

Chapter 401 By The Nose

"Also, remember, as more time passes, the speed at which the balls are projected at you increases. Not only that, if you last long enough, from a certain point onwards, the number of balls hurled and curled in your direction also increases. I guess that should right about sum up everything you need to know and will really be of any concern to you." Finalizing his elaboration, he called up, "First participant, Lydia Ross, step forward."

"Yes." Coming forward, Lydia couldn't help but question warily, "But... Mr. invigilator, won't I get hurt if I'm hit with those baseballs?"

"Hahaha... don't worry, all of the balls were made using a special type of softer material which won't harm your body easily until a certain limit in time is reached where the speed will be too fast which would make even the special soft baseball dangerous. Furthermore, from that point onwards, with each passing second, the danger level increases respectively."

Not stopping there, he shed light on the matter more, "Anyway, that danger point starts from the fourth minutes onwards. Before that, there's no need for you to be worried about your safety."

"But-" Even more anxious now, Lydia was about to say something only to be interrupted before she could even start.

"Hahaha, as I said, don't be afraid, I'm quite confident none of you would be able to get that far without breaking into a sweat."

Nodding in some relief, at last, Lydia no longer hesitated before entering the glassy dome.

Sometime later, she was in the process of awkwardly dodging the baseballs that were being pitched at her from all directions. Unfortunately, before long, a ball hit her.

"56 seconds, you barely pass as one star. You need to work on your speed and capability of dodging, Lydia. Only having a killer spit won't do shit in the real battleground. I mean, if you're like this... before you even have the chance to spit on your enemies, the monsters, you'd be dead thousand times over and over again." Shaking his head, the invigilator advised the young girl to train a lot more so as to cover the shortcomings of her trait.

In truth, in the real world, Lydia could not even be eligible to be given 'barely one star'. It was just that the examination standards were rather easy-going against the newcomers.

"Yes, mister." A little disheartened, Lydia retreated.

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"Next, Abby Wu."

Soon, as the Asian temptress walked into the room, she started darting around as numerous balls missed her body. In fact, she wasn't that fast really, it was just that her footwork was extremely good and therefore, she was able to evade the balls with the minimum amount of movement.

Still, less than two minutes later, the hardballs became too quick for her to evade, at that time, just as everyone was thinking she was about to get hit, suddenly, taking out her handgun from its holster, she took a shot at the incoming balls that was about to hit her, therefore successfully blasting them away as they missed her.

In this way, she was able to keep herself from getting hit several times. But in the end, that method just wasn't efficient enough as a ball finally connected to her body.

"Abby Wu, two minutes and forty-five seconds. I would say you're almost at the peak of one-star. Still, whether it's barely one star or peak one star, notwithstanding, it merely counts as one star. So, we can even say there's no difference between yours and Lydia's grade in this test."

Noticing Abby seemingly hurt by his claim, as a word of comfort, he also added while nodding, "Anyway, good job, you just need to continue training and persisting through and you'd be able to attain two-stars before long." He was indeed more satisfied with her compared to Lydia.

Afterward, not dilly-dallying about the useless stuff, he went on to address the following candidate.

"Damian Cline, it's your turn."

"Yes! But before I start, can I ask something too?" Confirming the call, Damian queried.

"Go ahead."

"Um, can you please tell me the timing required for each star?"

"Hmm... of course, even though that's been already printed within the guide booklet, I'll repeat it again so listen well. You see, if you last between 55 seconds to 3 minutes you will get a single star, If you remain in the room between three minutes to six minutes without being hit, you will be considered to have earned two-stars. Anyway, the list goes on like this, with each advancement in star covering the next following three minutes."

"Oh, got it, appreciate the clarification." Saying this, Damian ran into the glass room at once.

Regrettably, though, he soon walked out of the glassy area with his head lowered and dispirited.

"29 seconds. Sigh, you're not eligible enough to even get a single star. Unfortunately, I would have to ask you to leave this area and try again later when you're faster." Announced the invigilator with some traces of pity apparent in his tone.

Left with no other options, the iron leg, Damian Cline, could only leave. Fortunately, before he could leave the Abnormals Association's building, a representative showed up before him and told him he would like to make an invitation to their guild. He was being scouted as a potential Guardian member.

With that, a happy grin formed on Damian's face as he left with the man. Now that he had the support of a guild, as long as his speed progresses, he was sure to get another chance at the examination.

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Subsequently, Ismail Archer also went through the test. Fortunately, he was able to heave a sigh of relief since he was able to narrowly get a single star and move on to the next test, just like Lydia.

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"Anastasia Foster." Called the man in charge of the testing.

Once again, as quiet as ever, the silent beauty ambled into the room as she began her dance of evasion.

Chapter 402 A Gaze Full of Meaning

While everyone persevered in watching her dance in awe, for nearly an entire two minutes, Anastasia was able to evade every incoming ball while utilizing nothing but her maneuver technique and body alone.

However, at this time, the speed escalated once again as a type of ball that she was definitely not going to be able to dodge was shot in her direction.

Thereupon, just as everyone was thinking the test of speed was going to be over for her soon, abruptly, both her legs and eyes were set aflame as they were instantly covered in the previous scarlet-red flames.

Thenceforward, she once again earned her momentum as she was easily able to dodge the baseballs without any difficulties. And looking at her relaxed face, everyone got this weird vibe as if she was casually taking a walk in the park.

"S-she... that red flame-like stuff coating her eyes and legs... doesn't... doesn't she look somewhat similar to those special types of red flame-armored monsters right now?" As Abby uttered this in absolute shock and dismay, the same feeling promptly transferred to the rest of the candidates and even the invigilator himself.

"S-she... her trait is similar to those monsters? How can this be?" He uttered. He also simultaneously decided. 'I... I need to report this to the higher-ups. This could be crucial information.'

Meanwhile, from the moment Anastasia's eyes and legs were shrouded in that scarlet flame-stuff, an incomprehensible shine traveled through Virus' eyes as he concluded, 'So previously I wasn't mistaken when I saw her arms covered in that strange fire... her trait is indeed very similar to those monsters coated in red flame-like matters, the monsters that possess the Red-Crystals in themselves.'

In the meantime, not paying any heed to the visible perturbation within everyone's eyes, Anastasia continued dancing and avoiding the balls, and before soon, the three minutes mark was broken through by her.

"Ah, she can already get two stars!" Exclaimed Abby. Clearly, a hint of jealousy was apparent within her tone.

Regardless, the second the three minutes count was over, the number of balls sent at the same time also started growing.

When the timer surpassed three minutes and a half, the number of balls increased to five as their speed also nearly doubled in a few seconds! Still, it didn't seem like Anastasia was feeling any pressure from any of this as she continued dodging.

When the timer hit three minutes and forty-five seconds, the number of balls once again increased to seven! Naturally, the speed also began increasing!

