

Void 1631

Chapter 1631 Curiosity [2]

Nothing much happened that night. Melania finished putting away her groceries and then brought him some sheets and blankets to create a comfortable space in the living room.

After that, she went upstairs, and August was left on the ground floor by himself.

It wasn't as if that meant anything. All he did was set up his bed and lie down. His eyes were already getting heavy, whether because of the energy he'd spent throughout the day or all the food he ate.

'To sleep tonight and figure everything else out tomorrow...'

August sighed to himself, staring into the darkness above.

Were there really six more days worth of things for him to do?

'I don't know, but I'm definitely going to find out.'

He didn't want to spend the next six days wallowing in loneliness. If he couldn't find something to do, then he'd create something to do.

A positive mindset. It was August's best quality.

As his eyes closed and his consciousness faded into a dreamland, staying optimistic was his main priority.

August expected to wake up and leave before Melania even noticed, but he was completely wrong.

His morning was not fated to be a quiet one, and he...was not the first one awake in the house.

August's consciousness returned to him not because he was ready to wake up, but because he felt something strange.

'What...is that?'

He squinched his eyes as light flooded into his eyelids. Suddenly, the feeling of something poking at his cheeks brought him completely awake.

'What?'

He instantly shot up. His eyes opened and he looked down to his side.

"Ah!"

His sudden action surprised the being who was poking at his cheek, causing them to jump back.

August scratched his head in confusion as he looked around, but he wasn't seeing wrong.

There wasn't one, but two.

They had jumped back together, and they currently stood a few feet away from him and stared at him with a strong curiosity in their eyes.

"You guys are..."

They were small creatures, roughly three feet long, who looked more like lizards than dragons. They had small wings attached to their backs and tiny horns that indicated that they were something more, but their general figures were far different from the dragons August had ever seen.

"They must be earth dragons."

August smiled. He looked around to see if Melania was anywhere, but it seemed she was still upstairs.

"Nice to meet you," he said, addressing the two young dragons.

Their eyes twinkled as if they understood his words, and though they were still a bit suspicious, they inched forward as their curiosity took hold of them.

'They must be young. Three or four years old at most.'

August was born in his human form. It was because of Damien's influence. Other dragons would always be born as dragons and would first transform into their humanoid forms when they were around ten years old.

August was an outlier, but that was one of the first things he understood in life, so it didn't surprise him.

The two young dragons hesitated to play because they didn't know if he was friendly. It was easy to sense from their movements.

'Well, she told me not to do anything suspicious...'

But, wasn't it fine to entertain them a little before he left?

August's smile widened. He activated his Azure Dragon Bloodline just slightly, allowing his horns and scales to grow a bit.

It was just enough for him to have a draconic aura that the children could recognize.

Their eyes sparkled when they realized that he was like them.

Young dragons would always have one of two personalities.

A portion of them would only ever recognize their families. They'd never trust others outside of their lineage until they grew and learned enough.

The other kind was the complete opposite. They were friendly to any and all dragons, and were generally more inquisitive than anyone else.

August was a mix of the two, a true outlier, but these kids were obviously the latter.

The second they felt his aura, their eyes sparkled and they jumped at him, tackling him to the ground.

"Hahaha!"

August laughed at their silliness and entertained them well.

Since earth dragon children seemed to enjoy wrestling and playing physically, he summoned a string of water and waved it around to satiate their curiosity.

'They're like cats.'

August had never seen a cat before, but he'd seen them in Qinglong's memory and heard about them from Damien.

Watching those kids run around and chase the water string made him feel like those stories and memories were coming to life.

It also reminded him of himself as a child.

Just as he was fascinated with mana, they were enamored by any and all new things. They wanted to explore and learn, and that made August feel like they'd achieve great things in life.

'Ah...'

Perhaps that would be difficult considering their starting point.

August suddenly remembered where he was.

In a place like this, where even the architecture made one feel like there was no such thing as hope, how were kids meant to dream?

How were they meant to grow up and believe that they could be something outside of their circumstances?

And even if they did, what kind of opportunities could they have to make their way out?

'This is a problem.'

Dragons weren't meant to live like this. There was no justification that could explain these circumstances.

'It really is that bad.'

He hadn't seen those parts of Qinglong's memories. He'd only heard Damien's explanation.

August trusted his father above anything else, of course, but he also wanted to see the corruption in the kingdom for himself.

This was the start of it.

He'd only been here for a day, but he'd already found an issue rooted in the very core of this society.

'I guess it really is my job to change it.'

August shook his head.

'No, not just me.'

He alone wouldn't be enough to turn a rotten society into something magical.

'I need people. Allies and subordinates. People who will see this thing to the end with me.'

He really didn't want to do it alone.

A passion was reignited in his heart.

He'd always wanted to be a hero, but he didn't really know what it meant.

He wanted to save people, but he never really understood how.

He was young and ignorant. He had dreams without any substance, dreams that were impossible to achieve.

He was older now. Not fully mature yet, but enough to understand what he actually could do with his own power.

'My goal isn't something that needs to be held off until I'm on the throne.'

His goals needed to be slowly achieved as he aimed for it, and when he finally took that spot back and honored his ancestor, he could set everything in stone so that Arulion would become a real sanctuary for dragons.

August clenched his fist as he reaffirmed himself.

The string of water he'd summoned burst and splashed all over the two earth dragon children, which ended up being even more fun for them.

And, as if on cue, Melania walked down the stairs and froze at the sight she was seeing.

Her eyes turned cold, and when August saw her, he immediately knew.

'I'm in trouble, aren't I?'

Chapter 1632 Curiosity [3]

"Out."

Melania wasn't playing around.

The instant she saw her those children playing with the stranger she'd made the mistake of letting into their home, she saw red.

"I—"

"Out."

August didn't get a chance to talk.

He stood up slowly with his hands up, not saying a single word.

Melania was too defensive. He knew he didn't do anything, and she probably knew it as well, but she had no choice but to adopt this kind of attitude.

Why...?

'I'll have to find out.'

He wasn't going to push it. Whatever the case was, she was defensive to protect those around her.

These earth dragon children were obviously very important to her. If this was what she had to do to protect them, then he had nothing to say about it.

August walked to the door and out of the house in one move.

He could hear the sad screeching of those small dragons who wanted him to stay, but he put it out of his mind.

As he stood there, he heard the door open behind him and turned around.

"Melania...?"

Why had she followed him outside?

She didn't make him wait long for the answer. In a single motion, she stuffed a piece of paper into his hand and then returned to the house.

"Oh..."

August opened it up, finding a map that led him back to the city.

He smiled slightly.

'Well, at least I didn't leave a bad impression.'

His mood had slightly improved despite his sudden eviction.

'I know what I'm going to do for the next six days.'

He wanted to find out why Melania was the way she was.

Not by stalking her or anything of the sort, but by understanding the problems of the people and the environment they were truly in.

'She said not to go out at night, but that's pretty much all I'm going to do.'

August walked away, following the map he was given.

The city had a lot more to offer than just food and entertainment.

It was a hub for people. A place that contained both questions and answers. There, August could start his quest for the truth.

'It'll be a good week.'

A positive mindset.

Since he was practically throwing himself into muddy waters with everything he hoped to attain...

...he really, really had to rely on that positive mindset.

That day was spent well.

