say whatever you have to say. Then we shall start the tournament, with you or without you. Is that understood?"

Gladius narrowed his eyes on Tuan and released his Adept rank mana sense. It wasn't meant to harm him. But warn him. Tuan nodded at the guy and released a fire snake at the broken shards of the bottle. The shards were heated rapidly before dispersing.

Tuan coughed a bit and shook his head as if he was trying to shake the drunken haze he was currently gripped by. Then he looked at his dedicated fan booth before replying in the same shaky voice.

"First of all, I'm deeply sorry to all my supporters about losing my self-control at such a crucial time in my life. But know that it wasn't intentional."

Tuan said and wiped the tears from both of his eyes with his hands before they could roll off of his cheeks. He then made a few nasal sounds of taking deep breaths before continuing to speak up.

"I... I don't know how to say this. Hahaha! I feel humiliated by this situation. I'm sure half of my supporters would change sides if they knew what had happened to me."

Tuan said and started pacing about on the ground with his hands behind his back. His 10-meter giant live spectral image was following his movement above him in the space too.

"The thing is... I was cucked by my wife."

Chapter 516 Covering Flaws

"The thing is... I was cucked by my wife."

Tuan smiled mirthlessly towards his fan booth which had grown silent like the rest of the stadium. Once he was sure that he had the desired effect, he continued.

"I and my wife Tista had been happily living in a small home that I thought was sufficient for both of us. The budget we had for both of us was always tight. But we had only basic needs. Who cares about money if you have love to support you, right?"

Tuan shook his head as if coming to terms with the answer he had found to his question. He then sighed and continued.

"Then suddenly, my wife complains that we need to relocate. You must find a better place, a higher status, and better ranking resources for both of us. Better of everything. I... I didn't know what to do.

My biggest reason for entering the competition was to win money for this same reason. I wanted money because my Tista had demanded it from me. What was I supposed to do? Say no to her. Never!

Hahaha!

I will even fight the butcher of Osan Woods for her. Taking part in the Titus tournament was the least I could do."

Tuan said and looked above him, trying to mimic the performance of Drin that he had just seen. He then started telling the audience about the betrayal that he faced from Tista.

The butcher had an easier time narrating the events because they were all true. Of course, he added a bit of flair to his style to make them stand out more. A sparkling form of bullshittery!

Tuan's performance as a heartbroken man ruined by his circumstances was impeccable. His speech along with his body language created a distinct impact on the audience's collective psyche.

Of course, he kept the fact that Tista and his lover had been killed. He just said that they ran away from the city of Arangar, which was true.

"So this is my story as a failed husband and failed ranker who couldn't even keep his emotions in check. Once again, I'm sorry for my behaviour and the fact that you guys had to listen to a sad story when you had come here to be entertained."

Tuan bowed in front of his fan booth first. Then he bowed in all four directions as well. He then took out the dual swords from his storage and coated them in his fire element mana before speaking up.

"I admit that my mental health is fragile. I also admit that the personal tragedy that had struck me out of nowhere is going to affect my performance as a competitor in some way or the other.

But rest assured, I'll give it my all in this tournament. If previously, I had decided to bring out my 100 percent in the battles that are about to come, then this time, I'll exceed my limitations.

Unlike some people who are afraid of not meeting your expectations, I will surpass them. I, Tuan Aag, will rise over my tragedy."

Tuan then used one of his swords to slash at his wrist, drawing blood. He then dripped his other hand's four fingers in the blood that was gushing out before using them to create four simple yet bloody stripes on his chest before saying out loud.

"People present here as well as those watching from afar. Hear my pledge. I, Tuan Aag, will either win this tournament or die trying. There's no in-between."

Tuan tucked the swords away in his storage. Then he imbued his mana on his wound and it stopped bleeding. His enhanced healing ability kicked in and the wound got closed faster than it had appeared.

Drin narrowed his eyes on Tuan when he heard him speak about some rankers in the competition having performance anxiety. Drin couldn't help but think over his statement as a result.

'Hahaha! This is some entertaining footage we got here. Good job, Gladius.'

The voice spoke in Gladius's ears.

This time it took a bit longer for people to recover from their state of silence. Most of the male rankers didn't know if they should cheer for the guy for his conviction or offer him a few encouraging words to console him.

