

# Void 351

## Chapter 351 Unseen Memories [1]

“Finally here?”

The crisp voice of a woman was the first thing that greeted Damien when he arrived in Astoria. When he looked over, he saw a fiery red figure walking towards him with a smile on her face.

“Mm. I don’t get why we had to meet up here before heading to the rendezvous point, but it’s whatever.” He smiled back.

“Don’t be a bother. It’s been an entire year since we came to this place, so isn’t it normal to feel a bit sentimental?”

Damien let out a chuckle. He thought back to all the experiences that he had since entering the Trial World.

From meeting little Xue to establishing the Sanctuary, battling Demons on countless occasions and recruiting Elitra, getting struck by a Demigod’s True Voice and taming Mirage in the Ancient Temple, and even fusing the Void Flames and conquering a Demon King.

It was truly a time filled to the brim with adventures. If he looked back on it now, he might’ve struggled more than he initially expected. As for sentimentality?

“Well, I guess you could say that I thoroughly enjoyed my time here.”

He had reaped so many benefits in just this first trial that it almost felt unfair. He was extremely pleased with the progress he had made.

Not even just with the items he had come into possession of, but his own skills as well. Even his space element had improved by leaps and bounds. To have been able to increase his teleportation range to 10 meters in here, where the spatial suppression was leagues worse than it was in the 3000 Beast Mountain Range, he couldn't wait to see what it was like when he returned back outside.

“But if we have to talk about who had the biggest improvement, wouldn't it be you?” He quipped as he glanced at Feng Qing'er.

In the year since they had arrived, she seemed to have become more beautiful. A slight air of maturity had begun to mix with her original rebelliousness.

Feng Qing'er turned her head away with a smile. Even if she wanted to refute, she couldn't. Unlocking Reincarnation Flames before going through Universe Baptism was extremely rare, and for her to be able to do it was a huge boon.

After she became accustomed to her Reincarnation Flames, her progress in most other things also increased rapidly. Not to mention, the levels of her skills had skyrocketed.

“Enough about me. Where the hell is Qing Tan? We can't wait for her forever.”

The day of the one-year deadline wasn't far away, and if they wanted to reach the rendezvous point in time, they had to leave Astoria today. As if waiting for her cue, though, Qing Tan's voice suddenly rang out from behind them.

"Oho~ I heard that someone was missing me to the point of tears around here, so I came as fast as I could. Don't tell me...it was you?"

Qing Tan smiled and jumped on Feng Qing'er, hugging her from behind.

"Hmph! We don't have time for your games today. Now that you're here, we can finally set off."

Qing Tan looked downcast as she was forced to pull her hands away from Feng Qing'er, but in the end, she accepted.

Playing around was fun, but not at the cost of being stuck in the Trial World forever. She was dying to leave this place and experience more of the blood-boiling trials to come.

With the three of them gathered, they soon set out for the rendezvous point, which was the hill where they first arrived in the Trial World.

"Say, what do you think the next trial will be?" Qing Tan suddenly asked.

It was a question that had been on both Damien and Feng Qing'er's minds ever since they became conscious of the fact that their time in the Trial World was ending.

The first Trial was something fairly straightforward, but ended in then having prolonged conflict with the Demons. They had also found out many truths that they didn't expect to be present in a simple secret realm.

If just the first trial was like that, what would the rest be like? Damien inwardly hoped that it wouldn't be anything so complicated.

Although he didn't mind the Trial World's plot twist that much, he would definitely mind if he kept getting used as a tool in the fight between two Divinities. It wasn't his purpose in the Primordial Undying Realm, nor was it something he had any interest in.

But at the same time, it was an issue concerning the Nox, so a certain part of his brain always urged him to get involved even deeper.

"The easiest kind of trial would probably be something dealing with comprehension or pure combat like this one, but I doubt they'd reuse that idea again. Comprehension would be nice, but it feels too straightforward for this secret realm that always likes to do the unexpected. I really can't predict what the next trial will be like." Damien muttered, half in thought.

Feng Qing'er nodded her head in agreement. "How nice would it be if the trial was similar to what happened at the end of the Ancient Temple?"

“Hoh? But I don’t think Qing Tan would like that at all.” Damien smirked.

Qing Tan shot him a pointed glare before turning her head away with a pout. She still hadn’t forgotten what this bastard had done while she was still intoxicated.

“Ahh, what a shame that I didn’t have a record crystal on hand. Tsk tsk, the blushing face of the Shadow Devil Qing Tan...it would’ve sold for millions!”

“What Shadow Devil? Quit making up nicknames on your own.” Qing Tan grumbled.

“What do you mean?” Feng Qing’er replied. “You haven’t heard it? Ever since the first battle we had with the Apostles when you used your Domain to kill all those demons, the other geniuses here have been calling you the Shadow Devil. They were even saying it in Astoria before we left.”

Qing Tan’s eyes widened in shock. “Seriously? And I didn’t even notice something like that?”

“Do you ever pay attention to anyone you don’t care about?” Damien said wryly.

“Fair point.” Qing Tan immediately agreed. It would indeed have been weirder for her to notice the drivel of insignificant flies.