August made his first priority when he got into the city finding a place to stay. Once he got himself a room in a seemingly good hotel, he went back out into the world.

To find information, what were the best places to visit?

Some cities had information brokers that made the job easy, but Arulion didn't have that kind of organization.

The noble circle and commoner circle stayed completely disconnected. Not a single person broke that tradition or followed money, not even those from the Aureat Clan who treasured money.

August had to do it the hard way.

He traveled the city again, visiting a lot of the same spots he saw the day before.

However, this time, he used the perception-blocking artifact.

When people weren't aware of his presence, when people thought there was nobody around, what would they talk about?

That was what August wanted to know, and he spent the entire day trying to answer that question.

'I didn't get much, but...'

The people were not happy with their lives. That much was certain.

'For the most part, nobody talks about the nobles. They just complain about the city being cramped and changing into something worse.'

They did complain about a few policies, but the problem was that they didn't act like dragons at all. They'd completely forgotten their origins, and as they'd conformed to their lives, their original instincts were killed over and over again.

A majority of the citizens had been born into these circumstances, so they didn't question anything. They didn't even realize that their daily lives in their human forms were already wrong.

They were dragons, not humans!

Unfortunately, these dragons without strong lineages didn't receive ancestral memories, since their ancestors weren't strong enough to leave them.

Was it still a problem if they didn't realize they were suffering? If they were happy, did their lives need to be changed?

That wasn't a question for August to answer yet, but it was one he'd be forced to ask himself in the future.

There was no way to bring them out of their current plight easily.

And, though it seemed like a shame, a portion of them would likely reject change entirely, even if it was for the sake of a better future.

'It'll definitely be a long road. Maybe even a life-long thing.'

For now, he had all of the information he needed from people. But, he did have one thing he still needed to do.

'I remember the way now.'

He made his way to Melania's neighborhood one more time and slipped something under the door.

He left without making trouble and it seemed she wasn't home to notice, so the story of that gift could be saved for another time.

It was a six-hour detour, but it was one he needed to make, especially since he wanted to explore these neighborhoods again, intentionally this time.

August once again found himself wandering the streets at night.

He was walking back to the city, but he wasn't taking the same route he came through.

'I...' August thought to himself.

'I got lucky last time.'

He was instantly met with more activity than he expected.

There were people everywhere. They weren't doing much, but they were standing around as if they were waiting for something to happen.

When August, a relatively skinny boy who didn't look like he belonged, arrived, their eyes immediately darted to him.

'Hmm...'

They were obviously scanning him, trying to determine if he was worth going after.

'And we're still in the outskirts.'

There weren't many people out at night in these parts, so what were they possibly waiting for?

'Ah...'

August had a realization.

'It's me.'

He had come the night before. Others had probably seen him. When they noticed that he'd come back...

'It looks like I accidentally made myself a target.'

His guard went up instantly. He could sense their hostility from a mile away, so there was no need to doubt it.

'Well, it's nice to have some practice before the elimination round.'

He needed to see how fights with normal people compared to fights with his father.

'Though...'

August smiled a little.

'...I really can't sense danger at all.'

They looked threatening, but that was about it. If they actually fought, August was confident they wouldn't stand a chance.

But, just like every theory, that one had to be tested.

And when would there be a better opportunity to do so than now?

August stepped forward, and five of those dragons who prowled the night stood up.

They were obviously going to fight, but it was already a bit of a shame for those nameless dragons.

After all, the man they were being compared to was none other than Damien Void.

Even Gods would feel inferior at that point.

So what were they to do?

Chapter 1633 Corruption [1]

Was there a point in watching the fight?

It would definitely be interesting to see how August fought, since he didn't have many opportunities to show off his skill, but it would definitely make more of an impact to see how he responded to geniuses on his own level.

These dragons, while they were strong enough to run the streets, they didn't hold a candle to people who could participate in the heir wars.

If they got on the bad side of any of those geniuses, they'd lose more than just their lives.

There was a reason why they stayed in the outskirts and preyed on the weak. They didn't have any sort of standing in the ocean that was the real world, so they had to rely on the hierarchy they'd created for themselves in the small pond they inhabited.

For August, they were just target practice.

His physical ability alone was enough to take care of them. Considering that Damien was a close-combat enjoyer and he taught August how to fight, August's martial ability was undoubted.

His elemental ability, his talent in utilizing mana, was what he wanted to practice. Not because it was worse than his martial talent, but because that was where he wanted to specialize.

It was obvious since he was a child how much August loved mana. Naturally, he was going to become someone who used it as his main combat technique.

The offensive capabilities of water needed to be discovered by its users. For most, this meant using it to create projectiles.

Qinglong needed to find different methods. He was a dragon. Naturally, his techniques would reflect his lineage.

He started with the basic skills of a dragon and evolved them to work with his element. From there, he expanded and expanded until he had an entire repertoire of attacks that nobody outside of his species would ever be able to utilize.

Now, August had those skills as a basis to create his own unique arsenal.

It wasn't necessary, but it was part of his ambition.

A few shady dragons in some random street far away from any prying eyes were perfect for testing and learning what needed to be changed.

That was the only worth they had for August.

He didn't view their battle as any more than it was.

There were five of them against only one of him. As they focused on their obvious advantages, August surprised them by attacking first.

A stream of water appeared on the ground, unseen in the darkness, and when it reached them, it stabbed upward and incapacitated one of the thugs.

August shot forward before the rest could react. He grabbed another one's face and slammed water into his orifices and pores.

The scream that followed was...not pleasant. Anyone who saw the battle and instantly turned their eyes away.

It was confirmed within a second that August wasn't a target. He wasn't someone they should've touched.

These five would be the only ones facing consequences because they were the only five stupid enough to do something without confirming anything about their opponent.

August did everything in one motion.

All of his combat against other sentient beings had just been against Damien, but that was only a part of his training.

More than sparring, he was out in the mountains fighting the creatures Damien summoned to challenge him.

They weren't just wolves and pigs anymore, either. They were powerful creatures with more than enough ability to fatally injure him.

August had become used to fighting against packs. He was always standing with six or more enemies on the other side, and to properly defeat them without being defeated himself, he was forced to learn how to maneuver in battle.

August's real power came out when he was faced with multiple enemies. The fluidity of his movements could be used to their full potential in such a setting.

The last three of the thugs lost their will to fight when they saw two of their friends fall within a few seconds. Neither of them was dead, but both had serious injuries that wouldn't heal with a month or two of recovery.

They already wanted to run, but August had no plan to let them.

The ground dampened, and while the rest had their steps slowed as the dirt became mud, August slid across the water particles on the surface and used them to propel himself forward.

Two of them were right next to each other. They made it incredibly easy for him.

August arrived between them and raised his hands.

Water flowed out and grabbed one of them by the neck. The other was punched in the face. Water rushed into his throat and suffocated him until he passed out, only returning to August's hands when he was on the ground.

The last one was already running.

He turned on his heel the instant August moved towards his friends and bolted with everything he had.

Though, August didn't mind. He was holding the perfect projectile.

A dragon flew through the air, though not with his own wings. He was manhandled by a water claw and whipped into the air on a perfect trajectory to crash into his fleeing comrade.

Neither of them would be incapacitated by an attack like that. It was more than likely that they walked away unharmed.

Still, August didn't give chase. It just wasn't worth it against opponents who'd lost their will to fight.

