

Virus 461

Chapter 461 - My Sister...

She elaborated how her miss and Ra had dueled until it ended with her defeat. Not being able to tolerate her defeat, Henna had interfered but only ended up getting beaten up to her current state.

At that time, understanding that she was no opponent for them, she had escaped back to the Sphinx and awaited Virus' return, her last hope.

"Hmm? Is that so?" Gently touching his chin while raising a single brow, many contemplations and even brief suspicions crept into Virus' head. He felt as if many of the descriptions didn't quite add up concerning a few details he knew about the cheeky woman.

Still, in the end, he was resolved to go and see for himself, thus, he announced, "Lead the way, we're going there."

Meanwhile, Virus' mind began to overwork itself as he swiftly settled on the next attribute for his second form of the Peak-Human movement technique.

In the previous form, Virus had made use of the electricity to make his muscles and nerves faster than it should be possible at the current level of his cultivation. Therefore, Virus considered the internal work done.

In the following attribute, Virus wanted something that could complement the speed of his impulse in any manner possible.

Due to that, after deliberating hard on the topic in his time freeze perception, Virus figured out another factor that was hindering his body all the time.

That attribute was the wind itself. To be more precise, it was the air resistance that obviously impeded the path of everyone beyond a certain degree of speed.

After having made up his mind, Virus began contemplating how he was going to equip the wind attribute or something similar in a way that would at least lower the resistance he felt with each charge.

'I need to combine my energy with the wind attribute and then discharge them all on the surface of my body in a way that it would stop or lower the air resistance.'

As he reached that conclusion, subsequently, he began working on the little details.

Since the air resistance was basically air particles hitting against the moving force and thus lowering its speed by hitting its surface, what Virus needed to do was to somehow

force the air particles themselves to move out of his way before they successfully reach the surface of his body and slow him down.

To do so, Virus began developing and arranging his energy in a way that only by releasing it to the surface of his body, it would automatically open up his path and clear it of any possible air resistance.

'After adding the quality of air particles to my energy, I shall design it in a manner that would easily push aside the air particles. However, in order to achieve that...'

Having reached this point in his thinking process, Virus recalled a specific device called 'water turbine' which is a rotary machine much like a windmill, except the energy is provided by falling water instead of wind.

The reason why he thought of water turbines and not a windmill mainly had to do with the way they were designed as a water turbine was more suitable for his unique purpose.

'Hmm, not one, but two water turbines side by side to be more exact.' Concluding the final picture in his head, Virus decided to add the attribute of air particles to his energy and then begin the process of creating the circulation system for the front of his physique.

He wanted to create two circulations in front of his body much like two water turbines that were functioning in the opposite directions.

With this method, not only would most of the air particles be pushed aside before he even made contact with them, the energy air particles in his control circulating at the back closer to his skin might even help him gain more momentum! Albeit, that required enough energy in order to have any hope of achieving it.

'So, overall, I need to design two water turbines made up of air resistance themselves and start their circulation at the front side of my body.'

Since all the theories and blueprints were at last ready, the first plan of action Virus took was to start going over everything he knew about air particles as he kept pushing them into his energy to try fusing them together!

Subsequently, after a rather long time had passed in his time-freeze perception, he finally succeeded. Now that he had influenced his energy in the aspect he desired, his malleable energy had gained an attribute much like that of the air particles.

Next, without delay, he jumped to the procedure of designing two impeccable water turbines using the air particles themselves.

Thankfully, already having a complete understanding of exactly what he wanted to achieve, it didn't take much effort on his part to accomplish his intended goal.

'Done! Now I have two forms!' With a tranquil brow free of frown lines, a glowing expression appeared on Virus' face. 'Hmm, I think I can also begin the process of creating the third form as well the moment I break through to the eighth level of Liberation.'

Now that he had accomplished his first objective, in the outside world, Virus realized Henna and him were just about to enter the particular gate that would lead to the enemies on the other side.

Not feeling quite secure yet, Virus was resolved to make even further preparations.

Remembering the sword he had obtained a while ago, Virus knew that right now, he had no sword techniques to utilize. True, he had the Twisting Tempest Thrust, but the requirement for using that was to have a longsword as a weapon, not a common sword.

'Hmm, I can't make a Peak-Human sword technique since my mind's busy with decrypting the movement techniques right now, so, that leaves me with the other sword techniques I have available in my database.' Judging that to be the only alternative at the moment, Virus exhibited the strongest sword attack techniques he had at his disposal.

「Gouge Pounce」 :

[Description: I'm simple but deadly! There is only one form in this sword technique which requires six pathways. It concentrates all the energy that gathers as a result of pouncing on the enemy and shoots them all at the enemy in a single gouging attack!
Requirements: Sword, Six pathway liberated.]

「Fountain Arrow and Bow Cut」 :

[Description: O, my enemies shall see a beautiful fountain as the last scenery of their lives! The first form requires six pathways as it focuses on the quick curving movement of the hand which leaves a beautiful slash, it is called the 'Fountain Bow Cut', the second form requires seven liberated pathways as it uses the first curving movement like that a bow in order to release a straight attack that storms to the enemy just like an arrow released from the string which is the first form. The second form is called the 'Fountain Arrow Cut'! Requirements: Sword, minimum of Six pathway liberated.]

Seeing only two results, Virus knew these two were the strongest sword attacks he had access to and were suitable right now.

'Hmm, definitely the second one.' After examining and discerning that the second sword technique could even make use of seven liberated pathways, without further ado, Virus

instantly delved into the comprehension and grasping procedure of Fountain Arrow and Bow Cut.

In the real world, the two were already passing through the gate when Virus successfully attained the first form of the Fountain Arrow and Bow Cut. He couldn't begin training the second form since without liberating seven pathways, that was impossible.

Now, since Virus' preparations were over, he deactivated the time-freeze perception and restored it to an almost normal state while his unique awareness remained spread all around him.

Simultaneously, passing through the gate, the messed-up scene of a lady stabbed in the back and three enemies apparently waiting for someone displayed themselves.

The instant he arrived, the veiled lady who was unconscious just until now suddenly raised her head with difficulty and stuttered a few incomprehensible words, "V-Vee... be careful... s-she..."

It was unknown since when she had regained her consciousness.

"Damn it, this bitch was awake! She was just pretending!" Ra shouted wrathfully as he kicked her in the stomach harshly.

On the other side, behind Virus, a dark expression covered Henna's face once more as she darted her second blade right at the back of Virus.

If it was anyone else, not having eyes at the back of their heads, just like the cheeky woman, they would have been stabbed. However, detecting the sneak attack through the lens of his awareness, Virus swiftly noticed that he was about to be backstabbed!

'Impulse!'

'Steel of Darkness!'

'Fountain Bow Cut!'

In the span of a single second, arcs of electricity flickered all over Virus' physique as it was followed by the appearance of a luxurious-looking sword.

Next, with a curving movement of his hand and body together, Virus' sword left a mesmerizing sword arc in the air.

Swish!

A head flew off to the air before it fell and rolled on the ground.

Psshhhh!

After the head fell on the ground, at the last moments of her life, terrifyingly, Henna could see her own body still standing while a fountain of blood was spurting from her neck.

'My... sister...' That was the last scenery of her life before all traces of life vanished from her open eyes, eyes that had some traces of regret painted in them.

Chapter 462 - What Did You Do?

At a drop of a dime, all eyes were about to jump out of their respective sockets as four individuals, including the wounded cheeky woman, could only stare dumbfounded at the scene they had just witnessed while a deafening silence descended upon the treasure room.

Sensing the striking absence of silence, Virus turned toward the four and said, "What? She was trying to kill me, was I supposed to just be stabbed to death like a good boy?"

Finally, the veiled woman snapped out of her stupor as misery and sorrow descended upon her being, "H-Henna... Oh no... sob... Henna." She cried and cried and cried like the moment of betrayal had not even happened. Despite Henna's betrayal, the cheeky woman had still cared about that companion of many years.

After regaining some of her composure, at last, her tears of loss still wetting her eyes, she questioned in utter anguish as if she was blaming herself for her death, "C-couldn't you have... kept h-her alive?"

Discerning the deep grief and heartache within the tone of the veiled woman, Virus responded coldly. "Keep her alive? The moment she tried attacking me, she was dead already."