“How many do you think survived?” Damien suddenly posed a question of his own.

He had seen with his own eyes as countless geniuses died in battle. He didn't know exactly how many there were, but the number wasn't small at all.

Originally, there were around 100 of them that entered the realm together. Damien was 100% sure that at least half of them had died.

"Half? That's thinking too optimistically. If I had to guess, there'll be a maximum of 20 people at the rendezvous point, including us." Qing Tan scoffed.

"Even 20 is pushing it. Every time there was a battle with demons, a large number of them would die. And in the Ancient Temple, even more had died. I don't even think there'll be 10 left." Feng Qing'er pointed out objectively.

"Right. I forgot that there were other geniuses that entered the Ancient Temple. Pretty much everyone died before I got there." Damien replied in realization.

He really had to wonder how the forces of the 3000 Beast Mountain Range would react to the loss of so many geniuses. It was also curious whether or not such high death rates were prevalent in every Trial World or just theirs.

'Well, I guess I'll find out soon enough.'

The trio soon arrived at the rendezvous point, and as Qing Tan had predicted, roughly 20 people had gathered.

“We took our sweet time reaching here, so it shouldn’t be long until the notification pops up...” Damien muttered to himself.

And as he expected, a blue holographic window soon appeared in front of his eyes.

[The Trial of Stars has been completed.]

Chapter 352 Unseen Memories [2]

[The Trial of Stars has been completed]

[Total Number of Survivors: 18]

[Star Distribution: 15 Black, 3 White]

[Those who achieved the White Star Level will be given a benefit during later trials.]

The four notifications came in quick succession, mostly outlining information that was already known. The main thing people focused on was the last notification.

The gazes of all those who gathered on the hill congregated on the Damien trio's location. The greed in their eyes was obvious, but they didn't dare to move.

For one, the trial had already ended so there was no point even if they were able to steal the latter party's starlight. But the main reason was the fact that they weren't sure of the other party's strength. To be able to achieve a White Star, they obviously weren't simple. And on their way to the rendezvous point, they had heard a great many rumors.

It wasn't worth the risk even if only a sliver of those rumors turned out to be truth. If all of those rumors were true, the strength of these three was truly unfathomable. In this tense atmosphere, another set of notifications rang out.

[The Primordial Undying Tree pans its gaze over the participants.]

Damien felt the gaze that the notification spoke of. In fact, it was intensive as if the gaze was specifically focused on him.

Within that gaze, he felt an odd sensation. 'Is it...warning me about something?' He had no way to be sure.

[The second trial will be administered individually. When the participants are ready to begin, they may declare their readiness to be transported to the location of the next trial.]

"That's it?"



“There’s no explanation?”

“What do we do now?”

Various hushed murmurs rang out. After all, the first trial came with a sufficient description on both the contents and clear conditions that were attached to it. For the second, however, they were just being thrust into unknown territory.

But there was nobody to question. The Primordial Undying Tree only spoke to them in notifications, so how were they supposed to question it? In the end, the geniuses steeled themselves and began declaring their readiness one by one.

As the number of people standing on the hill decreased, Damien looked at Feng Qing’er and Qing Tan with a smile.

“I have to say, I had a lot of fun working with the two of you. If we have a chance to meet again after this trial ends, I hope we can continue being allies instead of enemies.”

Feng Qing’er rolled her eyes. “What’s with the formal tone all of a sudden? After all of the life-or-death struggles we’ve been through together, are you doubting our character? Hmph, even if I beat you up later, I’ll do it fair and square. Don’t worry about that. Anyway, I’ll see the two of you on the other side!”

With a cheerful declaration, Feng Qing’er’s body became illusory and disappeared from the Trial World.

Now, only Damien and Qing Tan remained. A small silence enveloped them for a while.

“Do you know what I want to ask?” Damien asked lightly. His gaze was on the horizon in front of him.

“...Mm.”

Qing Tan looked over with wide eyes. After hesitating for a bit, she let out a sound of affirmation.

“I don’t expect you to answer it right away, but I hope you can do so before anything happens. Those words I said before, you should understand who they were meant for.”

Qing Tan turned her gaze to the horizon as well. She had a complicated look in her eye. In the end, she couldn’t do anything besides sigh in resignation. Immediately afterwards, she changed into motes of light as she left the Trial World.

The sun was already starting to set. With the threat of demons completely eliminated for now, the Trial World seemed to have entered a time of peace. An aura of tranquility permeated the air.

Damien stood in this atmosphere with his eyes closed, taking in the feeling. It was only many minutes later that he opened his eyes again.

‘Haa...I really hope things aren’t as they seem...’

The Primordial Undying Tree, the Nox Demigod known as the Demon God, the power struggle going on within the Primordial Undying Realm...he didn’t want to add anything else on top of that.

But there was nothing he could do besides continue forward. After steeling himself and circulating his mana in preparation for the next trial, he declared his readiness.

The feeling of spatial mana enveloping his body soon overwhelmed his senses, leaving nothing else but darkness on all sides.

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Darkness.

On all sides, there was only darkness.