Finally, at this point, some traces of struggle became apparent on Anastasia's face. She was, at last, starting to feel the tension around herself.

Nevertheless, the timer soon hit four minutes!

At that moment, the number of balls instantly increased to ten as once again their speed increased to twice that of before. From this moment onward, each ball would have the capability of harming people!

Despite all of this, however, Anastasia proceeded to evade the balls while gradually, sweat was obviously pouring down her nice face.

After that, when the concurrent number of balls had just reached fourteen and the timer had struck five minutes, an even more horrifying growth in speed was felt.

It was precisely in that fraction of a second when Anastasia's eyes were no longer able to follow the balls as a few of them promptly connected to her body!

Crack~ CRACK!

"STOP THE BALLS!" Yelled the invigilator in horror as he shot into the dome the following instant. Next, examining Anastasia's current condition, his face went a little pale as he murmured, "A few of her bones must've been broken."

'How is she still refusing to talk or growl in pain... only her face seems to be screaming in pain with its contortion...' This useless notion also flickered past the invigilator's mind.

Afterward, he didn't hesitate to press the emergency button.

One of the reasons why the Guardian Examination was so expensive is the need to hire the necessary professional Guardians in order to oversee the tests. And naturally one of the hired Guardians would have to have the ability to heal the candidates in case something dangerous happened.

Thus, the moment the invigilator had noticed the injury on Anastasia's figure, he had not hesitated at all to call the respective healer over.

Subsequently, not even a single minute had passed, when a Guardian came running as she began the process of healing immediately.

Amazingly, before long, Anastasia was once again as good as new. The only noticeable change in her appearance was the fact that she looked somewhat pale now.

'Hmm, this woman must be a top-ranked healer for her to be even able to heal her broken bones in a matter of minutes.' Just as Virus thought this, the healer lady began talking as she warned Anastasia, "Try to rest as much as possible. My Trait is only able to use your own blood in order to mend your wounds and broken bones, so you should be somewhat experiencing blood loss within your body at the moment."

After carefully listening to the healer's advice, although she still didn't open her mouth to utter a word, a startlingly moving smile took shape on Anastasia's face. That smile was directed at the healer.

'Is this her way of saying thanks?' Feeling amused at her smile which she could only call heavenly, the woman didn't delay responding, "You're welcome. But seriously, you should smile more, it's too beautiful."

With that, after telling the invigilator to not hesitate to summon her when someone got hurt, the lady vanished somewhere.

After watching the kind lady disappear, abruptly, Anastasia began staring at the invigilator without mouthing anything in return.

Being under her persistent gaze which seemed to be requesting something of him, the invigilator broke out in cold sweats.

"I... are you trying to tell me something?" Asked the confused man. He was indeed lost at what to do. Everyone else was feeling the same way.

Luckily, just as he was no longer able to tolerate that intense gaze of hers, one of the candidates, Victor Goodwin to be precise, saved him, "Sigh, she's telling you to confirm her grade. Why do you keep forgetting that, man."

Finally realizing the meaning behind those eyes, breaking into laughter, he announced, "O-oh, hahaha... yes, yes, yes, sorry about that. You get two stars! Congratulations, you're the best so far!"

Chapter 403 Some Challenge Perhaps?

"Victor Goodwin, go."

Finally being called, everyone was expecting Virus to obediently step forward and enter the room. However, against everyone's anticipation, he turned toward the invigilator instead and said, "Your Trait... this Test of Speed must be a specialty of yours due to your sensory trait, right?"

Feeling slightly surprised at first, a chuckle formed on the invigilator's face before he admitted, "That's right, but what are you trying to imply here?"

"Oh, nothing much, just that I would love to see you demonstrating how the Test of Speed is truly done. An enlightening show that would teach us a valuable lesson. So what do you say, Mr. invigilator?" One large smirk was now clear for everyone to see on Victor's face.

Immediately, a realization struck the candidates as they began demanding very persistently.

"Oh, right! Mister, you must be very good at this! Come on! Come on! You must show us!" Said Lydia with high expectations forming within her heart.

"Victor's right, mister, you have got to prove to us how this test's truly done!" Abby Wu was also fuming in elation.

"Yes, yes, yes!" Hyped as well, Ismail Archer urged the man, "You must be great at this... we want to see it! Come on."

'You guys want to see the true gap between an expert Guardian like me and amateur Guardians like yourselves, huh?' Being surrounded by these brats which kept insisting on him displaying his skills, an amused grin formed on the invigilator's face too as he decided, 'Fine, I'll make you guys experience the great disparity between us. May it be an eye-opener for you.'

With that, throwing a brief glance at everyone's face, he declared, "Alright."

Next, he didn't hesitate to enter the dome as the game of evasion began.

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"Um, why is the overseer entering the dome?" Within the spectator's area, the representative lady from the Weapon Stars queried.

For a few seconds after that, every representative's focus was concentrated outside, until, the handsome old man replied at last, "He's going to show off to the kids."

"Oh, I see... this should be a bit interesting."

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After entering, predictably, for the next three minutes, the invigilator began walking around while evading the balls casually. Amazingly though, he always happened to be exactly at the places that no balls were going to hit.

"Ah, how is he doing that?" Thunderstruck by the show, Lydia was the only one to express her failure in comprehending the complexity of the situation.

And to that, Victor's clear answer resounded, "It's easy really if you think about it. He's merely sensing the balls the moment they are about to be thrown. And knowing where they're going to be, he simply avoids those locations."

"Ah, that's what I thought too! But to be able to actually do that... Mr. invigilator's truly awesome!" Abby praised.

Subsequently, as the clock hit four minutes, going against ten super fast balls, the invigilator's eyebrows finally started to turn sharper. It was obvious he was getting more serious now.

Still, being the professional Guardian he was, and more importantly, since his Trait was extremely relevant to this very test, he was able to continue without any issues.

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Five minutes!

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And even six minutes!

"AH! He's already within the domain of three stars for this particular test!!! Simply legendary!" Exclaimed Ismail with his eyes wide open. Just a minute ago, he was wondering how anyone would be able to exceed four minutes, that it was impossible to surpass four minutes. But now, that exact person had shown itself before him. Not only that, but the person also had far exceeded his expectations!

Afterward, the invigilator was still able to keep going for around thirty seconds. Unfortunately, he wasn't able to keep that up for much longer as he finally reached the absolute limit of his toleration as he promptly stopped the test.

Six minutes and fifty-three seconds!

That was the time the invigilator had lasted within the dome of speed.

Clap~ Clap~ Clap~

Applauding the man, Virus complimented him, "Bravo! Since from the sixth to the ninth minute is considered a three-stars mark, you should be somewhere in the middle of three-stars. Good."

Although he was saying this, however, internally, Virus couldn't help but admit he was somewhat disappointed. He was expecting some type of challenge from this man. A type of challenge that even he himself might not be able to outshine without getting serious first.

Regrettably, the man was still too raw and that did not happen.