His mind had already moved on to different things.

'It's still not right.'

August found a critical flaw in his techniques.

Well, it wasn't so much of a flaw as it was a difference.

'My techniques are too much like Dad's.'

Ever since that fateful day when August was still a young child, Damien had taken special care to make sure he taught August according to draconic ideologies, only mixing in human ideologies where he felt they were absolutely necessary.

However, August had always adored his father. He strived to be like him, and due to that, when he developed his fighting style, he subconsciously mimicked him.

That meant his techniques were more like what a human would use.

There wasn't really a problem with this, especially since draconic techniques came out naturally when he was in his true form, but it did lead to a strange predicament.

August couldn't use Qinglong's techniques when he was in his human form, nor could he interpolate them into something useful.

'I originally thought it would be easier when I'm actually fighting, but that's not the case.'

Perhaps he was never destined to follow the same path as his ancestor.

'But...will I have to do it all from scratch?'

August personally experienced how hard it was for Qinglong to create a completely new style. He didn't want to do the same if he didn't have to.

'Then again, I guess I don't.'

Qinglong left a legacy that allowed his descendants to see what an Azure Dragon could do. Damien gave him a unique thought process that allowed him to see the world from many different perspectives.

With their guidance and experience, August already had something of a path in front of him.

'It's just up to me to define it.'

In the end, he did gain something useful from his fight.

His mentality improved, and more importantly, the common street thugs wouldn't lay their hands on him anymore.

All in all, despite being short and unexciting, it was a fight worth having.

Now that it was over, August was already back on track.

He had come here to find out some truths, didn't he?

He wasn't planning to leave until he'd done exactly that.

Chapter 1634 Corruption [2]

In societies like these, street thugs never just existed on their own. It was stupid to think that nobody in the outskirts had the power to deal with them, especially since most of them were just 2nd class dragons.

If Melania wanted to, she alone could clear up the streets and let people walk freely.

However, she couldn't. Not because of them, but because of those they followed.

Sometimes, small gangs would act recklessly because they were young and ignorant, but for the most part, these thugs submitted themselves to stronger powers for the sake of survival.

They got themselves backing, so that when the situation came where they needed it, they could escape unscathed.

There were two main gangs in Arragon. They opposed each other but banded together against anyone trying to encroach on their territory.

It was impossible for a common thug to know the true strength of the leaders of those gangs, but they were estimated to be high 3rd class or even 4th class.

Their closest associates were of a similar level. These people monopolized most of the income of the two gangs, and they controlled everyone who wanted to commit crimes in Arragon.

People couldn't even stand up for themselves anymore.

A few thugs wouldn't alert the higher-ups of their authority being challenged, but if it happened three or four times...? Somebody would be sent to take care of whoever was so bold.

The people who lived in the outskirts had families and livelihoods. They couldn't risk standing against the gangs, so they just did their best to stay out of their sight.

'And if they see a stranger, they'll avoid them at all costs.'

Strangers meant danger here more than anywhere else. Danger meant that their families could be seriously injured or killed while nobody batted an eye. It meant they could lose everything in a single night.

After grilling a nearby thug for information and giving him a small tip to show appreciation, August mostly understood why Melania acted the way she did.

She also wanted those young dragons to explore and enjoy the benefits of their youth. She absolutely wanted to be kind and trusting.

However, she didn't live in an environment where kindness was rewarded.

She lived in a place where even children could die if she slipped up.

That was why she reacted so fiercely. If August wanted to do something to those young dragons in the time before she arrived, she wouldn't have been able to do anything to stop it.

That sort of helplessness could drive one mad.

'It's already impressive that she's still willing to try.'

Melania was a good person with an extremely strong mind. If not, how could she have passed the qualification exam's mental test?

She only froze because she was suddenly introduced to chaos. What mattered was the fact that she managed to pull herself out of her confusion within the test's time limit.

'She'd be a good ally, but that's only if she's willing.'

August didn't think she'd appreciate him approaching her now. He figured he'd wait until the elimination round came.

'Until then, I'm back on the case.'

Two days had passed in a flash, and five suddenly sounded like a much smaller number than seven.

There wasn't much time left. There definitely wasn't enough for August to do anything about the problems he discovered.

Gangs weren't exclusive to Arragon. In fact, the two in this city were quite high profile and likely had connections to even higher forces.

In places that weren't so close to the holy region, the absolute center of Arulion, gangs were everywhere, even having control over the entirety of a few districts.

Even if he managed to somehow unearth the massive gangs' entire schemes within five days and destroy them, chaos would ensue because of the power vacuum and the situation would just worsen.

He was just taking note of things.

If he wanted to change this kingdom, he had to know what needed to change.

That was, from the start, the purpose he established for his six remaining days in Arragon.

Damien had told him there was corruption, but he was intentional in glazing over the details.

Now that August was going out into the world, things were different.

His son would not be someone whose entire success was attributed to him.

August was going to be someone who could stand proud, knowing that he was the reason for his own rise.

If he wanted to rule, he needed to have the attributes of a ruler. Some of those were inborn, but even more needed to be learned through experience.

Damien had faith in his son, and August felt that faith strongly.

He used the intellect that he was gifted with to its maximum potential. He unearthed the problems of the people and used them to infer what kind of issues existed in the higher tiers of society.

He was going to be an Emperor in the future, one that could make his father and ancestor proud.

Nothing would be able to stop him.

Really, August spent the next five days looking for information.

Regular thugs didn't bother him anymore, and since he didn't go looking for them, he didn't attract trouble from those stronger powers.

He kept his head down and explored, and as his presence disappeared from most people's minds, the amount of information he got a hold of became greater and greater.

However, because he was using the perception-blocking artifact for most of the day, he failed to find a certain encounter that was waiting for him.

Melania eventually went home that night. She had just gone out to train, so she wasn't gone for long in the first place. August just managed to find the most coincidental timing to miss her.

Nevertheless, the moment she opened the door, she was greeted with strangeness. Her siblings were nowhere to be seen, so they must've been upstairs somewhere.

It looked quiet on the ground floor, except for one little detail.

'What is that?'

There was a small ring on the floor. It wasn't ornate at all and seemed to be made of the most common silver, but Melania was sure that it didn't belong to anyone in the house.

She was, of course, suspicious, but that was exactly why she picked it up. After examining it, she couldn't find anything notable in its structure, which left only one thing to do.

Melania moved outside into the street and created a barrier around the ring before injecting mana into it.

She was expecting an explosive or something similarly malicious, but what she found was her mind being pulled into a separate space.

She was still conscious of reality. It was like she could see two different planes with her eyes and her mind.

And in the one that was opened by the ring...

"I appreciate the hospitality. Here's a little something I brought to express my gratitude."

A simple note with only two sentences on it to indicate the identity of the person who left the ring.

And, several piles of gold.

Melania tripped over herself by accident as she took the barrier down and grabbed the ring, looking around to see if anyone saw her.

After confirming that she was alone, she rushed back into the house.

'There's no way, right?'

There really was no way.

That amount of gold, at first glance, was already enough to move her family to a better neighborhood.

And the fact that it was inside of an unbound spatial ring...

wasn't that already insanity?

People of her stature couldn't get anywhere near spatial artifacts, yet, an amazing one had just dropped at her feet.

She ran upstairs and opened the door to the second level of the house. It was just one bedroom, the place where Melania and her siblings stayed.