"SNAP OUT OF IT ALREADY YOU CHEEKY FOOL! WHY DO YOU STILL SYMPATHIZE WITH SOMEONE WHO BETRAYED YOU?" Suddenly roaring in a rare moment of rage, furrowing his brows, Virus scolded the veiled lady harshly.

Shaking his head next, Virus immediately calmed down as if his previous unusual episode just a second ago had not even happened! Then, he continued with a helpless sigh, "I already knew that you've been backstabbed."

"N-no... she didn't have a choice... her sister was poisoned so sister H-Henna-"

"Doesn't matter what kind of excuses you come up with, doesn't change the fact that she betrayed you. I'm sure if she was alive you might've even forgiven her after forcibly making yourself believe her excuse was somewhat justified. But who is to say she won't betray you again in the future with other justified causes just like today? Let me give you

a piece of advice, once a traitor, always a traitor. That's it." Finished with his little speech, Virus no longer paid any heed to the injured woman and instead turned toward Ra, Knightgruella, and the Purple-Maned Ancient Lion.

"Huh, you three must've greatly enjoyed watching the entertaining scene just now, right?" Smirking casually, Virus vocalized.

"Hahaha... indeed, can't believe you just killed that bitch like that, but I couldn't care less since I was about to kill her anyway. There's no way I would've left someone like her alive with the knowledge that I killed this supreme ugly here."

"Well, anyway, we have an account to settle between us, right?" Virus proclaimed, smiling viciously.

"Hahaha... your ant balls seem to have grown so large that you seem to have forgotten you're merely an ant at the end. An ant mistakenly assuming it can defeat an elephant after a workout, such a joke, hahaha!"

"Hmm, is that so?"

'Impulse!'

While wielding his Steel of Darkness, Virus's energy began to gather on his third tempering sword as he discharged a strike.

'Fountain Bow Cut!' While a curving slash was going toward Ra's neck, he abruptly burst into laughter as two rows of white teeth and a contorted expression became visible over his face.

"Hahahaha! Don't any of you dare interject in our duel! I want to teach this ant a lesson. Hahaha..." He warned Knightgruella and the Purple-Maned Ancient Lion to not get in the way of their fight no matter what.

Bam!

Immediately, as the laugh continued, an ax barred the path of Virus' weapon, victoriously stopping its beheading ceremony.

"Truly an ant, you get a bit stronger and your arrogance nearly breaks through the heavens!"

He then unleashed a hacking strike right at Virus' face.

Raising his weapon to defend, Virus blocked the attack at once.

Unfortunately, the force behind the barbarian's attack was so heavy that it coerced Virus to retreat several meters before he finally stopped.

Clicking his tongue, Virus glared at Ra in vexation.

'Should I use the second form of my movement speed?' The second that notion showed up, however, Virus denied it. Even if he revealed the second form, he could easily predict that he still would not be capable of defeating the barbarian in front of him in a head-on confrontation.

Thus, before he had a surefire plan and scheme that was guaranteed to work, Virus decided against revealing his trump card.

Just as various such notions were passing through his head in lightning speed, Ra took the initiative.

"Tree Cutter Ax!"

He rushed at him this time before striking with his ax from Virus' left side. Apparently, he was trying to cut Virus into two parts much like a tree.

'Impulse!' With a simple sidestep to the right side, Virus dodged out of the upcoming ax's path before it cut through nothing but thin air.

Afterward, the ongoing intense combat was witnessed by the remaining spectators who were truly in awe of both Virus and Ra's strength.

And yet, it didn't require an expert to notice that while Virus was in a defensive position, Ra had the upper hand as he kept persisting on offense!

If the circumstances of this fight continued this way, everyone could easily calculate that Virus' end was nigh.

'I need to do something before it's too late.' While various analyzes were shooting through Virus' brain, apparently, he still failed to compute an end where it finished with his victory.

'I'm not strong enough.' Woefully, every possibility that displayed itself in his mindscape was rejected with the ultimate conclusion that he wasn't powerful enough yet.

In the meantime, studying Virus' frowning expression, Ra could effortlessly see through his thoughts.

'Huh! He knows he's powerless and I can see it plastered right on his face so easily.'

"Hahahaha... how about this, you stop these pointless struggles and I promise to kill you with no pain and-"

'Unnamed Virus Technique, First Form – Impulse!'

'Unnamed Virus Technique, Second Form – Friction!'

Before Ra even finished his sentence, promptly, arcs of lightning boiled all over Virus' body before it proceeded with an intense wind in front of Virus' figure.

Right now, Ra could scarcely sense the two invisible pillars of small hurricanes that seemed to have taken root in front of Virus' body out of nowhere!

Not quite comprehending what kind of scheme Virus was cooking, with peace of mind and no concerns, Ra decided to watch and enjoy the last vain attempts of Virus.

Unfortunately, suddenly, he realized Virus wasn't even aiming for him as he stormed toward the opposite direction, unlike any speed he had shown so far!

'Fountain Bow Cut!'

Moreover, what bulged Ra's eyes the next moment was the fact that instead of attacking him, Virus had completely ignored him as he adjusted his target toward the Purple-Maned Ancient Lion as he perfectly cut its head off!

SWISH!

FSHHHH!

As its head fell on the floor, the lion witnessed its own body bleeding like there was no tomorrow as it died in that stupefied state.

Previously, without Ra even noticing, Virus had slowly but surely swapped their positions in a way so that he was closer to the monstrous beast and Knightgruella instead of Ra himself.

And the instant he found the opportunity, he didn't hesitate to unleash every bit of his power as he killed the monster!

Following quickly, as the monstrous beast died in utter disbelief, Origin began to suck and transfer its energy into Virus while his synthesis rate skyrocketed.

On the other side, just like ice statues, both Ra and Knightgruella remained frozen still for a long time, until Ra opened his mouth at last.

"W-What did... What did you do?! Do you have any idea what you just did?" He roared and screamed in perplexity while blood had long left his countenance.

To be honest, spotting such similar reactions from Ra, Knightgruella, and even the mortally wounded veiled lady whose face had gone paler, Virus could only feel bewildered himself while confusion fogged his eyes.

"Huh? What did I do? Did I perhaps accomplish an amazing feat? Hmm, that's not right, I mean what's so special about killing just a monstrous beast? Sure, it may have been a bit special considering he's a representative, but so what?"

"You fucking idiot! 'Just' a monstrous beast?! You're a madman!" Greatly alarmed, with his tongue hardly able to circulate his following sentence, Ra notified Virus, "H-he's the fucking son of the Lion King! The ruler of the Animal Kingdom!"

Chapter 463 - Lion King

"The Lion King? So, you were talking about his father... wait, are you feeling okay, by any chance? You said 'what did you do?' just now when you were supposed to use a famous line like 'Do you know who his father is?', you're acting out of character bro." Faking an expression of stupefaction, Virus stated. Internally though, the situation only made him amused and nothing but amused.

"Huh? W-What the fuck are you talking about? You have no idea who his father is, do you? His father is the fucking Golden-Maned Ancient Lion King!" Feeling absurd about how casual Virus was behaving after having just killed someone extraordinary, Ra honestly didn't know how to react.

"There you go, that wasn't hard, now, was it? I was starting to get worried about you back there." Letting out an exaggerated sigh of relief, Virus looked like he had been finally put at ease.

Meanwhile, internally, Virus' synthesis rate was shooting through the roof. In fact, that was why he was delaying the fight right now by acting like that.

90%... 96%... 100!

The moment the synthesis rate was complete and his seventh pathway formed to perfection, that passage started trembling and shaking as if something was stopping it from breaking through and entering the eighth level.

'Again?' Momentarily focusing within his internal world, Virus willed his energy manually as he rammed it into the wall of taboo that was trying to hinder the progress.

'Begone!'

Bam!

Unfortunately, the second taboo seemed even stronger than the first one.

'I said get the fuck out of my body!' A tick of anger popped into Virus' forehead as he gathered every bit of energy from every one of his pathways as he rammed them all directly into the barrier of taboo!

BOOM!

Fortunately, the taboo barrier was entirely incapable of impeding his path in this round as it immediately disintegrated into nothingness.

The Second Taboo, broken!

With no delay, the energy stormed into the subsequent pathways as Virus successfully progressed to the eighth level of Liberation!