"Hahaha... well, as long as it was helpful to you guys." A rain of sweat pouring down his face, the invigilator was exuding a teacher-like air from himself.

Seeing this, Virus 'nearly' felt bad about what was going to happen next.

Alas, 'nearly feeling bad' wasn't actually 'feeling bad'. Therefore, he still entered the dome of speed as the timer went in motion once more.

For the first three minutes, Virus was running around dodging the incoming baseballs in a very awkward and disgraceful manner.

His movements were so awkward and stiff that the others were starting to think it was a miracle he was still within the ring!

It was to the point that the candidates had already lost the count of the times the balls had barely gone past him while almost hitting him.

"Wow, he sucks at this, but he was somewhat able to last until now." Feeling ridiculous about the whole situation, Ismail Archer admitted.

"Let's just watch for now. Even if it's pure luck, he's doing a great job lasting in there." This was Abby Wu defending him. Even though she didn't believe Victor was truly capable of actually persisting this long, she still appreciated his luck.

03:56

At this point, since a new phase of assault was about to begin, the pitchings paused briefly.

03:57

And simultaneously with it, all of a sudden, in the middle of the dome, Virus stopped along with it.

03:58

"Eh, why did he stop moving all of a sudden? Did he give up perhaps? Is he paralyzed?" Full of doubt, feeling absurd, Ismail questioned.

Chapter 404 Monstrous

"Hmm, that's probably the case, he gave up. He's one to know his limits. Honestly, it'd be a lie if I said I didn't see this coming." Shaking his head, the invigilator shared the same opinion.

03:59

'But why isn't he telling me to stop the test? I'm not really allowed to stop the process without the participant's permission. Either that... or the balls needs to hit him.'

04:00

Swish! A ball went past Virus's face, yet he didn't even flinch.

"Ahhh... why isn't he moving! The ball's about to hit him!" Screamed Abby in horror. She was truly afraid for him now.

'Ah, there's no way he'd be able to dodge the next ball now!' Calculated the invigilator after sensing the next incoming hardball. He knew it was too late to even try now.

And indeed, just as he had sensed and predicted, from one of the pitching machines, a ball that was sure to hit him was released as it got closer and closer to his current position. In fact, everyone was still hoping that, in order to try evading the balls, Victor might start running around again.

However, against everyone's expectations, the baseball continued drawing near his figure while he remained unfazed, refusing to move. But that was only the case until at last, when the hardball was just a few inches away from him, while everyone was thinking along the lines of, 'he's done for', 'this is over', or 'he's being silly', he actually moved!

No, in fact, it wasn't correct to say that he moved. The right description would be to say that only the upper half of his body slightly leaned forward while the rest of his figure was still nailed to his last known location.

Fwish!

Instantly, with the gap of a single inch, the ball went past him.

"..."

"..."

"..."

...

Nearly everyone's eyes were gaping now. They were beyond speechless at this point.

"He... actually dodged?" Murmured the invigilator briefly. Of course, that was followed by another notion, 'No, the fact is, he was lucky that only one of the ten balls shot in his direction. He won't get that fortunate with the next wave of balls.'

Precisely at that second, the next wave of ten balls hurled from their respective machines.

'Seven of them are rushing toward his current position! This time, it's unmistakably over.' Calculated the overseer once again.

Meanwhile, sensing the incoming balls from seven different trajectories, a distinct grin formed on Virus's face. Subsequently, his body promptly took a very bizarre yet robotic posture while he remained in that pose.

Swish! Swish! Fwish! Phwish! Swish!...

Following that, much to the stupefaction of everyone, not a single ball actually connected to his body.

"W-what?! H-how?"

"Am I seeing this?"

"Urgh, is this even something a human being is able to do?"

"What... the... fuck!"

The candidates were rubbing their eyes while trying their best to snap out of this scene which felt like a dream to them.

Anyone could hardly believe he had actually dodged every seven balls in that weird position without even moving!

No one could even understand how he had done that in the first place. It just didn't make any sense.

Nonetheless, the dome wasn't going to wait for anyone to snap out of their shocked state as it continued shooting more balls at Virus as the timer continued increasing.

Meanwhile, in the middle of the dome, a man was seen making very awkward poses at nearly every second before it was followed by tens of balls going past him.

Nearly everyone had long lost their bearings while watching Virus' weird motionless movements. Of course, that was the case until Lydia finally checked the timer as she exclaimed in disbelief, "T-the timer... the timer's at seven minutes already! He's even surpassed the invigilator now! T-three stars..."

Just as to prove them that wasn't enough, Victor continued enduring within the ring until the time finally arrived at the eighth minute.

The 8th minute!

By now, the number of balls thrown at the same time had already surpassed twenty while only the word 'terrifying' could describe their speed and momentum.

However, none of these mattered. What mattered was the fact that when the timer reached the 8th minute, even a more startling change took place!

Swish! Swish!...

As the twenty balls were darted at Victor, everyone noticed that each ball was now moving in various ways!

While some were curving, some were spiraling, twisting, coiling, arching, or still moving in a straight line.

However, what was even more disturbing was the fact that Victor still managed to evade them!!!

"AH!... He..."

Not only was everyone feeling beyond dumbfounded at this point. The look in their eyes was as if they were staring at a monster!

"H-he's a monster! No, a demon! How can he still do that?" Lydia's figure was shivering as she refused to even blink, afraid she might lose the sight of this mighty monster.

In fact, even Anastasia's eyes were gleaming somewhat as Virus's figure was being reflected with her bright eyes. She seemed impressed.

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After that, a minute passed. Although it was just a simple minute, to all the bystanders, it felt like a very long time before the minute was gone indeed.

"Four stars!!!" Gasping sounds could be heard roaming around the representatives' area.

In the meantime, some droplets of sweat were rolling down the invigilator's face as he felt ridiculous about the entire situation. 'I can't believe I tried showing off in front of this monster... he's... he's something else. Even I, with my sensory trait, still can't do this... but he... oh, wait, could he possess an even stronger sensory trait than mine? No, no, no... that's impossible, if that was it, his body wouldn't be that strong! His trait definitely has something to do with strength and muscle.'

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Finally, as if he had suddenly lost all interest, now that he had achieved four stars, Virus signaled the overseer to stop the test.

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Chapter 405 Convention

Meanwhile, in Shanghai's Abnormals Association, a jaw-dropping scene was taking place.

At this moment, the clock hand was already on the fourth minute, but within the dome of speed, Hu Yuexin was still dancing around like a star.

"W-what, how can she have such movements full of grace and beauty?! It's as if she's trained in her footwork since she was in her mother's womb. No, I don't believe even that long would make someone so skillful in this. Hmm... maybe I'm looking at this the wrong way, maybe that's a movement technique she has inherited from an expert?" The overseer mouthed much to his own disbelief. He just couldn't understand how Hu Yuexin's movement could be so honed.