Most of the female rankers and mortals alike in the audience felt like their hearts had been squeezed by such a betrayal. Some of them even wished they could come forward then and there and try to mend Tuan's broken heart by being with him.

Then the audiences' reactions kicked in all at once. People started chanting Tuan's name with even greater vigour than any of the competitors had suggested. It was a tall claim for Tuan to declare that he would win the tournament. But the audience always loved the idea of a dark horse. So they started cheering Tuan's name all at once.

There was indeed a small group of rankers who made fun of Tuan and taunted him. But their voices were drowned by the overwhelming support of the rest of the rankers. They were busy showering Tuan up with their praises and well wishes.

'This should be enough to cover my flaws. Now I just have to win.'

Tuan said to himself and joined the rest of the competitors in line in the end. He was quite proud of the showmanship he had just displayed. What he didn't know was the fact that the act he had just pulled off was going to make Tuan extremely popular in the future. Especially among the ladies.

Even Gladius was a bit impressed by Tuan's way of handling his mental burden. He nodded at Eren before continuing with the next opponent.

Tuan was back to his usual self when all of the 32 finalists were accounted for. In response, he gazed at Gladius, who didn't wait long enough to resume the Titus tournament.

"Now that the formalities are out of the way, it's about time we started with the tournament."

Gladius introduced a brand-new array that was not visible before. It looked like this too was a spatial teleportation array.

'Looks like we are heading somewhere.'

Tuan made a quick note of the events.

Chapter 517 Rules of the Game

"Hmm. What should I do now?"

Tuan asked as he looked around himself. He found himself in an abandoned city that featured ruined, old houses and buildings. The city looked like a relic from the past long forgotten.

He was sent here along with all the other contestants after standing inside the grand array activated by Gladius at the end of his speech.

The rules of the game were not too difficult to understand.

The Titus tournament was going to run for seven days. Each day of the tournament would last from sunrise to sundown— a total of twelve hours. Participants were only allowed to stay active and hunt during these 12 hours. Trying to sneak in on one another outside the 12 hours would cause the offender to get kicked from the competition.

Each participant had been given a wristband that would keep track of their location and status. It would also keep track of the Titus points they would earn each day.

There were two ways to earn Titus points.

The first was to go outside the city and hunt the array-generated spectral copies of mana beasts and monsters. The competitors would earn Titus points according to the level of difficulty of the mana beasts and monsters.

The mana beasts and monsters would range from Novice rank to Adept rank. The contenders would get drops and Titus points for slaying the targets. The drops would contain healing potions, artefacts, alchemy products, and other daily necessities that may help the rankers during their stay during these seven days.

Titus points would be deposited immediately on the rankers' wristbands after they had slain the targets. They could also team up to kill Adept level targets. The total Titus points awarded for slaying such a target would then get divided among the participants that were part of the raid.

The co-op raids were more lucrative as the Adept level target had a much higher Titus point value even if it got divided among multiple rankers. But it was a bit risky to run co-op raids.

That's because of the second way the competitors could earn the Titus points. By taking hold of others' wristbands and crushing them, competitors could gain all the Titus points their victims had on their wristbands. Consequently, if and when co-op raids were successful, the biggest risk a competitor had came from their mates who had just fought with them.

Solo mana beast and monster hunts were relatively less lucrative. But they didn't contain any risk of betrayal. Plus, one didn't have to depend on anybody as long as they chose their targets well.

Fights were prohibited both during the day and at night in the ruined city. One could use any ruined house for their occupation during these seven days. They could also make use of any hidden drops the houses may have. The use of items obtained from drop sites would not be frowned upon.

The entire ruined city and the hunting area outside it were under observation by a giant observation array setup. The audience outside was able to see their favourite competitor in action through various POVs. Or they could watch the collective feed that was getting projected on the aerial space of the colosseum.

The most significant battle at that time would be spectrally unfolding inside the colosseum ring, just as it was in the ruined city. In short, the event was a pay-per-view event designed to cater to the various viewing needs of the audience.

There were 32 competitors inside the ruined city. They were allowed to use any strategy they wanted, provided they did not breach any rule of the competition. At the end of each day, each competitor would receive a message on their wristbands. The alert would tell them their position in the tournament according to the Titus points they had.