Albeit, although there was a humongous amount of vigor remaining from the killed Purple-Maned Ancient Lion, all of that only increased the fusion rate to two percent.

Now that he had reached the eighth level of Liberation, it seemed the difficulty of increasing the synthesis rate had also been elevated to a terrifying degree!

In the meantime, outside, both Ra and Knightgruella were gazing into each other's eyes, trying to figure out what they should do in order to avoid the wrath of the Golden-Maned Ancient Lion when they leave the Invisible Ancient Fortress World.

"Boss, bringing the head of that bastard to the Lion King might soothe some of its anger. You should kill him asap!" Knightgruella advised with some fear exhibiting itself within his pupils.

"Hmm, you're right, that's the only thing we can do right now. I'll get serious then." Instantly hardening his grip over the hilt of his ax, Ra charged at such speed that he was almost like a blur. This was the peak momentum he could display right now.

Earlier, while fighting both the veiled lady and Virus, although he had mobilized most of his energy, he had not truly gone up to his limits.

However, now that the Purple-Maned Ancient Lion was dead, Ra could not take this lying down anymore.

On the other side, easily following Ra's movements, Virus mumbled to himself.

'Unnamed Virus Technique, First Form – Impulse!'

At once, lightning came to his aid as Virus grabbed his sword and retaliated against the giant that had reached him.

'Fountain Bow Cut!'

Swish!

A graceful horizontal slash was drawn in the air, rapidly closing in on Ra to behead him in case he didn't succeed in defending.

FZZZ!

Two weapons, one sword, and one ax, directly clashed, however, none seemed to be willing to back down as an intense collision of power was keeping the two in a locked-up position for a few seconds.

Only after that few moments had passed did the equilibrium break apart as Ra's figure was thrust away backward!

"Huh!" Shouting in ridicule, Virus promptly sprinted at the opponent that was looking at him while gritting his teeth since the situation was reversed.

'Unnamed Virus Technique, First Form – Impulse!'

Along the way, lightning sparkled, increasing Virus' speed by an entire level. And yet, Virus wasn't finished.

'Unnamed Virus Technique, Second Form – Friction!'

Wind also joined the fray! As two hurricanes like air particles covered his forefront, his speed once again skyrocketed!

By now, Ra's eyes were nearly bulging out of their sockets as he looked at Virus in shock!

"How did he become so... wait! He broke through another level?!" No matter how he calculated, he could not get to a conclusion where that was possible.

The last time he met him, Virus had been much weaker than him, they weren't even comparable, to the point someone else had to protect him.

However, the next time they confronted one another, Virus was at least scarcely capable of keeping his ground against him. At that point, he could still comfort himself that he had probably come across amazing encounters in the Invisible Ancient Fortress World and that it must've been a one-time boost.

But now, out of nowhere, after a short pause in their battle, Virus had suddenly broken through and gotten much stronger with no obvious reason whatsoever! Furthermore, there was more to it than just that.

'He can't possibly be that talented to breakthrough left and right, even in the middle of the battle!'

'Fountain Bow Cut!'

Swish!

"Tree Cutter Ax – Fourth Form!" "DAMN IT!"

BALAAM!

Barely employing his ax attack technique, Ra triumphantly interjected the path of Virus' sword to his neck.

Instead of using his technique for attacking, Ra had just ingeniously taken advantage of it to defend!

However, even then, the force behind Virus' strike had been so heavy that it launched Ra's gigantic figure away just like a cannonball!

Smashing into the panel right beside Knightgruella, Ra's physique damaged and broke many of the pills apart!

Once again, Virus was just about to charge, when he heard Ra's awestricken and full of disbelief scream, "This is impossible! How did you become so powerful in the blink of an eye? You were at the Seventh Level of Liberation just now, but your energy seems even stronger now! But you don't seem to even be in the Sublimity Emergence stage yet so how can you be so powerful?!"

Virus was aware that due to some mysterious reason related to their genes and DNA, the barbarians could actually cultivate to the seventh level of Liberation since they had fourteen single pathways instead of the usual twelve.

Thus, it was understandable why Ra wasn't surprised after seeing that Virus had attained the seventh level as well. Of course, he might've been a little taken aback considering how it was so rare for a normal human to achieve such a feat. However, it wasn't anything extraordinary in his opinion, therefore, he dismissed it and didn't show any kind of reaction to it.

But right now, Virus' energy seemed to have progressed even further. He was quite confident that Virus' energy quality was still in the Liberation stage and not the Sublimity Emergence, and yet, he was above the seventh level!

Although Ra unconsciously knew what that signified, he just didn't want to believe that someone had been capable of going even beyond the barbarians' degree of talent and achieved even the eighth level of Liberation!

"Huh? I'm sure you know why though?" Grinning in contempt at the barbarian who seemed to be in some kind of denial, Virus added before dashing at him again, "But why are you suddenly starting a speech in the middle of the fight?!"

'Unnamed Virus Technique, First Form – Impulse!'

'Unnamed Virus Technique, Second Form – Friction!'

"Tree Cutter Ax – Fourth Form!" Urgently yelling this after seeing Virus about to enter his attacking pose, Ra quickly released his offense technique.

'Fountain Bow Cut!'

BOOM!

Once again, the powerless Ra narrowly made it alive. Alas, just as he was about to shoot backward like a broken puppet, Virus froze his time perception and comprehended the second form of 'Fountain Bow and Arrow Cut'.

Now that he had access to the seventh pathway, there was nothing preventing Virus from acquiring the second form.

'Fountain Arrow Cut!'

Since the 'Fountain Bow Cut' had been released just a moment ago, the window of unleashing the 'Fountain Arrow Cut' was still open, therefore, Virus didn't hesitate and let it go!

Chapter 464 - Necessary

The way the 'Fountain Bow and Arrow Cut' functioned was simple. When one used the first form, a curving slash will be drawn in the air, briefly creating the image of a bow as it beheads the enemy.

Moreover, if the foe succeeds in defending against the attack, while the bow arc is still in the air, one can employ the second form 'Fountain Arrow Cut' in order to unleash a straight strike just like an arrow that's been released from the string of a bow.

When the two are released together, they complement one another as an attack much more powerful than anticipated renders the opponent helpless by catching him off-guard.

Perceiving the incoming attack, Ra's countenance went wan in terror as he realized that since he had just unleashed his offense technique, he could not execute another one as there was no time for it!

'Am I going to die?' As he helplessly watched the upcoming sharp blade, all hope was about to leave him when an idea hit him.

Abruptly grabbing Knightgruella who was standing right beside him, he pulled him in front of himself and shockingly used him as a living meat shield!

"Ah!" At the very last moment of his life, Knightgruella's eyes went wide open in utter stupefaction.

Initially, he couldn't comprehend the situation. However, when everything sunk in, bewilderment was the only word that could describe him. He just could not believe his boss was using him as a shield.

Alas, the attack wasn't going to pause for him to digest the circumstance as the deadly sharp end of the sword penetrated through his head, cutting through his brain.

"Hmm?" Truthfully, even Virus was surprised to see this scene before him. "Wow, it must suck to be your underling."

As Knightgruella's corpse fell on the ground, Virus was about to pick up the rest of the battle and kill Ra as well, when abruptly, he noticed that Ra had thrown away any notions of battling him as he was already about to pass through his own gate of exit. Apparently, the fear of losing his life had long overwhelmed him as he desired nothing but to leave this place now.

'It's better he doesn't leave this place alive.' Squinting his eyes, Virus mustered every bit of his energy and shot toward Ra much like a bullet.

'Unnamed Virus Technique, First Form – Impulse!'

'Unnamed Virus Technique, Second Form – Friction!'

Lightning and wind rushed to his assistance as Virus' frame was like a rocket that had been launched in the direction of the fleeing opponent.

Fortunately, he was quickly closing the distance between them. Very soon, he was just a few meters away from Ra as he attacked!

'Fountain Arrow Cut!'

Since there was no time to first release the Fountain Bow Cut and then the Fountain Arrow Cut, Virus straight away chose the second form. The disadvantage of using the

second form without its complementary first form was that it becomes much weaker in comparison.

Immediately, while Ra was less than tens of centimeters away from the gate of exit, Virus' sword tip was like a lightning bolt that chased after him!

The following second, the sword reached the fleeing enemy, unfortunately, just as it reached and touched his skin, Ra's physique was already on the other side of the exit as the gate shut itself in the blink of an eye!