In fact, Hu Yuexin's movements were so sharpened and full of mastery that, utilizing the current absolute limitations placed on her weak body, she was evading every ball. One could easily tell that there were no extra movements made anywhere in her body. Every muscle that changed its position in any manner was due to a certain goal and purpose.

This procedure went on until the clock reached the sixth minute. Deducing from the perspiration covering her forehead, it was clear this was the current limit of her body even with that abnormal evasion technique of hers!

Therefore, she didn't hesitate to forfeit from proceeding any longer, "Stop it. I'm done."

"Y-yes, t-three stars! Congratulations!" The overseer confirmed.

"What's the next test?" Totally expressionless, Hu Yuexin inquired. Looking at her face, no one could detect any traces of joy from her after earning that kind of stunning grade. It was as if it didn't matter to her in the least. A matter that didn't worth mentioning.

"Huh? O-oh, yeah. The next test is the Test of Defense. Let's go."

Meanwhile, somewhere on the planet, a secret gathering was taking place.

This secret gathering was an extremely confidential meeting that possibly had to do with the future of Earth. A convention that may just lead to the decision of the next step of humanity in facing the rifts.

The participants and guests in this assembly consisted of the leaders of each of the Abnormals Association around the globe who had come to represent their own nation.

"It's indeed a fact that the planet can't go on like this anymore! The monsters of the rift keep getting stronger at a rapid pace, to the point that the humans are falling behind in this race of power and retaliation!" One of the leaders sitting in the conference room, the leader of Korea's Abnormals Association to be more exact, mouthed into her microphone.

"We need to think of something! Our defense lines are now too weak against them! If things continue like this, in a decade at most, every city and nation around the planet may as well fall! That would mean we would truly enter an apocalyptic era of chaos and disorder! We cannot let that happen!" The same person, Jang Mirae, announced to everyone present today. Her tone was very grave.

Next, it was the turn of the head of the Abnormals Association of China to talk, "Even though I would hate to admit it, miss Jang Mirae is right. We are experiencing millions of deaths and with each breakout, in case the rift happens to be around the vicinity of a city, we might even lose tens of hundreds of buildings along with it. Before this, we could've at least prevented that since the monsters weren't too strong. But all of a sudden, they turned too strong for us to handle them all."

"Everyone... Everyone! I hear what you're all saying and I agree with most of your words... but, what are you suggesting for us to do? What 'can' we even do? I mean... sure, we need to stop them... but how?" This was the leader of the Abnormals Association in France, lady Lia Duffy's voice.

"That's why we're here today, are we not? Let's just come up with a solution! Everyone, please don't keep any ideas or suggestions to yourselves." Taking a glimpse of the leaders' faces, Jang Mirae said.

In reality, prior to the meeting, every leader of the respective Abnormals Associations was already secretly informed of the subject they were going to be discussing today. Therefore, nearly all of them had done their own researches as they had also talked to their relevant professional teams.

And today, they were, at last, going to hear each other's solutions before choosing the best one amongst them all.

Thus, as the period of dumping ideas began, it was actually England's representative, Luis Short, who stood up first and started pouring the solution his own nation had come up with, "I say we concentrate all of the procured Red-Crystals on a select few Guardians with potential. Like this, the pace of progression would pick up as we would be able to dispatch them to the relevant rifts before their breakout. This is the idea my side came up with and I think it is indeed a wise answer to our problem."

"..." For a brief duration, quietness descended upon the conference hall as everyone began contemplating on the topic. Of course, it didn't take long before the head of the Abnormal Association of Korea, Jang Mirae, refuted the suggestion, "No, I don't think

that's a wise decision. If we do that, the weaker Guardians or those who were left out would feel greatly wronged, which might just as well lead to even bigger chaos. If the Abnormal population turns against us, not only would we have to retaliate against the rift, but also our own people. Sure, that might work for a short while, but in the long run, it would be catastrophic and poisonous."

"Hmm, yes, miss Mirae's correct." Several people soon came to defend her rejection.

Next, it was Russia's turn to throw its proposition into the ring, "I say, everyone, we could just enforce an even harsher mandatory law of summoning on the Guardians. Like this, at the time of breakout, we can forcefully summon many Guardian teams to each rift. Like this, we would be able to handle the beasts with numbers! What do you say?"

This time, however, there was to delay whatsoever before someone rejected the offer.

"I don't think that's rational either. Even now, with our rather light mandatory summoning rules, we are dealing with a lot of dissatisfaction amongst the Guardians. So just imagine us making them even tighter... not only would doing that result in even more unhappiness, but it will also wear our Guardians out pretty quickly, now let's not talk about the heavy pressure that we'll be putting on them by dispatching them day and night."

Not pausing there, he went ahead, "So, yeah! I definitely disagree with such a preposterous idea which would clearly lead to an even more grave and serious problem in the future." The person who had rejected Russia's proposition this time, was the person who hadn't opened his mouth at all up to this point, the boss of the Abnormals Association of the United States of America, Arron Cameron.

Ticked at once, the Russian leader phrased while frowning, "You...! If not the previous offer... and if not this one, then what? We gotta do something, right? Or could it be you have a better idea?" He was clearly very annoyed.

"..." After a brief gaze full of silence, the American boss only uttered a single adage in return, "The best defense is a good offense."

Chapter 406 GUARDIAN LICENSE

Moving on to the Test of Defense, Lydia, Abby Wu, and Ismail Archer were barely able to score a single star. Still, at the end of each of their tests, all over their bodies had become black and blue. It was obvious they had hardly earned this score by pushing themselves beyond the current limit of their fragile defense.

Then, it was Anastasia Foster's turn.

As she ambled before a professional Guardian, the Guardian picked up a wooden baseball bat as he was about to smash it against her figure.

Just before that could happen, however, Anastasia's entire figure was once again covered in red flame-like Trait of hers. But this time, unlike the previous tests, the fire was distributed all across her body. It was nearly covering everywhere, only, it was more concentrated on her torso now.

Bam!

As the baseball bat hit her chest, it shattered into many pieces instantly. Not stopping there, the hired professional guardian picked up an even more solid baseball bat as he targeted the trunk of her physique next.

It was clear that there were no traces of mercy within the guardian's eyes since until the candidate gives in or faints, this process needed to continue, with the baseball bat getting more lethal and unbreakable at each level.

At the end, when Anastasia, at last, reached the current limit of her defense, she signaled the guardian to stop.

"Anastasia Foster, barely three stars! Extraordinary!" Said the invigilator while nodding repeatedly. He could only imagine the bright future that lay ahead of this particular beauty.

"Victor Goodwin, go ahead."

Subsequently, everyone could see Virus's figure being constantly bombarded by various baseball bats which were replaced by an even more firm and solidified stick each time it broke apart.

What once again shocked the bystanders, however, was the fact that he casually stood against these barrage of attacks while maintaining an expressionless face. It was as if he didn't feel any pain whatsoever.