This also meant that the biggest earners of Titus points ran the risk of being targeted by other competitors. Meaning the top earners needed to watch their backs the most.

The competitors also had a self-quit option they could use through their wristbands in case of any emergency. Apart from that, the organizers of the Titus organization held no responsibility for the safety of the contenders.

Throughout the seven days, the spectators in the colosseum would visit the venue at sunrise and leave after sunset. Gladius would be actively commenting on the most eye-catching battle that was getting projected on the colosseum's battleground live.

The entire city of Arangar's schedule had been adopted to suit the tournament's timing. This was the biggest cash cow for the local vendors and the city's administration alike. Of course, they would make the spectators' convenience their priority.

'Do you sense anything?'

Eren asked to be the only voice he could count on in the tournament. He got his answer shortly afterwards.

'Hmm. This looks like a real city that had been pulled into a subspace. I guess the person who did this must be at least what you call a Grandmaster ranker.

Apart from that, hehe! Yes. The city is littered with various drops. I can sense your opponents in the city as well, struggling to make sense of their surroundings just as you are. Do you want me to tell you where they are?'

Tuan couldn't help flashing a smirk when he realized that Alephee understood his intentions. He responded promptly.

'One step at a time, Alephee. First, I'll need reliable weapons. Tuan's dual swords don't suit me. I'll need a pair of weapons that can aid me in the close and mid-range. Can you sense anything like that in the drops hidden in the city?'

Tuan decided to cheat his way through the competition right from the get-go. He knew that Alephee's soul sense was the most powerful tool he had at his disposal in this place. Unlike the mana sense of the competitors that were restricted by the arrays, her soul sense couldn't even be detected by the array system.

'I found one such hidden drop that can help you get what you want. But you need to hurry. There's another ranker approaching the same spatial array that may give you your choice of weapons.'

Alephee warned Tuan and provided him with directions. The latter narrowed his eyes and disappeared from his position— leaving a blazing trail behind in his wake.

Chapter 518 Katalina Reich

"Hehe! My lucky streak continues."

As she approached the nearest drop that she had found by accident, Katalina rejoiced. When their competitors walked inside the grand array activated by Gladius in the colosseum, they appeared in the ruined city at random places away from each other.

Katalina was no exception to the rule either. But the place she had found herself in was an old inn. When she explored the premises, she found a fresh scroll sitting on a giant desk that didn't seem to be part of the ruined setting.

The scroll was blank. But it projected the location of the chest drop when Katalina imbued her mana into it. This was how she was able to locate the drop despite the restricted mana sense that only allowed her to sense a bit further than her eyesight's range.

Katalina Haidern was a young Ace ranker that looked to be in her mid-twenties. She had off-blonde hair that was a bit longer than her shoulder line. Her ruby red eyes would be the centre of attraction if someone got close to her.

She wore a tight crop top that highlighted her ample bosom. Her denim pants were worn below her navel, exposing her shapely belly in the open.

The stature of 5.9ft made Katalina a relatively tall woman. Her long legs, wide hips, and slim but well-defined waist added to her feminine charms.

Katalina was wielding a rapier in her right hand as she ran towards the drop using her wind-element movement spell. She figured that other rankers would be busy finding their way outside of the city. Not everybody was able to be lucky like her and land in the same place where the drop location's clue was. So she decided to make full use of the situation and get her hands on the drop before things got messy.

Just when she thought that there was nobody in the vicinity, her limited mana sense picked up on a ranker's presence. The ranker was heading towards the same location as her.

'How... how is this possible? Are there multiple clues in the city that point towards the same chest? Damn it.'

Katalina realized that she spoke about her lucky streak way too early. She concluded that the tournament's organizers would have planted multiple clues that point towards the same drops, making the rankers aware of each other's possessions. This was so that they would have designs on the rankers who got them, creating temptation for confrontation.

Katalina's deductions were indeed correct. But it wasn't this way in her case. Her opponent was not dependent on the drop's clues.

"I suggest you back off, pretty lady. Today, I'm not fucking around."