Ra was gone!

"Ahh, that lucky bastard!" Virus exclaimed in frustration. Only a moment more was required before his sword would have victoriously messed up Ra's heart, albeit, since the last person alive had exited their respective gate, it closed up automatically, thus narrowly saving Ra as a result.

To be frank, Virus was adamant about killing Ra because if he left today, it was guaranteed that he would bring the news of him beheading the Purple-Maned Ancient Lion to its father which apparently terrified everyone else!

If possible, he wanted to avoid any unnecessary troubles. Woefully, that seemed implausible at this point.

Even though he wasn't knowledgeable about that monstrous beast known as the Lion King, Virus knew trouble would come looking for him at some point because of the matters of today.

"Well..." While many contemplations were passing through his head, Virus' attention was drawn to the injured cheeky woman who still had a blade running through her stomach.

As a matter of fact, the only reason why she was still breathing was that luckily, the blade was kept in her stomach. Otherwise, she would've long bled to death by now.

Rushing at her at once, Virus examined her condition while inquiring, "How are you feeling? Does it hurt?"

"Is that concern I see in your eyes, hot face, hehe, ouch... even laughing hurts." Despite the grief of Henna visible on her face, it looked like her cheekiness was still there, "I-I think I'm about to die. B-but... I'm unwilling to go out like this, sob, I haven't even gotten married and tried popping my cherry. But forget about my cherry since there's no time left, I at least want to e-experience my first kiss before dying... so, will you let me go in peace?" At the same time, closing both her eyes, while keeping his veil attached, she exaggeratedly brought his face closer to Virus'.

Veins were already popping on Virus's face as he pushed her face back in utter annoyance. "Shut up with the nonsense already! I won't let you die, so stop. Just wait a minute here and don't fall asleep."

Next, checking the panels filled with thousands of pill cases, he searched for any pill names that might ring a bell and be capable of saving her.

'We're in a fucking pill storage, there's no way I'm letting you die.' Furrowing his brows, Virus read one name after another.

Although he didn't recognize most of the names, once in a while, he came across pills that did exist in his timeline of the future or were somehow vaguely mentioned in his database.

Around a few minutes later, Virus was slightly getting restless for not finding anything useful when his eyes caught the sight of a particular name.

'External Energy Source Restoration.'

At once, Virus' eyes started shining jovially as a hint of relief filled his heart.

This specific name was something that was mentioned in a random corner of his database which he would've missed if he wasn't focusing on every little detail.

However, after reading the little bit of information he had available in his database, Virus' expression became a little strange for some reason.

'Ah, there's no other choice.' Grabbing the case, Virus took a few strides and returned to the fallen figure of the cheeky woman and started clarifying, 'I found a pill that will help you heal up fast, you need to eat it, and then another cultivator, which is me in this case, will need to provide you with sufficient energy. The provided external energy is the source that heals you. Do you understand?'

Despite feeling somewhat doubtful about the existence of such miraculous pill after spotting that peculiar wince on Virus' countenance, the cheeky woman nodded her head regardless. She had no other option but to trust him and believe this type of amazing medicine truly did exist in this treasure room.

"Alright then, I'll take out the blade now. The instant it is out, swallow this pill and I'll instantly start supplying you with the necessary energy!"

"On the count of three, I'll take it out. Here we go! One-"

Frtt!

"Ahhhh, you only counted to one, t-that's not fair!" She shrieked in affliction.

The weapon was out while her stomach began to bleed substantially, exhibiting a horrifying scene.

"Swallow it now!" Virus urged her in a hurry since this was no time for being distracted by useless details.

Gulp!

As she consumed the pill, much to the stupefaction of the cheeky woman, Virus grabbed her dress by two hands and ripped them apart at once.

Rip!

Following that, the alluring sight of the cheeky woman's two plump and firm breasts exposed themselves in front of his eyes.

"Ahhhh!" Screaming in shock and disbelief, the cheeky woman tried covering her breasts with her two arms, however, tossing them aside immediately, Virus reached out with both of his palms and grabbed both of her breasts in a way so her nipples would touch the center of his palms.

"Sorry, this is necessary." Simultaneously, he began to transmit the required energy into her body!

"W-w-w-what do you mean necessary!" Dumbstruck, she could barely talk since her heart had long jumped into her mouth.

"According to the instruction manual of this pill, the only way this pill is going to work is if the energy is directly connected and transferred from the liberated passages of the palms to the liberated pathways of the chest that is close to the heart."

Indeed, just as Virus was claiming, according to the few sentences that he could find about the 'External Energy Source Restoration' medicine pill, one's palm pathways had to be openly connected to the chest pathways of the wounded that are most tangible on the nipples themselves. That meant there couldn't be anything like clothes hindering the transference of energy.

In fact, that was exactly why this pill was also famously known as the 'Couple's Restoration' and there was even a sentence expounding on how this pill might even restore the lost vigor of couples as well.

If the mortally wounded person was a male, putting one's hands on his chest wasn't considered a big deal, however, when the receiver was a female, its signification was entirely different.

And that's precisely why Virus didn't elaborate how it was going to function since the veiled woman might have rejected and preferred to die instead. 'Though that's unlikely considering her cheeky personality.'

Meanwhile, as Virus began the process of transmitting the energy to her plump breasts in his grasp, the wound began to close up at a speed visible to the naked eye.

On the other side, as a rare sight, the veiled woman's both cheeks were blushing so hard that Virus could only concernedly question while unconsciously gripping her breasts harder and therefore tickling her nipples. "Huh? Why is your face red? Are you feeling unwell somewhere?"

"You gotta be fucking kidding me! You're massaging my fucking breasts and playing with my nipples and you ask me why is my face red? Damn you!"

"Fuck! Who's fucking massaging your breasts and playing with your damned nipples! I'm only maintaining my fucking grasp! And that's only because this is the only way to heal you so what can I do?! What do you want me to do? Let you die?"

"Ahh... you're a bastard! You're playing with my body and you still refuse to take responsibility!"

"Fuck you!"

"Yes, you are! And you refuse to admit it!"

"Shut up!" Virus' eyes were so bloodshot at this point that he even briefly considered the idea of letting her die.. This woman was seriously bad news.

Chapter 465 - I Like It

After the healing process was over, Virus didn't hesitate to push away her breasts in exasperation. If regret had a face, that would be the current Virus.

"Ah." But that act of pushing away only resulted in a tempting moan from the already healthy cheeky lady.

Next, taking off his own shirt, Virus' abs and refined muscles were visible for her to see and take pleasure in. "S-so hot, do you want to 'do' that to me now?"

Bam!

However, slamming his shirt right at her face, Virus said, "Cover yourself with this and stop bullshitting already, let's leave."

"O-Okay."

When she wore Virus' t-shirt and the two were about to leave the treasure room, the cheeky woman's eyesight suddenly fell on Henna's headless carcass and her severed head a few meters away. That instantly made her live through the earlier nightmarish experience of hers once again as sorrow filled her eyes.

Although Henna had betrayed her and broke her heart, that fact still couldn't make the cheeky woman forget about all the years they had been together. She was truly saddened to see her end up in this tragic fate.

Truthfully, looking at her detached head made the blood drain from her face as she still had a hard time believing she was gone, but that didn't prevent her from sitting beside the head and start whispering, "Don't worry about your poisoned sister and go in peace. For the sake of all those years I considered you my sister, I'm going to find the antidote for her and cure her, however, after that, it's over between us. I'm going to forget about you."

Standing beside her, Virus quietly observed her without interfering. And when she was finally done saying her goodbyes, the two left the treasure room.

As they materialized in front of the Sphinx with one person less, Virus could see the cheeky woman's mood was somewhat affected despite her trying her best to not show it.

"WILL YOU LEAVE OR WILL YOU CONTINUE WITH THE RIDDLE GAMES?" It was the blaring sound of the Sphinx that somewhat focused their attention on the Invisible Ancient Fortress World once more.

"Hmm? Just how many treasuries are there?" Wishing to know the precise number of treasuries and riddles ahead of them before it all ended, Virus queried.

Frankly, he was starting to feel bored with these repetitive riddle games now that the veiled lady was also traumatized by the previous experience she went through.

Thus, Virus wanted to finish everything as soon as possible before leaving this corridor.