What startled them, even more, was that although he hadn't shown any type of trait, his body alone was able to withstand those terrifying assaults.

The only conclusion the spectators could reach from this was that Virus' trait was already being utilized, it's just that they could not see or perceive it.

Afterward, when a baseball bat of certain threshold shattered apart, Virus finally told the guardian to end the test.

Immediately, the invigilator's trembling voice was heard as he announced, "Victor Goodwin... f-four stars again!"

"Fuck. He's a monster indeed. There's no doubt about it! I've never heard of any abnormal who was this strong from the start." One of the representatives exclaimed in frustration and astoundment.

"Damn, if he wanted, he could've been even able to pick the Defense or Speed-type evaluations since it wouldn't have made much of a difference! The only word I can describe him with is an all-round Guardian who excels in all three of the basic attributes!"

...

"So the last test for the offense-type applicants ended like this. We should hurry and try snatching one of these candidates before moving on to the evaluation test of support-type candidates which will begin in an hour." One of the representatives advised his assistant who had tagged along with him.

"Eh, isn't there also the Test of Support?" Baffled, the assistant who was just a newbie when it came to the matters of the Guardian's Examination inquired.

"Of course not, that test will only exist for the support-type applicants. The offense, speed, and defense types are exempted from taking that test." The representative explained patiently.

In fact, at the time of signing up and filling the form of the application of Guardian's License, one would be required to choose between [Offense-type], [Speed-type], [Defense-type], and [Support-type] traits.

The only difference between the four was their main focus on the various tests.

For example, for the offense-type applicants, the main focus would be on the Test of Power and measuring the extent of the power of their Trait in this particular field. And as for the rest of the tests, i.e., the test of speed and defense, the examinee would only be required to acquire the bare minimum score.

The same situation applied to other types of examinations. I.e., for Speed-type candidates, the test mainly revolved around the Test of Speed and for the Defense-type, the evaluation naturally focused on the Test of Defense.

The only group that differed somewhat were the Support-type abnormals who only went through the Test of Support as there were no Test of Power, Test of Speed, nor Test of Defense for them to participate in and pass successfully.

And going back to the time Virus had filled the form, he had naturally chosen the offense-type evaluation.

"Congratulations to all five of you. From this day onwards, you'll be Guardians of Earth." Chuckling at the five people in front of him, the invigilator announced before adding, "Now, all of you need to go to room number five in order to receive your Licenses."

...

As the five walked into the guided room, each of them was asked a couple of crucial questions before they were requested to install a certain mobile application on their phones.

Guardian App!

That was the name of the program.

Notwithstanding, after entering the app and entering their unique username and password, a basic page revealed itself in front of each of them.

...

『GUARDIAN LICENSE』

\u003cIDENTITY: Abby Wu (Show/Hide)\u003e

\u003c GUARDIAN TITLE: The Assassin\u003e

\u003cTRAIT: Gun Transformation\u003e

[POWER]: ★★☆☆☆ (2)

[SPEED]: ★☆☆☆☆ (1)

[DEFENSE]: ★☆☆☆☆ (1)

[EXPERIENCE]: ☆☆☆☆☆ (0)

...

『GUARDIAN LICENSE』

\u003cIDENTITY: Lydia Ross (Show/Hide)\u003e

\u003c GUARDIAN TITLE: Spit Killer\u003e

\u003cTRAIT: Spit Bomb\u003e

[POWER]: ★★☆☆☆ (2)

[SPEED]: ★☆☆☆☆ (1)

[DEFENSE]: ★☆☆☆☆ (1)

[EXPERIENCE]: ☆☆☆☆☆ (0)

...

『GUARDIAN LICENSE』

\u003cIDENTITY: Ismail Archer (Show/Hide)\u003e

\u003c GUARDIAN TITLE: Archer\u003e

\u003cTRAIT: Light Arrow\u003e

[POWER]: ★★☆☆☆ (2)

[SPEED]: ★☆☆☆☆ (1)

[DEFENSE]: ★☆☆☆☆ (1)

[EXPERIENCE]: ☆☆☆☆☆ (0)

...

『GUARDIAN LICENSE』

\u003cIDENTITY: Anastasia Foster (Show/Hide)\u003e

\u003c GUARDIAN TITLE: Spirit Warrior\u003e

\u003cTRAIT: Beast Flame\u003e

[POWER]: ★★★☆☆ (3)

[SPEED]: ★★☆☆☆ (2)

[DEFENSE]: ★★★☆☆ (3)

[EXPERIENCE]: ☆☆☆☆☆ (0)

...

『GUARDIAN LICENSE』

\u003cIDENTITY: Victor Goodwin (Show/Hide)\u003e

\u003cGUARDIAN TITLE: DS (Abbreviation)\u003e

\u003cTRAIT: Body Enhancement\u003e

[POWER]: ★★★★★☆ (4)

[SPEED]: ★★★★★☆ (4)

[DEFENSE]: ★★★★★☆ (4)

[EXPERIENCE]: ☆☆☆☆☆ (0)

Chapter 407 Lydia's Resolve

Looking at the red screen on his phone, Virus smirked. When he was previously asked what he wanted to choose for his Guardian Title, he had not hesitated to leave that spot empty for the moment. Instead, after learning a Guardian could also pick and display the abbreviation of his title, he had conveniently filled it with two letters, DS.

He was, of course, questioned as to what that meant, but his only response to that was, "You'll probably know in the future."

To this ridiculous answer of his, of course, the person in charge felt like cursing for the rest of the day. Nonetheless, understanding he had no intention of wanting to reveal it as of yet, that person could only give up.

'Huh, so this is the so-called Guardian License...' Having already achieved the purpose of his presence here, turning around, he was just about to leave when a familiar person blocked his path.

"Eh, what is it?" Gazing into the eyes of the Asian temptress in front of him in some amusement, Virus queried.

"Um, we all want to go out and celebrate passing the exam and receiving our Guardian License... even Anastasia accepted the invitation with a nod... s-so..." By the end of her sentence, being under the pressure of his gaze, a slight blush sat on Abby's face.

"Oh, I see... and how are you guys gonna celebrate exactly." Exhibiting a half-smile, Victor opened his mouth.

"W-we, we want to go to a coffee shop."

"Sure, let's go." Thinking enjoying his time a little wouldn't be bad, Virus decided to tag along.

...

Following that, as the five were about to leave the Abnormals Association, many representatives stormed at them before supplying them with their various contact information.

"Don't forget to call me, our guild will be offering you the best conditions! I guarantee you that."

"No, call me... our guild will agree to any conditions you have!"

While Abby, Lydia, and Ismail were swarmed by nearly everyone, surprisingly, no one tried approaching Victor and Anastasia. It was as if the two were a dangerous dragon's reverse scale which needed to be avoided at all costs.

Of course, it didn't take long before three figures ambled before the two and introduced themselves.