The walls, the ceiling, the ground, they were all enveloped in darkness.

Even after his eyes adjusted, it didn’t seem to get any better.

The uniformity of it all made him uncomfortable. It wasn't something he was used to.

"Haa...haa...haa..."

The sound of his heavy breathing was the only thing he could hear. But he preferred it that way.

It was much better than what he was forced to listen to at other times.

"W-what do I do?"

When his voice left his mouth, it was cracked and barely sounded human.

He didn't recognize himself anymore.

Who was he? Why was he alive? Why was he here?

He didn't want to think anymore. Thinking would only lead to further harm.

"I-it's all a dream. A nightmare. T-this isn't happening."

He was feeble. He was weak. He already knew this. They told him about it so often that it had been ingrained in his mind.

For him to be thrown into such a situation, it had to be a dream.

He stumbled through the darkness.

His steps didn't carry a hint of strength.

He weakly collapsed on the floor.

"I-I can't do this. It's too much...it's too much...if I just sleep...it'll be over, right?"

To wake up, what did he need to do?

He had never lucid dreamed before. Why did his first experience have to be so traumatic?

They say that escaping a lucid dreaming state was easy, but he didn't think so.

They said that it was impossible to feel pain in a lucid dream, but he didn't think so.

"Sleep...sleep...if I do that, then I can escape right?"

His body had already collapsed.

He tried to ignore how vividly he could feel the cold ground against his back. How realistic the jagged edges of those rocks felt as they pierced his skin.

He closed his eyes.

"M-mom...I miss you..."

The face of his mother. It was good that he could remember it. Didn't that mean he'd wake up soon?

He closed his eyes.

He tried to divert his attention from the current situation.

"There's...too much noise..."

He couldn't sleep.

The noise wouldn't let him.

"I want to go home...I want to wake up..."

It was an earnest wish.

He was pleading to anyone who could hear him, but unfortunately, there were none.

He opened his eyes.

The uniformity of the place made him uncomfortable. He couldn't get used to it.

The walls, the ceiling, the ground, it was all rock. Even if the rocks looked different in some places, and had different textures when they came into contact with his skin, it was all still rock.

"I...I can't do this..."

He wanted to go home.

He wanted to go home.

He wanted to go home.

“Survive...? Is there even a point?”

He couldn't accept it. He wanted to wake up.

But no matter how many times he tried to escape this nightmare, he couldn't.

Today marked the second day.

The second day that he was trapped in this dungeon.

Chapter 353 Unseen Memories [3]

Darkness.



No matter what else changed with the hours, the darkness present in the surroundings was the only thing that stayed consistent.

In the distance, the roars of beasts could be heard intermittently ringing out. The mana fluctuations of battles between them emanated.

In a dark cave somewhere on the floor, a boy sat curled up in a ball.

It was all too much.

Just yesterday, he had been living a solid life.

It wasn't a life he wanted, nor was it a life he was proud of, but at least it was a life.

Sure, he had been in dungeons before. He had even killed a few beasts. But was that ever through the use of his own strength?

Every kill he got was achieved by stealing from others.

A dungeon was a dangerous place. Even 6 years after the World Awakening, they weren't places people could just go without preparation.

To raid a dungeon, a large team was required. Not only for attacking, but also for healing and collection.

To enter a dungeon alone? It was unheard of.

But, it wasn't like he entered by choice.

"...why?"

It wasn't like he didn't understand why he ended up in this situation.

He just couldn't accept reality.

The fact that he was friends with a girl that happened to be a bit more beautiful than the rest.

Was that justification to put him to death?

He resented it, but it was the law of the world. With strength, nothing was impossible.

Whether it be strength or backing, the one who pushed him into the dungeon had both. Meanwhile, he had none.

He was angry. He was furious at the law of the world and he was furious at the fact that he was put into such a situation.

But even greater than that fury was his fear. A fear which translated into hatred for everything that caused him to feel it.

“If it wasn’t for him...”

Jin Horten.

Even if he was destined to die in this dungeon, he would carve that name into his heart and never forget it.

“If it wasn’t for her...”

Elena Pierce. His best friend since childhood. Even if he wasn’t thinking straight, he knew it was stupid to resent her. She didn’t bear any blame for the current situation.

In fact, she might’ve even prevented such a situation from happening to him countless times in the past without his knowledge.

If it wasn't for her serious injury this time, perhaps it would've been the same.

But his mind wasn't stable. He couldn't control his emotions.

Regardless of what logic told him, he couldn't help but resent her.

Resent her for what? For being pretty? For being loyal? It was resentment without reason, but the fact that he couldn't find a reason for it only made his resentment grow fiercer.

"I'm...hungry..."

He couldn't eat, though. Eating meant mutating into a horrendous beast. Even if he had to die, he wouldn't do it in such a way.

"I have to level up..."

It wasn't a thought born out of strength.

When one's level increased, their stamina would also recover a bit. Even if it wasn't much, it was still something.

Since he couldn't eat, he had to level up. That way, he wouldn't be hungry anymore.

"I have to survive..."