However, after hearing Virus' question, the Sphinx started behaving strangely as it remained silent for a while. Still, in the end, it seemed like it had no other choice but to open its mouth and answer.

"THAT WAS THE LAST TREASURY. HOWEVER, DON'T WORRY WE CAN CONTINUE PLAYING! IF I WIN, I'LL KILL YOU AND MAKE YOU ONE OF THE WITHERED CORPSES YOU WITNESSED ON YOUR WAY HERE, IF YOU WIN, I'LL KILL MYSELF, HOW ABOUT THAT?" The Sphinx replied in a panic. Them being gone before it won was the last thing it wanted to see.

Against the Sphinx's expectations, that response only made Virus feel speechless. 'This monster is really addicted to playing riddle games!'

Externally, however, without any ado, he rejected the proposal openly, "Why would I want you dead. We'll leave at once. It's not like I'll gain anything by seeing you commit suicide."

ROAAAR! Quake~

Unfortunately, that only seemed to force an expression of madness on the Sphinx's face as it roared so loudly that it made the corridor surrounded by the ocean tremble nonstop!

"WHY! JUST ONE MORE GAME PLEASE! I'M SO CLOSE TO WINNING THIS TIME!"

"But you have nothing worthwhile to offer, so I don't really see any point in continuing this vain play." At this point, Virus was speechlessly feeling he was the bad guy of the story. Like a drug dealer that sold all the drugs to the addicted person but the moment he ran out of it, he refused to do so.

ROOAAAR!

After another roar, the Sphinx made a final attempt in trying to garner Virus' attention. "THERE IS! I HAVE SOMETHING ELSE THAT I HAVEN'T OFFERED YET!"

"Oh? What is it? I'll make a decision after knowing what it is." Virus was truly feeling absurd at this point since the situation seemed to get only more ridiculous by the second.

"I HAVE AN OBJECT OF SOME KIND WITH ME! I DON'T KNOW WHAT IT IS BUT I SUSPECT IT TO BE A TREASURE MAP! ARE YOU INTERESTED? IF YOU WIN, I'LL GIVE IT TO YOU! IF I WIN, I'LL MAKE YOU MY PERSONAL WITHERED CORPSE SOLDIER!"

"I guess that's fine, but how's the next riddle game going to be like?"

"IT'S EASY REALLY. IT WON'T BE LIKE THE EARLIER GAME OF 'RIDDLE ME TOGETHER', THIS TIME I'LL ONLY ASK A HUNDRED RIDDLES, IF YOU ANSWER THEM ALL CORRECTLY, I'M WILLING TO DEPART WITH MY TREASURE MAP. BUT IF YOU GET EVEN ONE RIDDLE WRONG, YOU'RE DEAD." By the end of its sentence, pure killing intent was radiating out of the Sphinx's being. The grudge it had accumulated against Virus in this short duration was nothing to scoff at.

"A hundred? That's going to take a while, how about ten of your hardest riddles?"

"NO! NO LESS THAN A HUNDRED, MY DEAR MAP IS WORTH MORE THAN THAT!"

"Huh? Well, whatever, just ask away then." Feeling too lazy to even bargain, Virus agreed readily.

"WHAT IS ALWAYS IN FRONT OF YOU BUT CAN'T BE SEEN?"

"The future."

"WHAT QUESTION CAN YOU NEVER ANSWER YES TO?"

"Are you asleep, yet? Or are you dead?"

...

Afterward, one riddle after another was thrown in Virus' direction as he casually responded to them all while maintaining an unfocused gaze and even yawning from time to time. It was clear he wasn't even putting the slightest of effort before replying correctly.

ROAAAAAAAAR!

Around half an hour later, another enraged roar reverberated in the environment. The Sphinx was about to go insane looking at Virus with bloodshot eyes.

"YOU ARE MY NEMESIS! MY FUCKING NEMESIS! WHY CAN'T I DEFEAT YOU! WHY! WHY! WHY?!"

Albeit, to the Sphinx's dismay, Virus merely said. "Calm down now, will ya? Just think of me as a riddle god."

That nearly drove the Sphinx to the brink of lunacy as it tossed around and kicked and punched the water just like a kid that was throwing a tantrum. Albeit, much more terrifying.

"Hey, where's my treasure map?"

In the end, the Sphinx could only curse him out loud before helplessly surrendering the object. Receiving it, Virus stored it inside his spatial container without sparing it a single look.

"Okay, cheeky woman, let's leave."

...

When the two had just left the area of the aquarium corridor, the veiled lady suddenly mumbled, "Stop calling me cheeky woman."

"Huh? Then what should I call you when I don't know your name? Unnamed woman?"

After a few moments of awkward silence, the cheeky woman tilted her gaze downward and whispered. "H-Hellarose."

"Hmm? What do you mean hell arose? Where did the hell arise?" Entertained, Virus played around with her name while grinning, trying to exasperate her as payback.

"You bastard! I'm saying my name is Hellarose!" Staring at him in some resentment, Hellarose clarified.

"Hahaha, I'm just joking, so you're called Hellarose, that's a..." Going quiet momentarily, he nodded his head before adding, "Well, it's actually to my liking. I like that name."

"But... why didn't you introduce yourself earlier? Was there a particular reason keeping you from doing so?"

Indeed, as Virus was suspecting, there was truly a reason why Hellarose didn't introduce herself when they had just met one another. 'I thought you'd recognize my identity and then start acting all respectful and awkward like everyone else.'

'But, seeing how you didn't even know who the Lion King is, I assume you're ignorant of the matters of the world to an unbelievable degree... which makes me wonder how is that even possible.'

Although those lines were going through her head, externally, fidgeting with her fingers she revealed another excuse which was also true, "Well, you see how my name is unusually odd taking into account it literally says hell arose... so I'm usually against revealing my name..."

"I really like your name though." In fact, Virus wasn't just saying it when he claimed to like her name. 'I mean my name's Virus and I love it, maybe I'm just more into names with negative meanings rather than positive ones.'

Outwardly, however, while proceeding on the path forward, he didn't even bother to look back at her face while suggesting. "But if you really don't like your name having a negative meaning... how about this, your name is Hellarose which can also be divided into two parts of 'Hella' and 'Rose'."

"From where I come from, 'Rose' is a beautiful flower and 'Hella' means a shining light or sunray itself... so basically your name also means a beautiful flower made purely out of shining light. How about it?" Then turning back to see why it had gotten so quiet all of sudden, Virus' eyes met a frozen still woman with her cheeks redder than ever!

Her enlarged pupils were locked on Virus as if she was still in the process of hanging on to every word he had muttered.

"Your cheeks are red again! Damn, cheeky is really the most appropriate term for expressing you! If someone asked me to define you by a single word alone, I would definitely say cheeky!"

"Hehehe..." For some reason, despite him vocalizing something that usually resulted in some kind of retaliative reply, Hellarose simply continued to chuckle like an idiot.

"Oi! Are you okay? Why are you laughing like that?" Unfortunately, that only crept Virus out. "Let's go, stop acting that way. Just carry on acting normal, which is like a crazy person."

"Who's crazy!"

Chapter 466 - Hellarose

Suddenly recalling something, concern filled Hellarose's heart as she involuntarily put on an empty stare. "By the way... you shouldn't have killed the Purple-Maned Ancient Lion, you're in big trouble now."

"Hmm? Who is this Lion King you're talking about? And why is everyone so afraid of him?" In fact, now that the topic had been raised, there were a few things Virus was also curious about as well.

"Sigh, you're really ignorant about this stuff, aren't you?" With a rigid expression and pronounced sigh, Hellarose muttered to herself.

"Okay, so, the Lion King is a Golden-Maned Ancient Lion that rules the Animal Kingdom with an iron fist that covers a segment of Chao Mundi. You must've heard this from that bastard Ra before, right?"

"Yes."

"But what that signifies and the reason he can rule the Animal Kingdom is that he is the strongest monstrous beast there! Even the mighty Burning Sparrow serves directly under the Lion King as one of his few direct underlings. That's how strong he is!"

"Which means now that you've offended the throne of the Animal Kingdom, you might as well have offended the entire Animal Kingdom! So, you have to be extremely cautious from now on. When we leave the Invisible Ancient Fortress World, promise me the first course of action you take will be to get away from Chao Mundi as far as possible and don't think of returning ever again!"