"Hello, I'm the representative from the Dominators, I would like to extend a special invitation to both of you. I can assure you the Dominators will treat you the best!" Pushing back his spectacles, the man offered a gold card to both Virus and Anastasia.

"Haha, now, now, you're clearly exaggerating here, young man. How can the Dominators treat him the best when the Guardians of America is here." A beguiling old man also extended another gold business card at the two while laughing at the other man's folly.

"Although the two of you don't have weapon-related traits, if you two wield a weapon, I'm positive both of you would turn into even more horrifying monsters! Please join our Weapon Stars guild. We'll be offering you both the absolute top conditions!" The third person who happened to be a woman also threw the bait.

Subsequently, the trio started passionately gazing at the two, waiting for them to make a decision before following them to their bases.

In spite of understanding their rush, however, Virus merely accepted the cards and replied, "As you can see, the five of us are going outside to celebrate first, but please be rest assured that we'll be contacting you when we make a decision." With that, abruptly grabbing Anastasia's startled hand, they vanished from the sight of the representatives.

Watching this wise move from Victor, a realization hit the other three newly promoted Guardians as they decided too, 'Hmm, so, we should accept all the cards for now and then call them one by one later and just select the Guild that offers us the best conditions, huh? Smart move!'

Soon, the trio Guardians also followed after Victor and Anastasia, trying to catch up to them.

...

"What are your orders, dear customers?" Standing in front of the five guests, the waiter asked politely.

"Cappuccino."

"Decaf."

"..."

"Chai."

...

"So guys, what are your plans from now on?" Thinking about the numerous cards she had received, Lydia was the first one to initiate the conversation. She also stole a glance at Victor and Anastasia, the strongest candidates in this round of examinations.

"Ah, honestly, I mainly became a Guardian because of its good pay. I wanna live as a rich man. So... I guess I'll be joining one of the better guilds first and then try some of the weaker rifts with a group." Ismail was the first one to respond.

"I see... what about you, Abby?" Curious, Lydia inspected.

"I..." Unfortunately, after uttering that, Abby simply dropped her head downward and no longer raised it. It seemed she had her own difficulties.

"U-uh, what about you, Anastasia?" Noticing that she'd probed about something that perhaps she shouldn't have, Lydia was quick to change her target.

"..."

As expected, she was only faced with a hilarious silence this time. 'I wonder if she can even talk...'

Feeling even more awkward now, she promptly drifted to another target once again, "W-what about you, Victor?"

"Me?" Taking a sip of his delicious Chai, a mischievous smile covered the corners of Victor's lips as he answered, "Hmm, probably gonna be reserving a rift or two and try hunting some monsters for a Netflix and grill."

"..."

'Who can even be so carefree about a fucking rift!!!' By this point, beads of sweat were rolling down Lydia's face. She felt speechless at these two weirdos who happened to be the strongest of this batch of Guardians.

"What about you yourself, Lydia?" Victor didn't forget to return the question either.

"Me? Hmm, I'm probably gonna be joining the Dominators. That spectacles dude gave me a card so..." Although her words seemed a little hesitant, Virus could detect a very strong resolve within Lydia's eyes.

"Huh? Why Dominators? Did he offer you better terms compared to the other guilds?" A little interested, Victor tried getting to the bottom of the matter.

Chapter 408 The Bottle and The Pill

"Ah, not really... it's just that... my role model and self-proclaimed rival is kinda there. So I want to be there too." At the moment, her eyes were burning with the passion of rivalry and motivation.

"Hoo, a self-proclaimed rival, someone you would like to surpass, huh? And who might this lucky role model of yours be?" Truly wanting to know now, he probed further.

"Urm... It's... The Frost." With a shade of red engulfing her cheeks, she went on while feeling embarrassed, "I know I'm too weak compared to her and that I don't really deserve to be her rival at the moment... but! I'll get stronger and show her the true might of the explosion of spit! Water can turn into ice, but fire can explode just the same! And..."

She went on blabbering without noticing that Victor had long stopped listening to her excessive talking. Instead, his mind seemed to have been distracted and occupied from a certain point onwards.

A few minutes later, while Lydia was still going on with her nonstop chattering which no one was listening to at this point really, Victor suddenly turned toward the quiet Anastasia and placed a unique card in front of her.

"..." And indeed, he was instantly faced with her confused look which was filled with question marks.

"Haha... you don't need to be so baffled. That's the card from the Virus Industries. Although they don't own a guild at the moment... they're super-rich. You can contact them if you ever feel the need to... I'm sure they'll be quite interested in cooperation with you." An image of her Trait which looked fascinating was currently going through Virus's mind. Frankly, he was slightly interested in her trait.

"..." Once again, confronting her peaceful eyes which seemed to be asking 'why are you offering me this?' and 'how do you even know the titanic Virus Industries?' Virus could only grin and reply.

"Well, its CEO is a friend of mine. Furthermore, I think it would be a pity if you join another guild and restrain your own freedom like that. Instead of a guild, I believe this company would be much less restrictive for you."

Meanwhile, watching everything from the sidelines, the other three became dumbfounded at first before their looks of envy were directed at both Victor and Anastasia.

They were envious of the fact that Victor knew the CEO of the Virus Industries, and they were even more jealous that Anastasia was presented with the rare chance of having the opportunity to come into contact with them.

"W-what about us?" After some hesitation, Abby Wu couldn't stop herself from asking. She felt a tad bit hurt at the fact that Victor was only interested in Anastasia and not them.

"Haha, would you look at me, forgetting about you three." Handing over a different type of card to them, Victor went on, "Although I won't be giving you that company's contact information, I'll be giving you my own. If you ever need anything, just call me... if I'm able to help at the time, I won't hold back."

"Yay, thanks, Victor." Seemingly satisfied with him now, both Abby and Lydia thanked him. Ismail also showed his gratitude afterward.

"..." When his eyesight brushed past Anastasia, however, Victor was assaulted by an inquisitive gaze which he could only guess to be, 'Aren't you going to be giving me one of those too?'

"Hahaha... here, I have one for you too." Laughing hysterically, Virus placed one in front of her too.

For some reason, however, this made Abby and Lydia bitter once again.

...

After finally parting ways with Anastasia, Abby, Lydia, and Ismail, Virus directly returned to 4 Times Square.

Now that he had successfully received his Guardian License, his primary goal was to connect his first pair of Pathways before reserving a rift for himself to solo.

"Were you able to gather every material I need?" Currently laid back on the couch, Virus threw this question at the CEO ugly who was standing before him.

"Good job. You may leave."

"Yes, master." With that, the CEO ugly left to do his bidding.

...

Even after Virus had returned from the Guardian's Examination, the golden beauty did not come out even once.

'It seems she's really adamant about cultivating diligently.' While standing before the MDA and pushing the various materials into different entries, Virus' mind escaped in the direction of a particular golden beauty.