It had only been a day since he made an oath to survive, since he forged a will to do so. But, saying he would do it and putting it into motion were two different things entirely.

He desperately wanted to hold to his oath, but every time those bestial roars rang out, his body would freeze in fear.

He didn't have a choice, though.

He was a coward, sure. He was weak, sure. But he had survived on earth for so long on his own.

He desperately clung to life. He worked any odd job he could get. If it was necessary, he slept on the street to lower the amount of money he spent on himself.

All the while supporting his mother and paying her hospital bills so that she could survive as well.

He had built up a certain pride after surviving for so long in a hopeless situation. It was a dog's pride, sure, but it was pride nonetheless.

He wouldn't allow himself to die if he didn't at least try to survive first.

His trembling hands reached out to the floor next to him and grabbed the hilts of the two rusted short swords he had found yesterday.

He slowly stood up and walked out of the cave.

But there was no way it would be easy to just hunt.

Wolves, tigers, bears, all the beasts he ran into were massive and ferocious. He didn't have the strength nor the courage to fight against them.

He hid behind boulders and crawled along the dungeon floor, avoiding the beasts he saw but couldn't fight.

He barely had any mana in his body, so even if these beasts noticed him, they ignored him since it wasn't even beneficial to devour him.

Kill, eat, evolve.

This was the entire life of a beast without intelligence. Since he couldn't benefit their evolution, they instinctively cast him aside.

Even in a land of beasts, he was treated like trash.

He wanted to laugh at the bleak outcome, but he couldn't even force it out of his throat.

Instead, he kept crawling.

And after hours of such actions, he finally stumbled upon something that looked doable.

A group of small rabbit-like beasts that were moving through the dungeon. As he watched, he noticed that one of the rabbits had fallen away from the rest.

"A chance..."

If it was a rabbit, he should be able to do it. All he had to do was run up and stab it with his blades before it ran away. That way, he'd get at least a little experience.

After the main group of rabbits had escaped his line of sight, he made his move.

He ran forward with everything he had and ambushed the rabbit from behind.

His short swords plunged downward without aim. As long as they stabbed into the rabbit, it was fine.

But at that moment that the short swords were about to pierce through, the rabbit hopped forward.

The efforts of his reckless charge were all for null.

Before he could even understand that he had failed, the rabbit turned a full 180 degrees and hopped towards him.

In that single hop, it had already arrived at his position.

Its little arms looked so innocent at that moment, but in the next, frightening claws elongated from within.

They slashed forward.

Blood spurted into the air.



His face paled.

He couldn't even scream.

While he was still in shock, he backed away.

He couldn't feel his left leg.

But that didn't matter. That terrifying rabbit was coming towards him again.

He continued to back away. He turned around and ran.

But he only had one fully functional leg. He limped at the fastest pace he could to escape.

But that pace wasn't fast at all.

The rabbit caught up without difficulty and slashed again.

His left leg spurting more blood.

He almost collapsed right away.

But the pain didn't come immediately. His mind was too shocked to register it.

His vision went dark and a feeling of dizziness. Even as he tried to limp away, he couldn't tell which direction he was moving in.

He didn't know how he escaped.

Or maybe he didn't escape at all.

It was just, at some point, that rabbit stopped chasing him.

He limped and he limped. He was too far away from his original cave. His consciousness was already fading.

He found a nearby rock that was close to the dungeon wall. The space between the two was barely enough to fit his skinny body into.

He crawled into that space and hid.

And then, the pain finally hit him.

Chapter 354 Unseen Memories [4]

[Trigger warning. The following chap has some stuff about self-harm and suicide so just be mindful]

“AHH—!”

A piercing screech tried to leave his mouth. But he quickly bit his tongue to stop it.

Even if he was an idiot, even he knew that making so much sound would only attract more beasts to his location.

“Mmph...agh...”

Muffled noises intermittently left his mouth as he tried to cope with the pain coming from his left leg.

It was burning but also cold. With his body stuck in such a tight space, his leg kept bumping against the rocks, making the pain even worse.

“Haa...agh...”

Before he even realized it, tears began to spill from his eyes.

‘It hurts. It hurts so much. Why...why is this happening...I just want to live...why...’

His thoughts were incoherent. The dizziness in his head was only getting worse as his blood loss intensified.

He remembered scenes from a few movies he watched.

Looking at his shirt, he moved his arms and tore off the sleeves. Then, he wrapped them around the wounded area and tied them up.

“Blegh...!”

It was his first time seeing the wound. It was horrifying. There were three massive gashes running down from his knee to his ankle. Whenever a space opened up in the blood leaking from them, he could clearly see the white bone inside.

The fact that his own leg could look so mangled...he almost vomited on the spot.

But he swallowed back the vomit that forced its way into his mouth. He was already hungry, he couldn't let any food out of his grasp.

"Hsss..."

The pain only became worse. He didn't even know if the shirt pieces would help. But he didn't want to look at the wound again.

Even if he wanted to, he couldn't do anything about it.

His consciousness was fading.

With tears still streaming down his cheek and blood still spilling from his leg, he passed out.

It was his luck that he survived.