Finally getting a rough picture of the consequences of Killing the Purple-Maned Ancient Lion, Virus understood he was in big trouble.

"Alright, I get it. I promise I'll leave Chao Mundi after we leave the Invisible Ancient Fortress World."

"Good!"

In the meantime, the two were continuing on their path when they suddenly reached a dead end with no doors whatsoever.

However, the good news was that although there were no doors, instead, there were four portal-like entrances that supposedly led to another location. 'Hmm, they are somewhat similar to the portal gates that the Sphinx opened to the treasuries.'

"Which one should we enter?" Slightly anxious, the veiled Hellarose turned and asked Virus. From an unknown moment forward, without herself even realizing, Virus had become her pillar of support as she was adamant about following whatever choice Virus made.

Seeing that stare filled with expectations as if she had blind faith in him, Virus felt a little awkward. Yet, he soon got to work and started searching around everywhere in order to find any clues.

At last, he did indeed discover a sentence that's been carved on a hidden section of the wall in a tiny font.

'One to the beginning, one to the middle, and one to the end, and one to the death.'

After reading the sentence, Virus sunk into contemplation, 'Hmm, seeing this, it seems they want us to try our luck again.'

As a matter of fact, Virus had come to realize that the red gate seemed to be mostly dependent on luck and chances other than the capabilities one might possess.

"To be honest, I'm also not sure which portal gate leads to where, do you still want to trust my choice and follow me? I mean, are you certain you want to leave your fate on my hands?" Raising an eyebrow, Virus queried in anticipation.

To that question, however, Hellarose only displayed a relaxed smile as her eyes became like two crescent moons. "Hot face, did I ever tell you? You have this mysterious aura surrounding you which makes everyone around you feel as if as long as you're there with them, everything's going to be just fine."

"Furthermore, after being around you for a while, I've come to realize you're a genius unlike anyone I've seen before, you're getting stronger at a breakneck pace which honestly leaves me confused and speechless as to how that is even possible."

Despite articulating that, the veiled Hellarose had no intention of interrogating him regarding how it was possible to get so strong at such a speed since she understood everyone had some secrets that they didn't want anyone to be aware of. As a matter of course, that included herself as well.

"Moreover, I can also guarantee that you're very smart after seeing how you made that Sphinx wish it had never seen you." By the end of her words, she couldn't help but titter.

"So... I'm sure, I'll come with you... oh, that is unless you think I'm a nuisance, in that case, I'll just choose another gate just like we did in the Sphinx trial." By the end of her sentence, she lowered her head, as if she didn't want him to see what kind of eyes and face she was making at that moment.

Listening to everything she had to say, Virus merely stepped forward and put his palm over her cheek on the veil before gently raising it. While making direct eye contact, showing a bright smile, he claimed, "You are a nuisance..."

"..." Hellarose's eyes went wide open at once as her pupils dilated. While a bitter sensation of disappointment was overwhelming her heart, she broke eye contact between them before talking in the most natural tone she could muster right now, "If that's the case, then I guess this is where we part-"

However, before she could even finish, Virus proceeded with the rest of his sentence, "But in spite of you being a huge nuisance, it's been fun tagging along with you. So let's be together until the very end."

By 'the end', Virus obviously meant the end of the Invisible Ancient Fortress world.

Meanwhile, the corners of Hellarose's eyes moistened hearing that it's been fun being around her as she came to realize that he had been teasing her earlier.

So, while beaming a smile, she nodded and asked, "Is this a proposal?" Without any pause, she also started shrieking in fake excitement, "Yes! Yes! Yes! Let's get married and be together until the very end, honey!"

A tic of anger and annoyance covered Virus' forehead once more as he slapped her face away, albeit mildly. "I take it back, go by yourself!"

Invading his personal space, however, she crossed her arms with his and started giggling, "Come on, honey! Don't abandon your wifey that easily! Let's go!"

Rubbing the temple of his forehead, Virus felt a headache coming his way. He was already deeply regretting not having sent the nuisance away when he had the opportunity.

"Let's go." Randomly picking a portal gate, while Hellarose refused to let go of his arm, the two entered it together.

The instant they arrived at the other side, the scene the two of them faced was that of a gigantic molten core with burning lava everywhere!

Fortunately, in the location they were standing at, there was some kind of barrier that was keeping all the heat outside of their boundary. In case the boundary didn't exist, the two of them would've long melted away.

"Oh, no! Did we enter the gate of death?" All color seemed to have left Hellarose's countenance at once as she felt that they had entered a death trap that was impossible to escape from.. Though they were temporarily safe, they were not going to be able to survive for long without food and other vital daily necessities.

Chapter 467 - Opposing The Fate

On the other side, Virus was also furrowing his brows in a frown when the same archaic ancient sound that he heard many times on each floor interrupted his deliberation.

"Congratulations to you both trial taker number nine and eleven! You have both reached the center of the maze of infinity, thus, you've successfully completed the third floor!"

In reaction to that announcement, both Virus and Hellarose felt as if they were listening to the most beautiful melody in the world. At the same time, a substantial amount of smoke came out of nowhere as it entered their marks at the back of their palms and strengthened them even further!

One moment, they both had wondered if that was the end of the road for them and that they were going to die, but the next moment they were notified that it was indeed the end of the road, just not the way they had imagined.

Soon, the emotionless voice of the archaic being on the other side seemed to momentarily regain some of its sentiment as it added, "You should thank the heavens for picking that portal gate just now, if you had chosen any other one, considering the abrupt increase in the level of difficulty in the following trials after going into the Sphinx's glass gate, I bet you both would've been dead already!"

"Hmm, you are a lucky person trial taker number eleven, even though I had some hopes for other participants to survive, there were none for you. And yet against all the odds, you kept getting stronger and stronger as you opposed your fate." The archaic being wasn't trying to compliment Virus as it was merely stating the truth and nothing but the truth.

"Are you going to send us to the fourth floor, now?" Not bothering himself with its nonsense, Virus inquired.

"Yes. You are going to the fourth floor now which is the final floor for you participants of the Invisible Ancient Fortress. The rest cannot be accessed by you." Without holding back, the archaic being clarified.

'Hmm, so there are still higher floors, just that we are forbidden from entering them, interesting... I wonder what this place is.' Being the analytic Artificial Intelligence he was, Virus deliberated the true identity of this place. Albeit, not having enough information, his scrutiny was fruitless.

"However, do not be worried, the dangerous trials have ended for you guys, the next floor will be slightly different." The second the ancient sound was done talking, both Hellarose and Virus vanished from the center of the maze of infinity.

...

Amongst a world of clouds, there was an unimaginably broad and lengthy case of stairs that seemed to disappear off somewhere into the infinite clouds. Alas, only an extremely limited amount of the stairs could be perceived

Nonetheless, in the sections that could be indeed discerned with the naked eyes, on both sides of the stairs, there were hundreds of library panels filled with books that had been put on display.

Suddenly at this time, at the very foot of the stairs, two figures flashed into existence.

"Hmm?" Immediately, both of the newcomers seemed to have been startled as they looked around at the world of clouds in amazement and awe.

"Phew... such an otherworldly place, so mesmerizing I feel like I would lose myself." In utter disbelief, Hellarose exclaimed.

"Yeah..." Although Virus was rarely moved by beauty alone to such an extent, he had to admit that it was a stunning place to be at.

"What's this place though?"

"Trial taker number nine and eleven, Welcome to the fourth floor. I shall not tell you the name of this location since you are not worthy. I'll straight away get to the explanations." There was no contempt whatsoever in its tone when it said 'you are not worthy' as if it was merely stating a fact.

"Do you see that case of stairs and the panels of books that are placed on each side of the stairs?" Throwing that rhetorical question, the archaic noise continued, "that shall be your trial and reward as well."

"You will be given one chance to climb that path of stairs and reach the height you can endure. The moment you reach the limit of your ascension, you are advised to immediately pick the library panel at your level and choose one book of your own desire from there."

"Keep in mind, you are borrowing the knowledge. The instant you pick a book, all of its knowledge shall be lent to you until you achieve its purpose."

"Hmm? Is that so? But is ascending the stairs hard? Why is that the case? Does it consume our energy the higher we climb?" Wanting to know more, Virus raised a logical question.