'Well, this will be beneficial for her own future. A safer future. So I suppose it's all good.' Abruptly, the MDA's 3D screen was turned on as Virus entered many complex commands into it. All of the commands had to do with the processes that the materials needed to go through in order to shape the final product he desired.

'Including the blood of that monstrous beast, everything is in their respective entries and order... adding a bit of Water of Life would also intensify the efficacy... so here we go.' Pouring some Water of Life, Virus initiated the process.

Before long, a bottle of liquid was within his palm.

Staring at this bottle of liquid which was giving off a slight hue of ocean blue, a grin crept over his face. 'Success!'

'Unfortunately, this can be used only once for a single breakthrough.' Some traces of regret was also apparent as he gazed at the precious container. Nevertheless, he was quick to put that futile thought aside. Therefore, turning around, he was just about to take his leave, when suddenly, his eyes brushed past another small bottle.

As he gazed at this bottle that seemed to contain a single pill within, however, numerous memories seemed to be lashing out as it sent many waves within his mind. The memories of a particular point in the past where a certain woman had given him two pills when she saw him injured.

Chapter 409 Till fate wills us again.

At the time, due to the better constitution of his body, instead of two, he had taken just one while keeping the other one to himself.

'Apprentice-sister, I wonder... what are you doing right now?' The image of the fairy also became clear within his mind at this point. Her graceful movements, elegant figure, and every detail he was able to see became apparent before him as he recalled the scene of her wailing within his arms as they were about to separate for an indefinite amount of time. Virus was currently living that memory once again.

'Be well... till fate wills us to meet again.'

...

Shaking his head in the end, Virus proceeded to pick up the pill bottle as he returned to his room. Thereafter, placing the single-pill bottle on the table beside his bed, he sat in a lotus position before pouring everything within the other bottle into his mouth.

Soon after he closed both his eyes, the percentage of bonding between the first pair of Energy Pathways started to gradually increase.

32%... 33%... 34%...

...

97%... 98%... 99%...

Eleven days later, together with the wondrous aid of the ocean blue liquid, Virus was nearly on the verge of completing the synthesis of his first pair.

'Almost there!' The moment this line flashed through his mind, the unification rate successfully hit a complete hundred percent!

100%!

'Done!'

Simultaneously, he felt a surge of energy inside himself.

As he had perfected the first level of Liberation and had broken through to the second level, the quality of his energy was now going through a transformation once again. In fact, this transformation was even bigger compared to the time when he had just broken through to the Liberation stage.

At the same time, as the quality of his energy was going through a noticeable rise, from that exact synthesized and perfected pathway, Energy was gushing out into the world itself!

His first finished Energy Pathway could now release energy externally!

'Great!' Thinking the procedure was finally over, feeling very satisfied with himself, Virus was just about to flutter his eyelashes open, when suddenly...

Much to his startlement, he noticed that he could now sense the existence of Origin within his body once again!

Origin was starting to show some kind of reaction from itself!!!

'Hmm?!' This instantly made Virus confused as he could only wonder what was going to happen next. Every time Origin reacted, it meant it was on to something. Thus, Virus's confusion and curiosity were well-justified.

...

And indeed, slowly but surely, Virus began to sense a strange type of connection forming between his pathways and the Origin itself!

'W-what's going on?'

Thereafter, as the connecting bridge was successfully established, for a very brief duration, it seemed the Origin was about to flicker out of existence and disappear once more. However, the next instant, its reaction began to intensify and go wild again!

HUAAA~

Subsequently, a mysterious form of energy was released from the Origin as it all uncontrollably rushed into his thirteenth pathway!

No... the 13th knot within his thirteenth pathway to be more precise!

Next, the twist blocking the path of his thirteenth knot started disentangling itself at a terrifying speed!

10%... 25%...50%!

Noticing this heaven-defying development which truly defied every understanding he had of cultivation, a shiver went down Virus' spine as he had goosebumps all over his body while he thought about this unfathomable object called 'Origin'!

69%...

84%...

100%!!!

Soon, in the span of a few minutes, unbelievably, the twist obstructing the path of his 13th pathway disentangled!

And now that the twist was gone, Origin seemed to immediately suck every bit of that mysterious energy back into itself before it vanished from Virus's detection entirely! It was as if it did not exist, to begin with.

Notwithstanding, with the block gone now, the volume of his energy began to rise again as what was within the 13th knot joined with the rest of the energy under his control. The only difference in increase this time was the fact it was more of a quantitative increase rather than qualitative.

...

When the process was over at last, Virus's brows jumped before he snapped his eyes wide open! He was shell-shocked!

"H-how... how is this possible?" Full of disbelief, closing his eyes, he focused his awareness on his thirteenth pathway which he could sense again just like the rest of his twelve pathways.

He wasn't seeing things, it was indeed disentangled!

Originally, when he had broken through to the Liberation, other than those untwisted pathways, the rest of them seemed to have been entirely locked away from his reach and sense of detection forever.

However, now, for a second time, he was able to detect and even lead his energy into his thirteenth knot afresh!

Although it was just the thirteenth pathway while the rest of the 14th, 15th, 16th, 17th, and 18th passages were still locked, it didn't lessen from Virus' feeling of shock in the least!

'Wait, wait, wait... what could this mean?'

'Does it mean Origin can open my remaining locked passages from now on?'

His head was instantly invaded with many possibilities, 'But how? And why did it only open one of them? Why did it leave the rest locked up? Could it be just a one-time thing? Or will it continue disentangling one more passage every time I break through to

the following stage? Or perhaps... every time I progress by a level, this will be happening? Which one is it I wonder?'

'If it's just a one-time thing, that would be really bad... but that's very unlikely. Why would it bother unlocking one when it's going to leave the rest be?'

'Wait, this happened after I connected my first pair of pathways and turned them into one! Could it be... every time I synthesize a pair, a new pathway would be unlocked indeed?'

At this point, flames of excitement were burning within his eyes as he calculated what would happen if that was indeed the case.

1st+2nd pathways synthesized= 13th pathway unlocked.

3rd+4th pathways synthesized= 14th pathway unlocked.

5th+6th pathways synthesized= 15th pathway unlocked.

7th+8th pathways synthesized= 16th pathway unlocked.

9th+10th pathways synthesized= 17th pathway unlocked.

11th+12th pathways synthesized= 18th pathway unlocked.

"That makes some sense!" He cried in a stupor. This was one of the few and rare times where he was trembling in anticipation while showing an extreme type of emotion.

"If this hypothesis of mine is correct, by the time I reach the peak of the sixth level of Liberation... all my other blocked passages will have been unlocked!!! That means I'll be able to advance to the 7th, 8th, and even the legendary 9th level of Liberation!" He was literally yelling every word at this point while feeling mind-blown.

'Could it be... I was never supposed to untwist those nigh impossible passages in the Energy Disentanglement stage, to begin with? It was needed to be left alone for the Origin to solve in this stage?'