He had a regeneration skill from the moment the system awakened.

It was a slow process, but the muscles in his leg were being pulled back together and healed.

By the time he woke up, the bleeding had already stopped.

The gashes were still there, though. He couldn't walk without limping anymore.

He wanted to stay in this spot forever. He didn't want to go back outside and risk suffering so much again.

But just like before, he didn't have a choice.

If he didn't go out and level, he would starve. If he starved, he'd die an even worse death.

He didn't have resolve. He only had a basic human craving for survival.

That was the only thing pushing him forward.

But it was enough.

He was able to get up and return to that rabbit from before.

But he decided to do things differently.

To kill it in one strike, that's what he had to do if he wanted to be successful.

Of course, he had the capability to do it, but it was a double-edged sword. But he didn't have any other choice.

He used his skill. A skill that would've been enough to make him a top hunter on Earth if he had a body that could handle it.

He hid behind a rock and watched the rabbit. When he saw an opening, he teleported.

His blades pierced the rabbit before it could react. Then, he teleported back to his original spot.

"Kak...!"

He coughed up a mouthful of blood. His insides were churning from just that much teleportation.

How was he supposed to keep doing this?

But even while thinking so, he still did it.

He waited for his injuries to become lighter and used the same strategy to hunt.

And as he did so, he gained a level.

At that moment, he felt some of his hunger alleviating. At the same time, he felt his injuries become somewhat better.

It was reinvigorating.

Capitalizing on his current adrenaline rush, he kept going.

He made sure that the feeling of adrenaline washing away his fear never left his body.

Instead of facing reality, he forced himself to ignore it.

But it worked.

And he found that the more he leveled up, the more he could teleport without facing injury.



And so, he continued. In the back of his mind, he hoped that the situation where his adrenaline wore off would never come.

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'I can't sleep.'

Time passed. He hunted often and slowly got used to the feeling. But because of the fact that he kept himself in an adrenaline-crazed state at all times, he couldn't sleep at all.

'Sleep? There's an easy way to sleep.'

He picked up his shortsword and placed the blade on his neck.

'This way, I can sleep in peace, right? Haha, who am I kidding...'

Despite his thoughts, the shortsword didn't leave his neck. The blade pushed into his skin, drawing a line of blood.

'If I just...'

He had somewhat adapted to the dungeon, but it hadn't even been two full days yet.

There was always a voice in the back of his mind.

Why not just end it?

What's the point of suffering?

It's easier to just end it all.

Nobody will miss me anyway.

It's not like I had a good life to return to even if I survive.

Why should I survive?

It's all pointless.

Just end it.

The blade pushed into his neck even further. His breathing felt restricted by its weight.

End it.

End it.

End it.

It wasn't the first time he'd considered it. In the past day and a half, he'd considered it multiple times.

But he was a coward. He didn't even have the courage to kill himself.

But he felt that in this moment, if he kept pushing the blade forward, he wouldn't be lucid enough to stop himself.

If he wanted, he could really end it all.

Drops of blood trickled down the side of his neck and softly landed on the cold ground below.

He stayed in this position for a while. The blade didn't move forward, but he didn't pull it away either.

The drops soon accumulated into a small puddle.

I should just...

'Stop!'

He violently threw the blade to the side. It fell to the ground and the cracks on its surface became slightly bigger.

'Stop! Stop! Stop!'

He clutched his head. The voice within wouldn't go away.

'I won't! I won't end it! I won't!'

He vehemently shook his head.

Die.

End it.

Everything is pointless.

Even if I level up, my body is still too weak.

I won't ever be able to escape.

This dungeon is my grave.

So I should just end it all myself.

It's better than being eaten by beasts.

Why be stubborn?

'Stop! Stop! Stop! Get out of my head!'

He staggered over to a nearby wall.

What's the point of revenge?

Jin Horten isn't a person someone like me can touch.

Elena probably moved on already.

Mom was doomed from the second I fell into the dungeon.

There's no hope left.

So why struggle?

"GET OUT OF MY HEAD!"

He screamed it out loud.

His body moved forward.

Bang!

His head heavily collided with the wall in front of him.

“Get out! Get out! Get out!”

Bang! Bang! Bang!

The impacts were loud. Dull sounds rang out with every one. Blood oozed from his forehead.

“Just...FUCKING LEAVE!”

Crack!

His skull cracked slightly.

His consciousness could no longer hold on.

He slumped to the ground, the light in his eyes gone.

It was now the third day since he was trapped in this dungeon.

Chapter 355 Unseen Memories [5]

A new day began.

Or at least, he woke up and began moving again.

It was hard to tell the time in a place where the sky never changed. The air always flowed in one direction and the beasts always acted the same.

It was hard to tell the time.

Maybe it had been the number of days he assumed it to be. Maybe it had been less.

He didn't know.

He was slowly starting to forget about how time used to flow.



It was the fourth day by his books. He didn't know how much he slept, but it wasn't enough to cleanse his fatigue.

But he could do nothing but get up and hunt.

If there was one thing he could be excited about, it was the fact that his hunts had been getting better with the passing of time.