Tuan addressed Katalina when they met each other near the same drop site. There wasn't anything visible to the naked eye. But both knew that there was a spatial array that contained a treasure of significance. Katalina didn't know what it was. But Tuan did, thanks to Alephee.

"Hehehehe! Don't think you are entitled to have your way with the ladies just because your wife betrayed you. I'm sorry for your situation. And I'll not judge.

But I'd consider you to be a dense man if you think your words alone would make me back off from getting what's rightfully mine. I came here first, you know."

Katalina said with a bright smile on her face while clenching her weapon's hilt. She brought up Tuan's wife so that he would get affected by the topic and show her a chink in his armour. Something she could use to overwhelm him.

No ranker would want to fight with another ranker this early in the game. That's because there was no gain to be had doing that. Nobody had even earned a dime of Titus points yet. Only a few people were bold enough to leave the city straight away and start their hunt. Most of the competitors were busy carefully planning their strategies while paying close attention to their surroundings.

And yet there was someone like Tuan Aag who seemed eager to attack Katalina. She would have suggested a split of rewards. But something about her opponent's gaze told her he wasn't interested in a settlement.

In response to Katalina's remark, Tuan didn't give any verbal response. He just gave a simple smile that bordered on being psychopathic. The next thing she knew, a meteor-like object was heading in her direction at breakneck speed.

"This bloody cash..."

Katalina didn't get to complete her sentence. That's because the meteor-like object that was Tuan himself was already upon her. The first thought in her head after seeing Tuan approach her was to change her position.

Too bad, Tuan had already taken countermeasures for it by raining down fireballs in every direction. The rain of fireballs was dense and there was hardly any safe passage for her amidst it.

? ?? ??-?? ??? . ??? The fireballs themselves were not that scary. But she had an inkling that by the time she dealt with those fireballs or dodged them, Tuan would be able to tackle her just fine. In that case, she would have lost the advantage of creating a strong defence around herself.

'This bastard. How is he able to execute spells in such a way?'

Katalina cursed Tuan in her head as she held her ground and raised her rapier in front of her in defence. She had another brief thought just before Tuan made contact with her.

'I have seen this cuck bastard's battles. Although his usage of Fire Wings was indeed creative, he wasn't this fierce. His mastery over the way of the elements has increased by that much in such a short span?'

Katalina braced herself and waited for the point of impact.

"Haaaaaah!"

Boom!

Katalina screamed in a loud voice just before Tuan's attack made contact with her. In addition to bolstering her defensive spell, it also boosted her courage.

For some reason, Katalina felt pressured by Tuan's attack-first-ask-questions-later attitude even though she hadn't fought him before.

Katalina also cursed Tuan's wife because she thought he was being so aggressive against women because of her.

Chapter 519 The Unwise Owl

Boom.

Katalina created a windshield in front of her as she looked up only for it to be met with a huge kinetic force generated by Tuan's attack. The windshield held on for a few moments. But that didn't prevent the shocks of impact from reaching the surroundings and eventually the ground on which the female close combat expert stood.

A distinct crater was formed with Katalina standing in the middle of it. When the dust settled she saw Tuan standing on top of her solidified windshield with a pair of swords in either hand.

Katalina's hand that she had used to support her windshield felt a bit heavy. Some of the pressure that Tuan's attack had generated found a way to affect her arm.

'Mo... monster!'

Katalina commented in her mind. But her actions didn't make it seem that she was overwhelmed by Tuan. She didn't get flustered and raised her other hand before speaking up.

"If you think that your mindless aggression can scare me, think again."

A bunch of wind element spikes grew from the shield and tried to attack Tuan only to see that it was his afterimage that they had struck. Katalina spread her mana sense and realized what she needed to do.

Clank!

A distinct metallic sound rang in the surroundings as Katalina's rapier was met with one of Tuan's swords. With his other weapon, the fire-element ranker tried to strike at his opponent's neck. There was no hesitation in his attack.

Suddenly, some more wind spikes grew from the ground itself and acted as a block in Tuan's attack path.

Tuan's other sword was met with the trunk of the wind spike that was broader from the bottom. By the time he ran his fire-element mana through his weapon and sliced through the block, Katalina retreated to a safe distance.

"Katalina is it? That was a smart move and use of spells. Mind listening to my advice?"