'No... perhaps, seeing how I was incapable of disentangling the rest, the Origin is stepping up personally?'

Currently, he was feeling as if a new world had been just opened up in front of him. As if he had just discovered a new world!

"I-I need to progress by another level in order to make sure this hypothesis of mine is correct. That it will continue happening!" An unshakeable amount of determination was discharging from all over Virus's body now.

Chapter 410 Greedy but Smar

'But progressing by another level wouldn't be as easy as what I just did. I mean, even if I brew the required potion now, the best result I'll be able to accomplish would be half a level...'

'Most important of all, what makes me really reluctant in doing this is the fact that by continuing to rely on drugs for breaking through, I would be gradually ruining my own foundation and even destabilize and hinder my path of cultivation in the long run, which is something I want to avoid at all costs.'

Following those thoughts, he whispered, "For that to not happen, I need to either wait for a rather long time for my body and mind to digest everything... or I need to fight it out and quicken the process."

Afterward, without any wavering, his logic directly pointed at and selected the most efficient path, 'Combat would be the quickest way... it seems I would need to reserve a Rift or two to fight some monstrous beasts.'

Putting the matter aside with a simple shake of his head thereafter, the list of materials he required in order to brew the next potion flickered through his mind.

'Heart of a Six-eyed bear, Negin Sar plant from the planet...'

Subsequently, he called the CEO ugly, "How long will it take for you and the Island ugly to collect the entire list of materials that I just transmitted into your consciousness."

After a short duration of silence, the CEO ugly's reply was heard, "Um, master, except the heart of the six-eyed bear, everything else on the list can be gathered in a week or two at most. But as for the Six-eyed bear... that's a type of a four-starred monster and buying it will not be easy in a short time."

Since the mission of collecting various stuff for his master had become a common subject now, the CEO ugly was quite quick in calculating and responding.

"Hmm, I see. Do you know the rough location of any rifts that expels this kind of monster?"

"I-if I'm not mistaken, I think it's the rifts around Chicago that have the most probability of producing this type of monstrous beast... but you're not guaranteed to encounter them even there."

"Alright. Except for the heart of the Six-eyed bear, don't forget to gather the rest. That'll be all." He ordered before hanging up.

...

'Hmm, I should hunt the six-eyed bear myself, that'll be like killing two birds with one stone.' And with that, Virus was determined to go and procure the carcass of the Six-eyed bear by himself since, in this way, other than getting his hands on its heart, he would be also accomplishing his aim of combat. Therefore, picking up his phone once more, he directly opened his Guardian Application.

This time, however, he didn't enter the Guardian License section, instead, he pressed the 'Reservation' icon.

[Welcome, Guardian DS! Please select the State you'd prefer to reserve a Rift in.]

\u003cCalifornia\u003e \u003cTexas\u003e \u003cFlorida\u003e
\u003cWashington\u003e \u003cIllinois\u003e \u003cArizona\u003e...

Seeing the list of states, Virus didn't hesitate to select \u003cIllinois\u003e and then \u003cChicago\u003e.

Subsequently, the picture of eleven rifts displayed itself in front of him. Below each picture, the details pertaining to each of them were also revealed for him to see.

According to the details, three were two-star rifts and they were all going to activate within three to four days, seven were three-starred and were expected to activate within a week, and the final one was a four-starred rift which was going to activate in eight days.

'Hmm, I wonder how they specify the danger level of the Rifts?' For a brief moment, he pondered about this essential question, however, not delving on the matter and putting it aside temporarily, his finger touched and chose the only four-star Rift option.

\u003cInsufficient experience stars, you can't choose or view more details about this rift!\u003e

Furthermore, it was followed by another notification.

\u003cOrdinarily, beginner Guardians who possess (0) stars in the [EXPERIENCE] segment would be required to start reserving from (1) star rifts and progress accordingly. However, since the average of your other three attributes is (4), you can begin from reserving (3) star rifts.\u003e

Seeing this notification, with a mere nod of satisfaction, Virus didn't dilly-dally in selecting one of the seven 3-star fractures.

\u003cThis rift has been already reserved.\u003e

Immediately, a furrow showed up on Virus' brows, however, just as he was about to click on another option, a smaller notification in a corner attracted his attention.

\u003cYou can forcefully buyout this Rift for the price of: \$28,000,000\u003e

\u003cDo you wish to proceed?\u003e

Having read the lines, Virus couldn't help but murmur, "Greedy... but smart. It seems the Abnormals Association won't let go of any chances to earn some free money."

'Meh, it's good for me anyway. Considering how I won't need to be bothered by the annoying matters of reserving them earlier than others now.' Still, he didn't jump into pressing the \u003cBuyout\u003e button. Instead, he tried reserving the other six 3-star Rifts.

\u003cThis rift has been already reserved.\u003e

\u003cThis rift has been already reserved.\u003e

...

Unfortunately, he encountered a similar result for the rest of them. Thus, he could only sigh in some disappointment before selecting the Rift which was going to be activated in exactly seven days.

\u003cYou can forcefully buyout this Rift for the price of: \$30,500,000\u003e

\u003cDo you wish to proceed?\u003e

\u003cYes.\u003e

As he selected yes, the amount was instantly withdrawn from his already bound bank account to Guardian Application.

...

SEVEN DAYS LATER, AROUND CHICAGO

Having just ambled before his forcibly reserved Rift, Virus was faced with annoyed expressions of two unfamiliar Guardians who were standing before the Rift.

"Tongue Woman, when do you think he's coming? The Rift's already about to activate." Said the man with a long mustache.

"Just wait, Gun Mustache, he'll definitely be here since not showing up before a Rift you've reserved is a great crime. I just don't understand why the fuck would he buyout our Rift? Doesn't he fucking know buying out a Rift that's been already reserved a very frowned upon act among the Guardians?" The woman replied while her forehead was clearly creased in anger.

And it was exactly at this moment when Virus arrived. "Hmm? I believe I reserved this Rift... why are you two here?" Spotting the two, Virus questioned.

"Hello. This Rift was initially reserved by us, don't you know it's not very well taken to buyout someone else Rift?" A sharp glint went through the woman's eyes as she inquired immediately.

"So? I don't care about it being well-taken or not. All I care about is that I reserved the Rift already, so get lost." Not bothering himself to be polite whatsoever, Virus just told them to leave in a rude manner.

"You! Do you know who we are? We-" Before she could finish, however, a bored light shimmered through Virus's eyes as he didn't hesitate to connect to the world's database as he extracted every single information about the two before interrupting her.

"Of course I do woman! You are Tongue Woman from the [Musketeers] guild, your real name is Nancy Pot, 31 years old, the mother of two. You have a big mole on your left butt-cheek and your husband's di..." And so, in a single breath, he went on to reveal even the most embarrassing secrets she had just to prove the point he did indeed know her. That he knew both of them to the smallest detail.

"..."

"..."