He was learning how to fight. A faint hope of survival welled up in his heart.

He looked at the wolf corpses on the floor below him. A smile inadvertently crept up his face.

Battle was a good distraction. When he was in battle, he didn't have to think about the troubles that plagued him.

He was starting to fall in love with that feeling.

His gaze panned upward, and he saw something glint in the corner of his eye.

'That is...'

He ran.

He ran with all his might.

If there was even a slight chance that things were as he saw them to be, it was worth expending all of his stamina.

So he ran.

And when he finally reached that spot, he almost jumped in joy.

His eyes weren't fooling him.

Plants. Green plants. Green plants with assorted colors spread along their surface.

'Food!'

It didn't matter what the plants actually were, but if they were plants, it meant he could eat.

Even if it was the slightest sustenance, it was fine.

He was hungry.

So hungry that every time he saw a corpse on the ground, he wanted to dig his teeth into it and devour it.

But he couldn't.

Because if he did, he'd turn into a mutated being that was neither beast nor human.

He had some ideas, some insane ideas that he didn't want to entertain, but the situation wasn't dire enough for him to put those ideas into motion.

That's right.

Even as he thought of his current situation, the pain he had been going through, he still thought the situation wasn't dire enough.

It was simply how deranged his ideas were.

Staying down here, his thoughts were becoming more bestial.

And it had only been a few days.

He put aside his thoughts and reached out to the plants in front of him.

His hands were skinnier than he remembered them to be. He could clearly see the outline of his bones through his skin.

He picked a plant from the ground. He didn't hesitate to shove it into his mouth.

He was voracious.

He didn't stop with just one plant. He grabbed every single one in the vicinity and devoured them.

"Ah...ah...ah..."

He could only make incomprehensible noises. The plants didn't taste good at all.

They were muddy. They had grown in a musty dungeon, and the water source that fed them wasn't anywhere close.

They had been trampled by beasts before. They carried a slight taste of the wastage those beasts left behind.

But at the same time, they tasted heavenly.

They were food. That was all that matters. To a body that had been on the verge of starvation, anything that could be classified as food would automatically taste amazing.

There was such a great food source here, so why would the beasts ignore it?

He couldn't figure it out.

"Ah...ack...!"

He wanted to keep eating, but his body suddenly revolted.

He couldn't move a muscle. He was paralyzed.

His insides were churning. His consciousness became weak.

A disgusting feeling spread through his body. Like a thick sludge was entering his bloodstream.

“Blegh...!”

He inadvertently vomited. He hadn’t eaten in three days, though, so it was mainly just stomach acids.

And blood.

Mouthful after mouthful of blood that were vomited from his mouth.

It was so violent that his body began to cramp. But he was paralyzed. He couldn’t even hunker down or scream in pain.

His eyes rolled back into his head. He began foaming at the mouth.

Bloody tears left his eyes. And soon after, trails of blood began leaking from the rest of his seven orifices.

He was seizing up.

“Blergh...!”

This time, chunks of meat were mixed in with his vomit.

But he hadn't eaten anything in three days. That meat was pieces of his internal organs that were forced out of his body.

The sludge in his blood made his body feel disgusting. It was a feeling that somehow managed to stand out even in the pain he was going through.

It didn't just spread, though.

Steam rose from his skin. His body started to heat up uncontrollably.

Sweating was good. It meant that his body was trying to expel the poison from his pores.

But the reason he was sweating was different.

His blood...it was boiling.

It was burning. Evaporating away and becoming steam that left his body through his pores.

The boiling blood was circulated through his body along with the disgusting sludge. It only amplified the horror of his current situation.

He had been reckless.

He had been too starved for any sort of sustenance.

The adrenaline rush helped him ignore the feeling. The thick mana in the atmosphere did the same.

But in the end, when he saw hope right in front of his eyes, he couldn't resist.

He was desperate.

He was going to pass out again.

He couldn't believe it.



How many times had he passed out from pain since he became stranded here?

It was embarrassing.

But his pride was slowly being whittled away.

After all, the poison he ingested just now was vile. His mouth wasn't the only exit to his body that was being utilized to try and extract it. His intestines were also being affected by its spread.

He could feel a disgusting substance leaking through his pants.

He wasn't at a level where he could ignore the urges of his body.

He just hadn't eaten anything in three days, so his body had nothing to digest.

But now, everything he had digested even before he was stranded in the dungeon was being forced out of his body.

After this event, he would no longer be able to simply ignore his carnal desire for sustenance by ignoring it.

He wanted to stop such a situation from occurring at all costs.

But he was paralyzed. His blood was evaporating, leaving him even weaker. His body functions were in the process of shutting down.

He could only endure the humiliation he brought upon himself.

While also enduring the searing pain that wracked his body.

His consciousness was forced to hold on by the intense pain. Even if he wanted to pass out, he couldn't.

But eventually, his mind wasn't able to bear the torture anymore. It shut down.

And he passed out again. In a puddle of his own blood and excrement.

Chapter 356 Unseen Memories [6]

How did he survive?

Once again, by some miracle, he survived.

The poison was gone from his body when he woke up, but the aftereffects remained.