Along with a woman who was currently unconscious on one of two beds in the room.

She was frail and sickly, seemingly on the edge of death.

"Mom..."

Melania collapsed at the bedside, tears streaming down her face.

"A miracle happened."

She carefully cupped her mother's bony hand and brought it to her face.

"With this...with this, we can save you!"

At last, her kindness had paid off.

At last, her most daunting worries could be dealt with.

August had just grabbed a large amount of money and stuffed it in the spatial ring without thinking. He didn't know just what his gratitude meant to the ones receiving it.

But to Melania, the things he'd given were gifts from the gods.

And she was never one to forget a favor.

Chapter 1635 Corruption [3]

Melania searched for August for several days before giving up.

She just couldn't find him. She wanted to talk to him about many things, but since she couldn't find the opportunity now, she just had to wait until they saw each other in the elimination round.

There were many things she could do before then.

For instance, curing her mother.

Her mother had fallen ill after having her two younger siblings. It was around the same time that their father died. Ever since then, they'd been living on barely enough money to feed themselves.

Melania found out what her mother's illness was long ago. She also knew where the cure was. However, it was far too expensive for her to afford even if she worked for her entire life.

Entering the heir wars was a last resort. She believed that her talent could at least get her noticed by a few big shots, who would provide her sponsorships and chances at higher positions where she'd get more pay.

She was correct. After all, Rakon offered her a sponsorship the moment the qualification test ended.

She didn't end up taking it.

When August left the conversation, the terms changed and became far more demanding. For someone in her position, it was still a great offer, but she decided to wait.

The elimination round was near. If she made it through, then Rakon's offer would pale in comparison to what she'd receive. If she failed, she would do so while attracting the attention of people who want her talent for more than just the heir wars.

It was all planned out.

But...in just one day, hadn't that plan been brought to ruin?

With the gold that August gave her, Melania could purchase a house in a safer district and cure her mother while still having some left over.

Considering that this was only a small portion of August's wealth, one could assume just how much Damien gave him.

Nevertheless, Melania could solve the problems that originally led her to participate in the heir wars.

Yet, she wasn't planning to withdraw herself from the competition.

August gave her a far better starting point, but it wasn't a long-term solution.

Her goals hadn't changed much now that her family was safer and healthier.

Still, with her newfound hope, she was able to see the coming competition as more than just a money-making opportunity.

She could focus more on herself and her growth.

When five days flew by and she found herself in front of a teleportation array that would take her to the location of the elimination round, she was filled not only with stern ambition, but also excitement.

She wasn't going to waste the chance she'd been given.

Nor was she going to let August's gratitude go unreturned.

If she did, she wouldn't be a proud dragon at all.

August also stood in front of a teleportation array, though it wasn't the same one.

Rakon's assistants had found him at his hotel early in the morning and led him to that place.

The array was located inside of the testing facility, which had, by now, been repurposed as the office of some organization that August wasn't told the name of.

"Where's Melania?"

It was the first question he asked when he arrived.

"She will be taken to a separate array that is more convenient, considering her location."

There was a bit of disdain in the assistant's tone when she mentioned the outskirts, which made August frown.

'It runs deep indeed.'

This woman was probably a maid or something in the Scorch Clan, not someone of high status in the slightest. Even still, she felt superiority over those in the outskirts.

August didn't say anything about it. No good would come from lecturing this one random assistant.

Instead, he quietly allowed her to lead him to the array and stepped into it.

Rakon was there as well.

"Have you thought about my offer since then?" he asked, somewhat hopeful.

However, August shook his head.

"It would be nice to have support, but I only came out here so that I can achieve something on my own, so I can't accept anything of the sort."

His answer had changed since the last time they met.

Instead of a flat-out refusal...

'...did he just confirm it?'

August practically told Rakon that he was a hidden genius from a noble clan, didn't he?

It was a great misunderstanding to uphold since it gave August more freedom to act, so he decided to reinforce it just a little bit. It was a good way to keep Rakon off his back too.

"I understand," Rakon responded, his eyes brighter than they were a second ago.

"Then, prepare yourself. You will be teleported shortly. Remember, though you'll arrive directly inside the arena, do not attack anyone until the horns are blown. That...will become a fatal mistake for anyone who makes it."

Rakon left August one last piece of advice, to which he nodded thankfully.

To Rakon, if August was a hidden noble, it was impossible to sponsor him. However, since his desire to do so had left a good impression on someone of high status, he was satisfied.

He walked away with some pep in his step, and the array around August lit up.

'It's time.'

After so much delay, and a week that led to a surprising amount of development, August was finally on his way to participate in what was, by all means, the first round of the heir wars.

His body disappeared from Arragon, and when they received light again, he was in a massive colosseum unlike anything he'd ever seen before.

"This..."

He couldn't help but say it out loud.

"This is what I was made for."

The entire heir wars would be "televised."

Everyone in Arulion was able to watch the event in some fashion. For those in the central region, tickets were available that let them watch some of the events in person. For those outside of the checkpoint that only True Dragons could pass, the events were only available to watch on projection devices.

Still, August wasn't alone in believing that the elimination round was the official start of the heir wars. Most people thought the same, since it was the first event that could be viewed by the audience.

This battle between commoners would set the stage.

They would create a benchmark by which every genius participating in the heir wars would be judged, and it was the key determiner of the public's attitude towards the event.

It was an important day, even for the nobles who didn't have any part in the competition.

People flooded the coliseum stands in droves, and geniuses appeared on the stage below one by one.

None of these people were known names. Not even the most talented of them.

However, many of them had people in the stands cheering for them, awaiting their victory.

August also had a person like that.

A part of Damien was still searching for the Dragon Emperor, but his main body had taken a break from that quest.

Today was his son's big day, after all.

If he wasn't here for it, then he'd be nothing but a terrible father.

He blended in with the dragon people and smiled as he saw August arrive on the field.

His expression was strong, and he looked to be surveying his opponents from the second he could see again.

Regardless of August's performance, Damien was already set in how he was feeling about it.

He was proud, and he was excited to see what August could do in an environment like this.

The cheers and conversations in the stands were loud enough to create a tsunami of sound that assaulted the geniuses below from all directions, but they were all silenced with a single sound.

A man appeared in the sky, his draconic aura fully exerted.

"Welcome, everyone..." he said, his voice amplified by mana.

"Today, we see a hundred and fifty-three fine geniuses who have proved that they have the qualifications and talent to proceed, however, only fifty of them can continue on to the next round!"

It was a brief explanation for anyone who didn't know what was going on, but that was the end of it.

But it raised the anticipation in the stadium to an all-time high.

Everyone was waiting for him to say one thing and one thing only.

Because, with a single word from him...

...the heir wars would commence!

Chapter 1636 Elimination [1]

"Start!"

The word finally came after some more introduction was done, but since nobody actually cared about the things he was saying, they hardly even heard it.

Their eyes were focused on the geniuses below, all of whom were waiting for the moment they could let loose.

August was also focused on his peers. He'd hardly looked into the crowd, and he completely tuned out the man above.

He was something of an "announcer," but he didn't exist for anything but providing entertainment to the crowd.

The real indicator for when the event started was as Rakon told him.

He had to wait for the horns to blare.

'I wonder what happens if we move early.'