"Yes, it will be hard. No, it does not consume your energy. In this specific trial, two factors determine the height you can climb." Maintaining its emotionless voice, the ancient being elucidated.

Subsequently, the elaboration started, "The first one is the mark of the Invisible Ancient Fortress World on the back of your palm. The more distinct you were capable of making the tattoo so far, the longer you shall be able to endure the pressure of the stairs as long as you also possess the second factor."

Since the voice was yet to get to the ending line of the explanation, it went on, "The second factor is the extent of your determination and willpower, the more determination you have, the further you may be able to tread on the path."

"However, be warned, you cannot climb the stairs without any of the two, both have to be present."

"If you have determination alone but no mark, then the pressure shall throw you off the stairs." Using the most impassive tone, it resumed, "If you have the mark but no determination, the stairs shall still expel you at once!"

"Hmm, I see. And I assume the higher we climb, the more valuable the books we can select from the panels become, correct?" Just to make sure, Virus pointed out this small detail that hadn't been mentioned during the entire course of the conversation. Although it was highly unlikely, he didn't want to climb all the way up just to realize that all the books were of the same worth, that would be a tragic outcome indeed.

"That is correct."

Releasing a pronounced sigh, Virus threw his final question to the table, "I understand now. Can we begin?"

"Yes, you can, very soon. But wait a moment."

Just as the Archaic sound was done, abruptly, the two saw more light flashing as several figures materialized in front of them.

They were respectively the two disguised participants who still had their cloaks on, Hadelia, the academician, and finally the third prince of the barbarians Ra who had just escaped from Virus' grasp a while ago.

"Huh?" Catching the sight of Ra, energy began to bubble within Virus' physique while he was getting ready to charge at him before ripping him into many pieces immediately.

On the other side, Ra's face went ashen white instantly as he looked around nervously, trying to find any path he could escape to.

Chapter 468 - Stay Your Hand!

Alas, just as Virus was about to attack and annihilate the enemy, the ancient sound warned him, "Stay your hand! No one is permitted to engage in battle on this sacred ground. Keep your grudges for when you are out of this place or you shall be expelled outside at once!"

Listening to it, Virus clicked his tongue in dissatisfaction while Ra heaved a sigh of relief as all fear left him. Hellarose was also gritting her teeth so hard that it was a miracle they weren't breaking apart.

Subsequently, the archaic being elaborated everything to the newcomers until they were also put in the loop.

"Hmm, out of the original eleven, seven trial takers survived this time around which is honestly higher than I had expected initially. Well, whatever, you shall begin!" As if it was mumbling to itself, the archaic sound uttered a few words before announcing the commencement of the trial.

Immediately, Ra, the cloaked people, Hadelia, and the academician stormed toward the stairs as they initiated their trial.

"Shall we go as well?" Meanwhile, reaching out with his hand, Virus garnered Hellarose's attention who had been drowning in hatred glaring at Ra's rushing back.

Virus' stretched-out arm swiftly brought Hellarose out of her enraged state to a more normal one as she extended her hand as well, trying to grab it.

However, just as she was about to get it, Virus withdrew his palm and said, "Let's go. Forget about your hostility for now. It appears like even the slightest bit of distraction can impact your final results since determination is involved. So, focus! Focus hard."

"Hmph, I know." Feeling mad about how she had been made a fool of, Hellarose dashed forward as she entered the trial of the staircase as well.

'Good thing she's back to normal.' Virus thought grinning while looking at her figure dashing through the stairs.

Afterward, seeing everyone was gone, Virus also took one step after another as he launched into it.

The instant he took his first step onto the stairs, Virus sensed a negligible burn at the back of his palm, thus, sticking out his hand, he examined to see if anything unusual was happening to the mark of the Invisible Ancient Fortress World.

And indeed, he could see an extremely meager amount of smoke gradually leaving the mark.

'So that means the maximum level of height one can ascend to is as far as this mark can last, in case the bearer of the mark has enough willpower and determination to last that far that is.' With that, Virus finally understood exactly how important the distinction degree of the mark was.

As a matter of fact, that had been indeed one of the first few sentences the archaic voice had blabbered about in the first floor, notifying him that 'the final prize and rewards will be calculated according to how distinct, bold, and colorful one's mark of Invisible Ancient Fortress World becomes'.

'Good thing I broke lots of records on the earlier trials.' Each time Virus had broken a record due to overachieving like in the trial of the fallen skin of the Emissary Flesh or on the first floor where he went against the smokey beasts several levels stronger than him, the final smoke reward he received were multiplied by several times the usual amount.

And now, he was finally seeing the outcome of all the hard work and effort he had experienced on the way here.

After that, no longer bothering himself with the mark, Virus took one step after another as he climbed the stairs at a moderate pace.

For a while, he didn't feel any different than usual. But that was only until he started feeling a slight degree of unexplainable pressure that appeared to be weighing down on him in a way he quite could not describe.

'Maybe it's a pressure that directly affects the soul and precisely targets the willpower.' This was a theory he was coming up with randomly without much pondering. A theory that could be either be correct or incorrect.

As the ongoing trial proceeded, slowly but surely, on some of the trial takers' foreheads beads of sweat began to gather. It looked like they were feeling the influence of the pressure now.

The person with the worst condition amongst the trial takers so far was in fact Hadelia who was currently gritting her teeth as she persisted through one step after another.

Apparently, her mark was also about to flicker out any second now.

The people who were the most casual yet while treading ahead of everyone else, however, were the two cloaked people whose countenances were not visible.

Truthfully, other than Virus, the group that had performed the best were those two who had gathered a lot of smokes as they had pushed through the trials one after another without any of them being even injured.

That difference became even more obvious when one compared it to the other groups.

Amongst the academicians, only one had remained alive.

Between the two barbarians, Ra was the sole survivor who had barely escaped the claw of death that was called Virus.

And when it came to the group of the monstrous beasts as well, thanks to Virus, Hadelia alone was going to leave the Invisible Ancient Fortress World.

Last but not least, even the veiled lady's party had one person less since the supposed death bringer of the Invisible Fortress, Virus, had beheaded her as well.

While the representatives continued with the two cloaked people at the front and the academician at their tail, Virus was currently at the very back as he gazed upon the panting figure of Hadelia who had yet to give up.

'It was good to see you again, Hadelia.' Briefly remembering his first visit to the Cultivation Earth, a strange feeling of nostalgia began to overwhelm Virus.

He felt as if those were the simple days when his single worry was to steal some fruit from the sect's treasury before getting the hell out of there.

Chapter 469 - Willpower

And yet, that simple purpose had resulted in a lot of memories and encounters along the way which he was going to remember forever. When he recalled those memories, the person at the forefront of them all was his apprentice sister Astes and afterward came the pagoda master, Hadelia, the Sun and Moon Elders, and everyone else!

True, many of those memories weren't anything quite worth recalling or even good memories at all, to be frank. But still, they had already become a part of Virus. A part of who he is today.

After delving into that short nostalgia, Virus shook his head as he overtook Hadelia and walked toward the following person at the path ahead of him, Hellarose.

Studying the condition of Hellarose in front of him next, Virus saw she still seemed to be quite comfortable as she resisted the pressure and went forward.

As Virus increased his pace and slowly walked beside her, he looked at the several rolling sweats on her forehead and teased her, "You look like you're about to shit yourself, want me to piggyback you?"

However, much to Virus' incredulity, he realized Hellarose was absolutely focused on the task at hand, to the point she had yet to even notice Virus' existence beside him.

'Those eyes, they're terrifyingly concentrated.' Indeed, just as Virus was claiming, currently, Hellarose's eyes were exuding a strange illusion of light made of focus. If willpower could take a form, Virus would say it would probably be similar to those eyes. Everything beside her had no meaning at the moment, the only thing those eyes could see was the path ahead.

Not wanting to disturb her in any way since she seemed to be in some sort of odd state, Virus took over her as he proceeded ahead once more.

Now, the next participant in his line of sight was the third prince of the barbarians, Ra.

Quickly charging beside his worn-out physique, Virus exclaimed, "How can you live with yourself after running away from me like such a coward?"

Spotting Virus beside himself, a shiver went down Ra's spine momentarily before he picked up his pace and overtook Virus.