Tuan didn't approach Katalina immediately. After gripping his swords firmly, he lowered them in a relaxed manner before looking at the female close combat expert.

"What is it?"

While increasing her vigilance against Tuan, Katalina responded. The latter chuckled before speaking up.

"You said mindless aggression doesn't scare you, right? To be honest, that's exactly what a sane person should be scared of.

You don't realize how liberating it feels to experience 'mindless aggression'. One can get addicted. I know I can.

Hahahaha!

Then again, I get addicted to my vices easily. So there's nothing new about it. Hehehe!"

? ?? ??-?? ??? . ??? Katalina now truly believed Tuan's wife had hurt him on such a level that it had affected him as her husband and ranker as well. There were cases of rankers achieving extraordinary feats after suffering through tragedies after all.

His progressing further in his fire element attainment wouldn't come as a shock to anyone after knowing about his life experiences. That's because the way of the element was dependent on the ranker's emotions.

But that also meant that Tuan was mentally unstable during this period. He was talking about things that partially did make sense. But then he would wander off on a different tangent, making Katalina feel like she was hearing something random.

Katalina regretted engaging with such a time bomb this early in the competition. She also realized what Tuan was trying to say with his speech after looking him in the eyes. He was warning her that all his moves would resemble kamikaze attacks.

But it was too late. The die had already been cast. She couldn't back down and lose her image. That's because Katalina was sure that her fight with Tuan was going to be aired outside. They were possibly the only two fools who would engage with each other so soon.

Katalina took a deep breath and decided that it was her time to take the initiative. Untamed aggression is better handled with tamed aggression after all.

Katalina encircled Tuan using her movement spell and executed wind-blade slashes at him from all directions. This made Tuan jump in the air to avoid the flying blades without breaking a sweat. But Katalina had anticipated his exit strategy and was ready for his move.

Hoot!

A guttural mana beast sound was released in the surroundings as a large white owl was seen approaching Eren from above the skies. It agitated so much air with his flight that it created a wind pressure. The beast was a wind-element entity.

The beast's body was made of wind-element mana. It had a combined wingspan of about 6 meters. It had sharp black claws that were visible amid his porcelain white feathers. Its sharp blue eyes were locked on Tuan as he flew in his direction without any care in the world. It was as if Tuan was eager to be clawed by the bird.

'Heh! The lass relies on her beast contract spell. Normally, I would try to escape and deal with the rest of her traps. Too bad, I got to act my part.'

Tuan thought to himself and cast his go-to spell.

Katalina was preparing to meet with Tuan from the side with her wind blades ready to be released at a moment's notice. But to her surprise and delight, she found that Tuan didn't change his trajectory. He set out on his way to confront the contract beast.

But soon her expression turned grimacey. That's because she saw Tuan using his fire snakes as a lasso to grip her beast's legs just above its claws. He then used it as a hanger to swing away from his previous position.

Tuan was swung high in the air as a result of his creative use of the fire snakes. He was at a height that was unattainable with his movement-spell-powered jump. So he decided to make full use of it.

"Fire Wings!"

Before the beast could figure out what had happened to its prey, the unwise owl felt a strong force colliding against its back. All it could do was cry in pain as it approached the ground without any control over its flight.

Chapter 520 Anduril And Lnvi Blaze

Kieeee!

Katalina's contract beast released a shriek that didn't sound very owl-like. The fire-element mana of Tuan's meteor-like attack had struck the beast's back with such momentum and force that it crashed to the ground without making any attempts with its large wings to stabilize its flight.

Boom!

The beast landed on the same spot where Tuan had stood earlier. It had crashed right in the middle of a previously existing crater that had been made by Katalina's wind blades colliding against each other from multiple directions. That crater only widened after the fallen bird made contact with the ground.

Boom!

Another small crater was formed beside the crater made by the beast's fall. But unlike the beast, his attacker was seen standing upright when the dust settled. His swords drawn and his fire-element mana still circulating throughout his body. His large Fire Wings added another layer of intimidation to his image.

'This is... do all guys turn monsters after their girls ditch them?'

Katalina wondered as she saw Tuan while maintaining her distance from him. She felt her contract's beast's condition through her connection with it and found out that it wasn't doing well.