Rakon's wording was curious when he spoke about it, so August was naturally confused. What kind of fatal mistake could be made in such a nonlethal setting?

Sadly, nobody who'd made it to this stage was stupid enough to let recklessness ruin their opportunity.

It seemed to go over a lot of people's heads. In many circles, the heir wars were viewed as a competitive event that existed for entertainment purposes only.

No.

This was an event where the future of the dragon kingdom was at stake.

This was an event that gave commoners the chance to become the Dragon Emperor's disciple, and gave those who failed opportunities far beyond their station.

It was an unbelievably important moment for every single genius in the arena, regardless of their individual goals.

Therefore, none of them even moved a muscle when they were teleported into the arena. They surveyed those around them with predatory eyes, circulating their mana calmly in preparation for the moment to come.

The announcer's drivel in the background eventually came to an end. The crowd went silent too.

The geniuses took their stances, and...

The horns finally blared, filling the arena with a cacophony of sound.

August took a single step and released his mana instantly.

'There are three nearby who could be a threat. Ten people have their eyes on me, but they're all being eyed by others. It'll probably be less of a group battle than I expected.'

There were too many people for them to team up and target others, at least, for now.

August could sense the hostility coming at him from every side. As he whipped his eyes around to find a target, the arena exploded into battle.

Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom!

Clouds of dust rose as some geniuses immediately put all of their power into their attacks.

The announcer's voice came back as he commentated about the most interesting battles taking place.

Chaos enveloped the arena, but for August, it was still quiet. His attention had focused in on his surroundings. All unimportant information was filtered out. His mind entered a battle state.

'There.'

August found his first target. He wasn't aiming for weaker participants. There were only a few that August felt could actually challenge him in the vicinity. They were the ones he needed to eliminate first.

He shot forward with a plan in mind, but executing it was an entirely different story.

Boom!

A boy and a girl had approached him from behind, one to each side.

They didn't have weapons, since weapons dragons were not beings who used weapons, but their extended claws were more than enough to cause damage.

Whoosh!

August ducked down and dodged both of their swings. He pivoted his foot on the ground and summoned a stream of water, letting it turn solid as it jutted up and stabbed towards the boy among them.

Unlike the thugs he faced before, these geniuses had some ability. The boy dodged his attack with relative ease and drew out more mana, obviously planning to counterattack.

'Not happening.'

Bang!

August dodged another attack from the girl and twisted his body to get behind her.

He grabbed her head and slammed it into the ground, dealing a massive blunt-force trauma that made her world spin.

The boy had arrived in that time. He swung his claw down again, but when August dodged, he found another attack waiting for him. The boy was an earth dragon like Melania. He'd used his mana to tie August's feet to the ground so that he couldn't keep moving out of the way.

'Solid.'

August complimented the move.

The boy's other claw was coming down at him with heavy force. If it struck, August's flesh would definitely be torn apart.

But, they underestimated his flexibility. Like water, his movements could not be defined by his shape.

He bent his back strangely and used his knees to pivot the angle he leaned in.

'Tch!'

The boy's claw still managed to swipe his shoulder, but only with the force to cause a flesh wound.

August had prepared for this. His momentum was already too high for him to bring himself back to a standing position. He summoned pure mana into his legs and expelled it, breaking the rock that kept him captive into shards of rubble.

His body kept falling backward. The boy saw this as an opportunity, but it was nothing of the sort.

He approached closer so that August wouldn't be able to evade again, but that was exactly what his opponent wanted.

August kicked his feet off the ground. A pressure wave was released from his soles, pushing the boy back several steps.

Meanwhile, a small stream of water appeared below August's back and flipped him onto his stomach. Before he fell, completely to the ground, he got his feet and hands down and used them to propel himself forward, recorrecting his strange position.

Bang!

It didn't help that all of this was done above the nauseous girl he'd taken down before. All of the residual force from his movements slammed down on her, knocking her completely unconscious.

'Dammit!'

Realizing that he was in over his head, the boy tried to run. There were better fights for him, ones that he could actually win.

However, this was not a street brawl.

This was a competition.

And August didn't have a single thought of letting his competitor escape without suffering the consequences of attacking him.

The elimination round didn't have many rules.

The geniuses weren't allowed to kill each other, but any degree of damage that wasn't fatal was accepted. Those who suffered could be healed back to full health by the staff on-site, so it wasn't a problem even if they lost a limb or two.

Mana and the physical body were the only weapons allowed, but there were no limits on how they could be used.

And, though all of the geniuses had started in their human forms, they were given the right to transform into their true forms. However, if they did so, they wouldn't be allowed to return to their human forms until the battle was completely over.

The boy that August was chasing, Jason, wasn't a great genius. He managed to barely pass the qualification test, and he was planning to get good sponsorships and offers by attacking those who were weaker than him to seem stronger.

That was how he'd gotten by in life until now. It was the same for the girl whom he'd allied with.

But, the first person they'd attacked was far beyond their level, and as he looked around, he realized that there was no such thing as people who were weaker than him in this place.

He was at the bottom of the barrel.

And if he wanted to survive for more than five minutes of this fight...

...then he had no choice but to go all out before others started doing the same!

He saw August chasing him at a speed he couldn't match, and that was when he made his decision.

He planted his feet, turned around, and changed.

August was no longer charging towards a humanoid being.

He was charging towards an earth dragon who was ready to risk it all to defeat him!

Chapter 1637 Elimination [2]

This battle was still in its infancy.

It was a free-for-all. Nobody knew what their opponents' strengths were, so they were not only probing each other, but also trying to eliminate those who were most threatening.

However, this was not a battle where those unworthy could slip by because they managed to eliminate those who were meant to pass.

No, in a place like this, only the worthy could achieve victory, no matter what they faced.

The crowd was already roaring. There were many individual fights taking place that were more than worth watching. Their attention went from place to place, seeing everything there was to see. It really gave them no time at all to feel bored.

Most of those battles were far away from August. His location was both lucky and unlucky in that there were really only people below his level around him.

Even those he saw as a threat were only seen as such because of the environment. If it was just him against them, he'd be able to take them down without a problem.

But perhaps that was a good thing.

It hadn't been mentioned yet because August never put much thought into it, but he wasn't that strong.

He was still at the peak of 3rd class, and while that was monstrous for someone who only recently turned ten, this was a competition for everyone under a hundred years old.

There were several geniuses here who'd already passed the 4th class boundary. And, when it came to the nobles, all of them were at that level.

August had yet to completely become someone who could deal with them, so for him to spawn in an area where he could first develop his skills was actually more of a boon than anything else.

When August hit 4th class, he would be an unstoppable force. Reaching that level was one of his main priorities after this round ended.

Nevertheless, Jason's transformation attracted quite a lot of attention. He was part of the first wave to do so, and in his area, he was the only one.

It was up to August to take him down and move on to more challenging fights, but compared to others, his job was easy.

On the complete opposite side of the arena, there were three specific geniuses who made it into the qualification round before anyone else.

When they arrived at their testing facilities, they set precedents that others couldn't hope to match.

Of those who had passed the qualification exam, they were some of only ten who were above the 4th class level.

And that...

...surprisingly wasn't as scary to their competitors as they expected.

On August's side, everyone was fighting small battles apart from each other. For them, on the other hand, it was more than that.

There were at least twenty people attacking each of them, all of whom were in their dragon forms.