Unfortunately for him, Virus easily caught up to him and added, "When you go home back to the barbarians, every time one of them looks into your eyes, don't forget that their prince was a coward who escaped for his life after having used one of his own people, the most loyal one, as a meat shield. Shame on you, trash!" Roaring that at his ear, Virus spat on Ra's path to the front.

Ptooy!

"AHHHHHH!" Screaming out of exasperation and disheartenment, all of Ra's determination and willpower seemed to falter and crumble away at once as he was promptly propelled backward as the stairs expelled him out of the trial.

Rolling back through the stairs one after another, when Ra returned to the feet of the staircase again, he stood up and started shouting and cursing in Virus' direction like a maniac, "I'll fucking kill you! I'll fucking kill you, bastard! One day, I'll fucking kill you, just you wait! You hear me?! Wait-"

Albeit, before he could even finish, his body vanished away as he was transferred outside the Invisible Ancient Fortress World at once!

Just as the archaic voice had told them, everyone was given a single chance alone to climb the stairs and in case they didn't pick a book panel when they were at their utmost limit and fell off, they would simply lose their chance of gaining a book from the panels as they would be naturally teleported out of the trial worlds.

"Hahahaha." Seeing that he had succeeded, Virus began laughing uproariously as pleasure and amusement tickled him. 'Who could have thought it was that easy to rip apart his willpower. Such a weak mentality.'

After sending Ra away from the trial, immediately, all distractions left Virus' expression as he became absorbed and engrossed in the process of the trial itself.

By now, Hadelia had reached the ceiling of her limitations, therefore, being wise enough, she stopped and entered one of the library panels beside the current height of her stair.

Meanwhile, while the absorption degree of Virus had been elevated to a monstrous extent, he could feel some of the pressure that had been previously building up over his body disappearing.

'So, the more determined we are, the less the pressure will get, huh? Though the pressure was already very minor to begin with, which means it's not just the active concentration that matters but rather the passive level of determination and willpower one builds throughout one's life is even more essential.' Through logical analysis and comparison, Virus concluded quickly.

As he reached that conclusion, a frown of seriousness took shape on his face as he proceeded with even more determination.

One step...

Two steps...

One step after another!

It didn't take him long to arrive right at the back of the academician he didn't even know the name of.

Nevertheless, witnessing Virus about to catch up, the academician scoffed at him before picking up his speed. Clearly, he was in utter contempt of Virus' funny attempt of trying to move ahead of him.

That, however, didn't draw out even a minor reaction from Virus. Virus just increased his pace as he gradually reached the same stair level as the academician before overtaking him and leaving him in the dust.

Although he felt a little amused by how frustrated and offended the academician looked when he realized he was no match for Virus, it still wasn't to the degree where he would spare him a second glance since it felt beneath him to bother himself with a nobody.

Thus, continuing the test, Virus locked his gaze on his last targets, the cloaked figures!

At the same time, he also effortlessly determined that half of the smokes had left the mark by now, which meant he was closer to his limits by that much.

Chapter 470 - The Peak

"Now then, shall we overtake these mysterious individuals?" Virus whispered while grinning from ear to ear before picking up his speed.

As he got closer and closer to the two, they seemed to notice Virus' existence at last.

"Hmph."

However, with a harrumph of contempt, one of them reached out and grabbed the other one's hand. Then, as if they weren't even that serious before, they doubled their speed at once!

"Oh? Would you look at these two cuties?" With his smile widening even further, Virus was feeling even more amused now as he also sped up!

Once again, he was following closely behind the two. Spotting him in their tail again, a look of momentary surprise could be seen in their body language. But they quickly disguised it just like their faces as they increased their speed again.

After that, while Virus chased after them, the two continued putting more energy in their legs, concentration, and willpower as they were barely able to stay ahead of Virus.

However, if one listened meticulously, he would be able to hear the panting breaths of the two cloaked participants.

"You two finally about to hit your limits?" Although Virus was saying that himself, some droplets of sweat were also occupying his forehead.

Although he was confident about his willpower considering how he had lived for an astronomical amount of time, and during that period, he had confirmed his will again and again until he became the great rebel Virus, for some reason his willpower and determination seemed to be weakening or faltering as time ran by.

Despite him having access to a lot of willpower, for now, noticing how his determination had been influenced by that much, he was taken aback.

'Let's see what's causing this.' As this notion and doubt flickered through his mindscape, while continuing his race with the two he had respectively named cutie number one and cutie number two, he also entered a deep state of analysis as he tried to figure out the possible source that might be affecting his willpower.

At the same time, elevating his speed to another degree, Virus got closer and closer to the two until he was just about to go past them. That was when the one whose hand was being held forcefully let go and whispered, "Go."

Since he was very close to the two, Virus could easily determine that the voice belonged to a woman.

Nevertheless, as the woman let go of the other unknown figure's hand, suddenly, the other person's speed intensified to a great degree as that person stormed away, creating a considerable gap between them.

'Oh, as expected, cutie number one was carrying cutie number two before.' As he thought that, Virus immediately left cutie number two and chased after the first cutie.

Meanwhile, as he had gone through enough data already after analyzing the current changes of his physique, Virus arrived at a possible cause of the slight suppression in his willpower.

'Prior to time traveling to the Earth of the past, I don't believe anything could have shaken my willpower. My willpower was all about what my mind desired and nothing else.'

'But now, my heart seems to have also truly joined the fray for some unknown reasons. This wasn't supposed to be possible, yet here it is happening to me.'

'Once again, it comes to my heart!' Indeed, just as Virus had confirmed his weakness of the heart before, now, he came to realize his heart might be suppressing or hindering his willpower to some extent again!

'Begone!' As he indoctrinated that to himself shortly, he also increased his speed even further.

Once again, right at the back of the cloaked figure, Virus could hear the panting noise that had crept up by another notch!

'She's reaching her limits and this is getting boring now.' Determining that cutie number one was also a woman due to the tone of her puff and blow, Virus pushed every bit of speed he could muster at the moment, an amount of speed that could be maintained without being thrown off the staircase.

Instantly, his frame was like that of a blur as he overtook the cloaked person!

Behind Virus, the cloaked person seemed to have been startled beyond belief as she froze in her standing position.

"Hahaha." Chuckling out loud for a second, Virus proceeded even higher, no longer paying any attention to his opponent who was never truly an opponent, to begin with.

Now that Virus was the one ahead of everyone else, there were only two opponents he was competing with, one was the staircase itself, and the other was actually Virus himself.

As he took continuous steps forward, internally, Virus was suppressing any interferences that might originate from the heart.

The manner he was accomplishing this was by entering a high-speed perception almost close to his special time-freeze, because, every time he activated his time-freeze and focused only on his intelligence and nothing else, Virus had this slight sensation as if his heart was falling behind and couldn't react fast enough compared to his wit.

Of course, Virus also knew that wasn't a permanent solution and that he needed to find a sustainable one in the future, or else this might become a big issue at some point.

In the meantime, the higher Virus went, the slower his speed became since the pressure of willpower was heightening at a pace visible to the naked eye.

Soon, the oppression was so much that Virus could no longer even sprint as he instead walked step by step.

Meanwhile, behind him, gritting his teeth, cutie number one finally reached the utmost level of her limitations and conceded to a library panel beside her staircase.

One footstep after another!

Looking ahead of him, Virus attempted to make out the highest point of this trial of stairs.

After a certain point onwards, Virus noticed that the number of books on each library panel and even the number of the library panels themselves was decreasing the more strides he took to the front.

He also determined parallel to the stair he was currently at, there were only ten panels that have been installed alongside one another. Furthermore, there were only around a hundred books on each of them.

Afterward, when he strolled even further, Virus soon came to be aware of the fact that the number of panels had decreased to eight and even more so, the book count on each panel was lowered to eighty.

'Hmm, the highest point I can see is...'

In fact, since the participants had begun from the feet of the staircase, all they could witness was up to a specific point on the stairs and for unknown reasons, the clouds were barring their sight from perceiving any further, as if they were not eligible nor worthy enough to see past that point.

Of course, according to the ancient voice, they weren't even worthy enough to be there and them being there was only a temporary allowance that would be soon redacted.

Nevertheless, at the highest level of everyone's perception and eyesight, a single white dais, full of grandeur and ancientness had been planted as it spread its grandeur from the loftiest position of the staircase downward.

Above the dais, only a single book was resting, waiting for its first worthy bearer to come to it!