The owl's white feathers were burning. Tuan's fire element mana had penetrated his mana body and was affecting its foundation. It was corrupting the wind mana that was acting as the body's primal element.

"Tu... Tuan, can we talk?"

With stress lines visible on her forehead, Katalina asked. She would be foolish to engage with such a monster if the rewards were not worth the efforts. She wasn't even sure she could fight with the guy on equal grounds anymore.

Tuan didn't turn back. He stayed in his position only to see that Katalina had dispersed her beast contract spell. The beast was in pain. Such wounds on its mana body were going to affect its soul as well. So its master decided that there was no need to make those injuries more severe.

Katalina clenched her fists and spoke up.

"That drop. I give up my claim on it. In exchange for co-operation in raids. What... what do you think?"

Katalina couldn't back down without gaining anything in return due to her viewers watching her move. Furthermore, she could not continue battling with the maniac either. So, she decided to give up the claim on the reward to gain him as a raid partner. This way, her image won't be ruined.

"Hmm. That's a smart suggestion. I can't help but agree. Hehe!

But we'll talk later, miss. Let me get my reward first."

Tuan responded without giving the suggestion much of a thought. He then started walking in a particular direction without worrying about Katalina.

The latter felt a bit aggravated by the fact that she had to take a step back. But the next moment, she took a breath of relief at the fact that she didn't have to engage in confrontation with the fire monster in front of her.

Eren scanned the region with his mana sense and found an anomaly at a place which didn't generate any feedback for him. He walked towards that area and imbued his mana through the ground.

A pair of identical swords appeared out of thin air and were seen levitating in front of Tuan immediately after he did what he did. These were fire-element swords meant to be used by battle mages like Tuan's current fighting style. They supported close range as well as mid-range attacks.

The swords had an orange-yellow tint on them as if they had just come out of the smithy. It was as if yellow and orange fires had been condensed to make these swords. They had fire-element runes etched onto them close to the hilt that attested to their nearly flawless compatibility with anything that was related to fire.

The weapons had a simple hilt that offered an optimal grip. The crescent guard of each sword was inscribed with hybrid runes to make the sword lightweight.

These hybrid runes enabled the weapons to be used for close-quarters and mid-range combat. These runes alone made the weapons exceptionally exquisite.

Eren gripped both the swords in either of his hands and imbued them with his mana. Then he swung them a few times to get a better feel for them. He was immediately satisfied with the weapons. They seemed like the right match for him to carry out fire-element attacks.

'These blades are exceptionally lightweight despite the mana-influenced metal that is used in their construction. They are perfect for my close-combat moves. Plus, the spell that is inscribed onto them...'

Eren channelled his fire-element mana through the weapons and swung them to release the flying slashes at an empty area in front of him. Yet, he couldn't see anything but two blurred and hazy crescent-shaped lines travelling towards the ground.

Immediately afterwards the ground in front of Eren caught fire in a stretched X format. This was the effect of his weapons' slashes that he had performed just now. And yet, the slashes released by the weapons using fire-element mana were so compressed and un-mana-like that he could barely sense them.

The cut the swords had generated on the ground was exceptionally distinct even though Tuan had barely put any mana into them. Plus, the fire ignited by fire-element mana had the property of accelerated burning. It meant that the attacks would inflict more damage over time in a short span.

'Hehe! This is like me trying to copy Al's attacks. Real or fake, it doesn't matter if the results are the same.'

In any case, they sure are keepers. I'll let Tuan announce that he had gifted these blades to me.'

The butcher said to himself and swung his weapons a few more times and used the inscribed spell some more. He named the spell Invi Blaze because of its effects.

His excitement for the weapons was natural. He hadn't wielded elemental weapons of such quality in his previous life.

Plus, the butcher now had two sets of weapons for his two elements. And both weapons had their own spells inscribed on them. The butcher would have never thought that he would be able to diversify his attacks so much in this timeline in such a short time.

Tuan kept the weapons in his storage after playing with them a few more times. He couldn't help carrying a cheerful glee on his face. Coming from a guy like him, it looked downright maniacal.

? ?? ??-?? ??? . ??? Anduril.

That's what he had named his new set of weapons.