If he didn't eat soon, he would really die.

For a human to die of starvation, it would normally take roughly 2 months.

For a human to die of thirst, it would normally take 2-4 days.

With the introduction of mana, these limits were somewhat surpassed, but the level depended on the amount of mana one had.

For him, starvation and thirst were still things that could kill him in a week.

That was if there were no extraneous circumstances.

Even without mentioning the poison, he had been running around and accumulating fatigue for days on end.

Not to mention how often he got injured and had to cope with the blood loss.

It was only normal for those time limits to be rapidly shortened.

He had to eat.

And so when the fifth day in the dungeon dawned, he became fiercer in his hunting.

And he ended up in a situation he couldn't cope with.

He almost died. No, he surely would've died. Why did he survive? Once again it could only be attributed to luck.

He was just lucky.

It wasn't fair to say everything was due to luck. Since the day he was stranded, he had indeed grown a lot.

However, even taking this growth into account, he should've died five times over at least.

It was strange.

He loved to complain about how his luck was terrible, but that was just avoidance.

In reality, his luck was amazing. What was terrible was the consequences of his own actions.

The only time he was truly unlucky was when he was thrown into the dungeon.

Ever since then, luck had kept him alive.

When he was almost killed by the rabbit, when he was almost killed by the poison, when he was almost killed by his lack of basic human necessities, he himself didn't do anything that could help him survive.

Instead, he only worsened the situation.

It could be argued that his reckless actions were forced by the situation, but even that was just an excuse.

It was his fault.

And on his fifth day in the dungeon, the culmination of consequences of his reckless actions befell him.

His fatigue caught up to him, a beast too powerful for him to kill targeted him, and his luck could no longer protect him.

As he watched his arm get torn off of his body by the jaws of that beast, he realized this.

And he snapped.

He didn't care anymore.

If he was meant to die, he'd die while killing this beast.

He stabbed into its flesh, tore into its body with his fingers and teeth.

Even after his blade broke, he jammed the jagged stump into the beast's eye to cause any degree of damage he could.

Perhaps because he had finally been able to put his life on the line, he was able to kill that beast.

And he devoured it.

He didn't care anymore.

So he tore into its body with his teeth. He feasted on its best and drank its blood.

It didn't taste good.

But it was the mark of his survival.

So he ate and drank without pause.

But it wasn't like that beast died immediately.

In its death throes, it decided to perish together with him.

He survived once again due to luck. Or maybe this time, it could be attributed to his own efforts.

Falling was one thing, but what came after was another.

A trial by blood.

Forced maturity.

He stood inside a blood world of his own making, facing an endless horde of beasts that wanted to eat his flesh and drink his blood.

But his own stamina was infinite as well.

He killed.

He killed and killed and killed.

He started to enjoy the feeling of killing.

He started to crave the feeling of blood splashing onto his body.

So he killed and killed and killed.

His mindset began to change.



He was pathetic.

When he looked at how he had been behaving for the past few days, he wanted to kill.

He wanted to go back and kill that pathetic version of himself.

If he wanted to get stronger, all he had to do was kill.

How long was it before the horde of beasts finally came to an end?

By the time it was over, the man who exited the blood world was no longer the same man who had entered it.

It was forced maturity.

He killed so he wouldn't be killed. He did so until killing and becoming stronger became the only thought that occupied his mind.

Revenge? It could wait. He needed strength to get revenge.

His mother? She could wait. He needed strength to cure her of her illness.

Everything could wait. Strength was above all.

He regained consciousness at some point. He seized his body and took control over his bestial instinct.

Or did he?

Maybe he just merged with it.

After all, he wasn't much different from the version of him that was possessed by that instinct.

The only difference was that he was capable of conscious thought.

An indomitable will forged in fire.

That was what he liked to delude himself into thinking he had built.

But he was wrong. It was all just the delusion of a man who was falling into the depths of insanity.

The only thing he had built was bloodlust. Bloodlust that trumped his fear and allowed him to continue forward without it.

But at least he wasn't pathetic anymore.

He wasn't sniveling like a bitch on the floor after every battle.

He wasn't coughing up buckets of blood every time he teleported.

He had achieved his first class. He had achieved a perfect mutation.

He now had the qualifications to grow stronger.

Who cares how he got it?

So what if he didn't earn it himself?

What was the point in being hung up on pointless matters like that?

He moved through the dungeon. He cleared it floor by floor.

He killed and he killed. He devoured and he evolved.

He loved the taste of blood on his tongue. The feeling it gave him when it splashed on his body.

He loved the pain.

The pain of evolution meant he was growing stronger.

The pain of injuries was just proof that he deserved to become stronger.

But it wasn't easy to maintain his insanity. Every once in a while, he would have moments of lucidity.

"I'm lonely."

"I'm tired."

"I don't want to do this anymore."

The thoughts would flood his head.

It was hard to get rid of them. They were his true feelings after all. The feelings that he hid within a sea of blood and a mountain of corpses.

“I want to go home.”

“But where is home?”

Earth wasn't a home anymore. He had been cast aside by earthlings long ago.