They didn't reveal their own true forms quite yet, and though they were under quite a lot of stress, they didn't plan to do so any time soon.

Boom!

One explosion knocked ten dragons back. All of them were covered in blood as their scales were pierced, but none of them gave up.

Boom!

Boom!

Boom!

It was all fire released from the girl who caused the damage, yet, her fire seemed to take physical form.

Every time she swept her claws, shards of pure heat compressed into projectiles that seemed like they were made of metal.

And when they struck, people were harmed. If she wasn't holding back, it was almost guaranteed that her enemies would have already died.

Nearby, there was a similar scene taking place in an icier environment. It was a man this time, somewhere in his late twenties.

He was surrounded by sculptures. The dragons who charged at

him found their bodies intruded by cold. Their scales did

nothing to protect them and merely froze along with

everything else. Even when they were eventually melted and

resuscitated, they'd sustain injuries that would need a long
time to heal.

The two of them were obviously eyeing each other, but now
wasn't the time for them to fight.

Rather, they were united in their goal.

This stage could only be passed by those who had the ability.

The rules said fifty people would make it to the heir wars, but
they didn't see fifty people who were worthy of that privilege.

Yes, they were also commoners. Yes, they understood the
struggles of their peers and the motivation that kept them
fighting.

But the heir wars weren't a thing so they could prove
themselves or gain opportunities.

No. This was a place from where the future Dragon Emperor
would be born. Rabble couldn't be allowed into the competition,

no matter how compelling or heartbreaking their stories were.

These two, along with their 4th class fellows, had made it their

mission to eliminate ninety percent of the arena at the very

least.

And since they were almost done cleaning out their side...

...people like August, who were focused on their own battles,

would soon be enveloped in the storm.

Whether they liked it or not.

At this point, one could begin to wonder.

Where was Melania?

She had also been transported to the arena, and she was also

fighting, but August hadn't seen her, nor had she been involved

in the clash of 4th-class dragons.

Melania was also fortunate in her own way.

Just like August, she spawned in a place that mostly had others

on a similar level as her, and, since the fighting style she

developed was quite...unique, she'd managed to evade the

attention of those who were too strong for a very long time.

Melania could be best described as a trapper.

It was a rare battle style even among humans and barely

existed among dragons. Those who used it were usually sages

and scholars who focused more on gaining knowledge than

battling.

Melania wasn't a scholar. She wouldn't consider herself smart

by any means.

But, she knew her limits. She understood that talent could only

get her so far, especially since she wasn't as good as a lot of the

others who were competing against her.

A style that allowed her to continue fighting even when she was outclassed, a style that perfectly fit her needs until her hard work could pay off and match the talent of others...

That was the style she chose, and so far, it was working out as she'd hoped.

Everywhere she went, she laid traps with her mana that would activate when other people either stepped on them or triggered them with their rampant auras.

Four people had already fallen for her tricks. They were trapped and suffocated, left as open targets for her to pick off one by one.

Nobody even knew what she was doing because of the chaos.

Still, her main goal was to be seen, to be recognized by others.

Eventually, she'd have to start fighting seriously, using power

with abandon and putting herself on the line for success.

And that time was approaching fast.

Due to the antics of the more powerful geniuses in the arena,

the number of competitors was being cut down quickly.

It would soon become a battle of only those who stood above

others.

For Melania, especially...

...it really was uncertain if she could survive through it all.

Chapter 1638 Elimination [3]

Boom!

An earth dragon slammed into the ground, his consciousness completely gone from the real world.

'Done.'

August let go of his tail and took a breath. He stayed wary of his surroundings while taking a short break for himself.

It was hard to fight someone who had unveiled their true form while still in one's human form. After all, dragons were best when they were in the forms they were meant for.

August was definitely stronger than Jason. It was a strong difference that couldn't be overcome just because of a transformation.

Still, Jason was able to hold August up for over five minutes. August attacked and attacked, but earth dragons were known for their sturdiness.

His water was particularly bad at piercing. He could do something about it against dragons in their human forms, but he couldn't pierce scales with the power and techniques he had now.

August had to resort to physical force. After enough blunt force trauma to the head and spine, Jason was done.

It was barbaric, but since it worked, it was enough.

Nobody interrupted their battle while it happened. It seemed that many were wary of Jason's dragon form. More so, the boy who was fighting it with his fists alone.

Everyone was busy fighting, anyway. They dropped faster than anyone expected. These geniuses were putting everything they had into the battle, and that meant that despite individual battles taking a decent amount of time to end, people still got eliminated every five minutes.

There were already less than a hundred people left with only ten minutes passing. And that number...

Boom!

August finally got the chance to examine his surroundings properly.

That was when he noticed how wildly the battlefield had changed.

In one corner, there were heaps of burnt geniuses rolling around on the ground. In another, many who were frozen into ice cubes.

There was a third area where trees had appeared across the battlefield and suffocated loads of geniuses with their roots and branches, leaving not many areas free of total destruction.

'Wow...I must be lucky.'

Somehow, August didn't run into whoever was causing a scene like that.

Luckily, right...?

Wrong.

Those three geniuses had already split up. The two that had been seen earlier, the young dragons who used fire and ice, had moved in directions away from August.

However, the last was approaching fast. It was quite obvious from the line of trees that inched closer and closer every second.

'This is a big one.'

August's eyes narrowed.

He had only fought one person before now, yet he was being thrown into a situation like this.

The others wouldn't attack him anymore. They probably wouldn't even come near this area.

Everyone with a brain had already started running, but August already knew it was too late for that.

'We're already in the attack range.'

Boom!

It was as if the genius in question wanted to prove August correct.

The trees instantly started attacking, flinging tens and hundreds of roots into the air to chase after the geniuses who ran.

The dense forest they created hid the person who summoned them from the eyes of others, yet the impact they had made it impossible to ignore them.

August hesitated.

The forest was moving towards him. If he didn't make his decision now, then it would be made for him.

'Either I run and keep fighting people like that earth dragon...'

August's eyes sharpened.

'...or I charge into that forest.'

The safer option was the former. It might guarantee his survival and it would definitely give him a performance beyond what he could achieve in the forest.

On the other hand, the latter option was more dangerous and created the possibility of him getting eliminated in this round.

'But, that's the one that will help me grow.'

He could sense it somehow. He didn't know if it was fate or the strange aura calling him into the forest, but he truly believed that he would benefit most in the long term if he followed a more risky path.

'Hmm...'

It wasn't like he had time to ruminate over it.

His instincts had to make the choice, and for a dragon, one raised by a man who became a legend by following his instincts, August's decision was obvious.

'Well, there's nothing I can do about that.'

His feet were already moving.

As everyone else fled as far away from the growing forest as possible, August shot into its depths, disappearing from the eyes of the onlookers.

Many who saw it happen gasped. They were suddenly intrigued about the identity of that bold genius.

Their curiosity would have to wait, though. August had completely vanished, and only a single person in the audience could still see him.

'Oh...?'

Damien's brow raised with interest.

'I didn't expect something like this. Did he want to surprise me?'

August's performance wasn't the best thus far, but that was only because he was holding himself back. For the sake of hiding his identity, he couldn't use too much of his power as an Azure Dragon.

In that place...

'Not many people can see him.'

Only the important ones would be able to, but they were precisely the ones he needed to evade.

'Hmm...I guess I should help a little.'

Damien understood what was happening more than August did, and for the sake of that, he used his power a bit.

A barrier appeared around the forest, completely imperceptible to all outside observers regardless of power or status.

The only thing it did was hide August's aura so he could fight properly, but Damien was confident that it was all his son needed.

'Now...'

He smiled as August approached the opponent waiting for him in that place.

'...let's see how he does when he's taking things seriously.'

August rushed through the forest, unaware of what his father was up to.

He was confused as to why he was able to do so.

'Nothing is attacking me.'

The trees all focused on those outside. The rest of the forest didn't seem to care about him at all.

'Am I being provoked?'

Either that, or this was an invitation

Whatever the case, the lack of interference from the environment allowed August to reach the center of the forest within two minutes.

When he reached, he was met with a strange sight.

A girl sat there in a chair made of twisting vines. Her posture was relaxed as she leaned back and snacked on an apple, reading a book as if she wasn't consciously controlling the roots that wreaked havoc outside the forest.

She sat in a clearing that received an odd amount of sunlight, which hit her at the perfect angle. When August stepped into that clearing, she immediately raised her eyes to look at him.

"Oh...? Are you the one...?"

She asked as if she'd been waiting for someone.

"The Azure Dragon child, I mean."

BANG!

A geyser exploded out of the ground and flooded the clearing. It burst from directly under the girl's chair. The scalding water coming from it was obviously meant to harm her.

But, she was already on a nearby branch, completely unharmed.

The curiosity in her eyes had only grown.

Because the boy who stood before her was not the one who arrived here a second ago.

No, his eyes had changed completely, as had his stance.

That icy gaze, that hostility...

The moment she decided to say something like that, everything went sideways.

August was no longer just participating in a competition.

Right now, in this moment, secluded from the rest of the arena...

...August was looking to kill.

He had to be the only one who walked out of this forest when the elimination round ended.

Chapter 1639 Elimination [4].

August being an Azure Dragon was an absolute secret. Damien knew. He knew. In this world, there couldn't be anyone else who knew that information.

August didn't know this girl. She looked to be around fifteen, but she was already a 4th class being, which shouldn't have been possible for someone outside of a noble clan.

Yet, she was here taking the test with the commoners.

August didn't understand anything about who she was, nor did he understand why she'd brought up such a crucial fact.

However, since she had, his life was now in danger.

Azure Dragons. The Liqua claimed to be part of their species, but they were not.

They were fakes, water dragons with a bit more talent than others who liked to pretend that they were great beings.

In reality, Azure Dragons were a scorned race.

If anyone with that bloodline appeared, they'd be executed as soon as possible.

The Holy Clans couldn't allow another Qinglong to rise.

As such, even regular water dragons often disappeared at random. If their bloodlines were too strong, the Liqua Clan would immediately eliminate them.

August was able to survive as a water dragon with talent because his aura and draconic lineage signified that he had no relation to Qinglong. Damien had made sure that nobody would ever be able to tell otherwise.

This girl thought differently. If her thoughts spread and became more mainstream, then everything August was trying to achieve would be ruined before he even started.

He couldn't allow that.

Interrogating her and finding out what she knew and who else knew it was important, but August didn't think he'd be able to do it.

That left only one option.

He had to kill and then search for clues later.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

August stopped hiding his power. He still hid his bloodline aura just in case she was making assumptions without proof, but he didn't fight with power that a 3rd class being should've had.

He swung his claws out ruthlessly.

A manifestation of blue energy, foaming with white like rolling waves, shot forward and destroyed several of the surrounding trees.

August watched as that girl moved around as if this place was her home. In a sense, it was. Despite the strength and frequency of his attacks, she was able to evade everything without a problem.

"Ooh, you're a feisty one, aren't you?"

She smiled as she taunted him.

"Try a little harder."

Those were fighting words. They were meant to rile him up and make him reckless, but he refused to fall for her provocation.

'She's nimble.'

Just like him, she didn't really fight like a dragon.

'If so, then I need to abandon convention.'

For now, his unique fighting style was the best way to approach this situation.

That style was not one that allowed him to attack from a distance.

BANG!

August shot up from the ground, propelled by jets of water. He swung his foot out and used the same jet as a laser that cut through all of the trees in front of him and eliminated any cover that the girl could take.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

As the trees collapsed, the girl jumped into the air, preparing to move again.

But August was already on her tail.

BANG!

Another geyser erupted below her. The scalding water came close, but she managed to dodge in time.

August twisted his hand, forcing the temperature of the water to rapidly cool.

August didn't wait to see the results. He shot through the steam, protecting his body with a film of mana, and found his target again.

"Now, now. I can't let this happen."

As it froze, the rapid temperature change influenced its structure, and it exploded into a massive cloud of steam.

BOOOOOOOM!

August didn't wait to see the results. He shot through the steam, protecting his body with a film of mana, and found his target again.

"Now, now. I can't let this happen."

The girl's eyes became more serious.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

The ground around them exploded, giving way to the roots she summoned.

Over ten thick tree roots slashed at him. They were like whips, but at the same time like swords.

In the middle of it all, August lost his chance to attack.

'Tch!'

He twirled his body and managed to avoid the initial attack. As his eyes swung around, he saw a root aimed straight at his shoulder, but he didn't try to stop it.

Shik!

It stabbed into his flesh, and in the same moment, August located the girl and struck again.

He needed to be more serious.

August didn't have access to the most of his abilities because he had yet to become a 4th class, but he could still do a decent amount with what he'd learned.

When it came to flexibility and rigidity, August had done so much studying about the concepts that he could almost replicate what a 4th class could do.

And, he could accomplish things that were impossible to others. That was a benefit of being an Azure Dragon.

When he had to create water for himself, he'd always be restricted to his level.

But if he could find a source...

August let that tree root hit his shoulder because he needed that second of time to focus on other things.

The girl had summoned this forest with her mana. It was created without a natural ecosystem, which meant there weren't any lakes or water sources nearby that he could take advantage of.

However, she still used trees, and trees couldn't survive without water.

VOOM!

August's power spread across the entire forest. His senses melded in with any water that he could find, and as he pulled his arms towards himself, the water responded to his call.

At first, she thought she was going to win easily.

She knew he would be here and that was her only reason for participating, but from what she'd heard about him, August was still a youth who was in his growth stage.

He wasn't meant to be powerful.

However, the scene she was seeing now proved her wrong.

She could feel the vitality draining from the forest.

'Maybe it wasn't such a good idea to provoke him like that?'

She thought he would calm down after a little bit of fighting, but the calm demeanor he usually had didn't translate to battle.

'I thought he was supposed to be innocent and naive.'

However, the killing intent that had been embedded in all of the water flowing out of the dying trees told a different story.

The girl's thoughts were light. It didn't seem like she wanted to be his enemy.

But, August didn't know that.

He felt his power growing. He felt himself healing as the vitality from the water was transferred into him.

'Okay.'

He never stopped moving, nor did the girl stop trying to attack him.

His body was swerving everywhere, supported by jets of water as he zipped through the air. None of the roots were hitting him anymore, but they did make it harder for him to aim.

'But with all of this water...'

August's eyes sharpened.

'...I don't need to aim.'

VOOOM!

His mana raged. If he kept fighting like this, he'd eventually run out, but he wasn't thinking about that.

He focused on the mana. He didn't try to force it to change shape, since that went against the nature of water. Instead, he supported its flow and suggested it a path.

The mana responded to him with the same feelings he put into it. The relationship he'd formed with the energy over the few years he'd lived allowed him to communicate with it in ways others simply couldn't.

It formed into a shape it would have never otherwise reached. It adopted a hostility that was uncharacteristic of water solely for his sake.

And as the girl watched on, August managed to form an attack that even she didn't think she'd be capable of.

'Shit.'

She smiled wryly as she looked at it.

'I think I need to clarify things before we keep fighting.'

Chapter 1640 Elimination [5]

Clarification...it would definitely be nice, but it was too late for something like that to stop August.

He wasn't ready to listen to reason. Definitely not if it came from the girl who created this entire situation in the first place.

Humans formed their original mana techniques by watching animals and learning from their habits. That was because humanity itself was an adaptive species that combined many of the best traits of said animals.

However, dragons were, technically, animals themselves. They learned to wield mana through their own actions.

They used their claws and teeth to attack, so they evolved to use their claws and teeth to attack. Even breath attacks formed by utilizing the same concept as a dragon's roar, which was why dragons always roared when they let loose their breath.

Wasn't that quite constraining?

To use no other inspiration but the movement and capabilities of one's own body was only useful until a certain point.

Humans eventually branched out. They studied the stars and the world, the elements and their own unique traits like weapon handling.

Eventually, the human training method became so diverse that it couldn't even be considered a method anymore. It was not a single doctrine, but so many that even the least talented and equipped people could find a way to learn at least a part of it.

Then, what about dragons?

What did they do when they found that their base capabilities weren't enough anymore?

Well, that truly depended on the dragon.

For some, their elemental abilities combined with their physical strength were enough. Dragons were naturally gifted, so even if their techniques remained basic, they'd be able to dominate others with power alone.

The Ignis Clan was like this. While their techniques were developed, they could still only be used through claws or teeth like their ancient ancestors.

The ones who diverged from this belief were those who came to be known as scholars. Just like their human counterparts, they studied the world and the stars above.

But, because they were dragons, their perception of these concepts was different. The techniques they created didn't hold any resemblance to human techniques, and the comprehensions within them could only be understood by other dragons.

It was hard to describe that branch of perception.

August had to experience it firsthand through Qinglong to even properly adopt it.

It completely and utterly clashed with his father's worldview, but that disharmony was actually more helpful than anything else.

They were two completely different perspectives that couldn't be combined. When they were placed within a single person's mind...

Their clashing ideologies could create magic.

The shape of August's mana was that of a dragon. In a very human way, he mimicked another being to form the "vessel" that his power would use.

It was an eastern dragon, resembling the Noct, Aurora, and Ether Clans in its appearance.

But within, the comprehensions were all draconic.

They came from the worldview of a being who was far more in tune with the world itself than a human. It was formed based off of the perceptions of a dragon who could truly meld with the water and become one.

This was one of the main teachings of the Azure Dragon Manual that Damien created to teach him.

It was, by far, the main source of August's great strength.

It formed within a few seconds, not giving the girl much time to do anything. August coldly flicked his wrist, commanding it to kill her in one strike.

WHOOOOOSH!

The wind ripped apart as the dragon traveled through the air as if it were alive. Its body waved as if it was truly propelling itself with its physical capabilities, and its eyes contained a strange mirage of spirituality that couldn't be distinguished from reality.

It seemed to move slowly because its every minute movement could be discerned by the naked eye, but that wasn't the case at all.

The girl's perception of time had slowed. It was in front of her so fast that she barely had time to put up a barrier.

Still, she was a 4th class dragon. She didn't earn that power by just sitting around and meditating.

BOOOOOOOOOOM!

The water dragon crashed against a thick barrier of wood. The instant it lost its form, the amount of water within ballooned explosively.

It aggressively flowed around both sides and over the top of the shield, flooding everything in its path.

A huge wave formed on each side of the wooden barrier and rushed past the girl. After moving for several dozens of feet, they froze, blocking all but one escape route that was too far away to be viable.

Meanwhile, the water that was slamming into the shield and over it took on completely different properties.

It got faster and faster, using mana to accumulate more and more energy. Its pressure increased and the area that it targeted became much smaller.

August could feel the energy draining from his body to support the reaction, but he continued to push forward.

Steam rose and turned into smoke as the water reached a temperature that burned the wood into ashes.

XIU!

The girl was immediately forced to dodge to the side as a jet of water faster than a bullet rushed past her face.

Her expression changed as she felt the integrity of her shield fading.

'This is dangerous.'

She'd been trapped and cornered. If she tried to attack back now, the situation would escalate to a point where it couldn't be controlled anymore.

'And if that happens, I might be able to take him down, but I'll definitely go down with him.'

She didn't need any more proof after feeling what was happening on the other side of her barrier.

'I need to stop this.'

XIU!

XIU!

XIU!

XIU!

One by one, similar jets rushed past and tried to kill her. The girl was able to evade them since she could sense where they'd come from, but if the entire force of the water on the other side managed to get through, she wouldn't have anywhere left to dodge.

'Tch.'

The girl took most of her mana out of the shield and directed it at the ground. Immediately, several tree roots sprung up and grabbed her ankles, pulling her into the dirt.

She didn't control the earth, so she couldn't necessarily do something like this safely, but August didn't leave her with any other options.

As he continued to attack her barrier, she tunneled through the ground, following the paths her roots had laid out before until she was directly under him.

'Now...'

She was covered in a film of mana that helped her breathe and conceal herself. She waited patiently until...

BOOM!

Her shield exploded.

As did the ground above her.

August barely had time to recognize that she was no longer trapped. His eyes went down as he heard the forceful destruction of the ground, and the first thing he saw was a girl with green hair charging at him with everything she had.

He moved his arms, ready to attack again, however...

"Ahhhhhhh!"

Bang!

...he wasn't expecting her to let out a war cry and tackle him.

"Huh?!"

August inadvertently exclaimed as the two of them crashed to the floor.

He didn't know what she was trying to do, but she'd given him the perfect opportunity.

Drawing his hand off of the ground, he formed a blade of water in his grasp.

Killing was something that came easily to August.

Or so he'd thought.

But now that the moment came, he found himself hesitating, if only for a second, before actually making the necessary movements.

Still, a second was all the girl needed.

"Wait!"

She shouted, taking his attention off of the blade and putting it on her.

It was a last-ditch plan, meant to be used if conversation was no longer an option. She didn't think they'd reach that point within five minutes of meeting, but such was the situation.

She didn't know what use it would have, but she'd been instructed to do it, so she followed.

The girl's draconic aura flared outward. Her lineage fully expressed itself.

August furrowed his brows, not understanding what she was trying to do. He continued to swing his blade for but half a second before he froze.

'Wait.'

Despite his rampant desire to kill, he was still rational.

He sensed something off and stopped himself before he could do anything he'd regret.

"That bloodline..."

August frowned.

'...it's familiar.'

He didn't know who this girl was. That much was certain. However, if he'd felt that bloodline before, then there was only one answer.

'She...is not my enemy.'

August had never met an enemy dragon before. The only auras he recognized were all allies and friends.

If she was related to one of them...

'...wow.'

August dropped his hand, letting the water blade sink into the dirt.

'I almost messed up. Big time.'