He only realized it after he was stranded here how little he cared about earth.

The only thing left for him there was his mother.

And his revenge.

And just like that, his bloodlust resurged. Malice clouded his mind.

The feeling of blood, the taste of blood, the pain and the thrill of battle.

Those were the only things that could quell his insanity.

Chapter 357 Unseen Memories [7]

Life in the dungeon continued.

Compared to how it was in those first few days, it had gotten considerably better.

But it was lonely.

Incredibly lonely.

The only solace he had was during battle. Whenever his battles ended, he would be forced to face his loneliness once more.

He found himself in a state where he sought constant stimulation. Without it, he would truly go mad.

When it wasn't battle, it was training, when it wasn't training, it was anything else he could think of.

Even after so long, his fear didn't completely go away.

And even though it had been quelled for the most part, he still needed to cope with his current situation.

It had reached a point where he forgot about everything other than the dungeon.

His life was the dungeon and the dungeon was his life.

Was there a way to stave off the insanity that threatened to consume him?

He found himself reminiscing.

Not about people nor about events from his past. Instead, he reminisced on characters he used to read about.

People who would end up in similar situations as he was now.

But they weren't the same as him.

They weren't pathetic trash on the inside.

They braved every danger with pride and cool indifference. They challenged the heavens as if it was the most natural thing to do.

He wanted to be like them.

He wanted to become them.

Who was he?

What was his identity?

A sense of identity was incredibly important. Without it, he would be no different than any other beast in the dungeon.

He had already somewhat become one of them.

He had his own territory on the 20th floor.

No beast dared to challenge him.



Even if he descended, there were still many beasts that didn't dare come close after sensing his aura.

But at the same time, there were beasts that wanted to contend with his hegemony.

Naturally, he fought these beasts. And he indiscriminately slaughtered every other beast on the floor afterward.

If he had to give a reason?

For strength.

To kill. To eat. To evolve. This was his life.

So without a sense of identity, without anything to keep him human, what would he be?

His end goal was still to leave.

To escape. To go home. To get revenge. To cure his mother.

How long had it been since he was stranded in the dungeon?

Enough time had passed that the flimsy will he had originally built up had blossomed slightly. He was at least able to clearly delineate his goals.

But if he wanted to return to society, could he?

In his current state?

It was impossible.

He needed to become human again.

He needed to become those characters he would fervently read about in the past.

His days changed.

When he needed stimulation, he went and slaughtered hundreds and thousands of beasts.

When there were no beasts left on a floor, he would return to training.

And when he wasn't training, he acted.

He stood in front of a massive beast that was crawling on the floor.

Blood stained his skin and leaked from that beast's body.

"This Young Master has shown leniency. Take it as a grace from one above you."

His words were arrogant.

He didn't feel like himself when he spoke them.

No, he didn't feel like himself when he spoke.

He was alone.

When was the last time he spoke at all?

His voice was hoarse even as he tried to put up an arrogant front.

“This is the fate of those who have eyes but can’t see.”

The phrase was one he had seen many times before. It had become something of a joke on earth.

But he spoke it with utmost seriousness.

This was a character.

He needed to play it well.

Until he could become that character.

And regain his humanity.

What was humanity?

It was a question he asked himself plenty of times. He had been seeking his humanity ever since he came to the realization that he had lost it.

What defined him as a person?

What used to define him as a person?

He could answer the second question easily.

Struggle, weakness, the inability to grow stronger.

But that old version of him had perseverance. It was one of the only admirable traits he used to have.

But that perseverance disappeared when he was stranded in the dungeon.

He had become a weeping mess.

He complained about everything he could complain about.

He resented people who didn't deserve to be resented.

He pushed the blame onto others so he could avoid his own weakness.

But the dungeon didn't allow him to avoid it.

It laid his weakness bare in front of him.

It forced him to acknowledge the fact that he was pathetic.

And it almost killed him multiple times in the process.

And so, what was he now?

He had strength. That was what he had been chasing after for so long. That was the ultimate goal he had ever since the World Awakening.

Why, then, did it feel so empty?

Why did it feel like his strength didn't matter at all?

What was he missing?

That missing piece, he had judged it to be his humanity.

He had become no different than a mindless beast.

He killed, he ate, he evolved.

What else did his life constitute? What did he look forward to every day? What did he work towards?

His overarching goal didn't matter. He didn't have a method to escape. He didn't think he would find one any time soon.

How long would he be trapped in this dungeon?

Perhaps, by the time he exited, his mother would've long succumbed to her illness without his support.

Perhaps, the target of his revenge would've become a figure that even with his newfound strength, he couldn't touch.

He felt like his thoughts should drive him to work harder, to try harder to find an exit to the dungeon.

But it didn't work like that.

For such determination to be born, the prerequisite was hope.

Hope that the chance of success existed.

He didn't have that hope.

He didn't have humanity either.

The only thing he had was the dungeon.

To kill, to eat, to evolve.

He didn't have any other thoughts in his head.

Well, there was one.



Blood.

He had become addicted to it.

Sometimes, he found himself unable to sit still if he didn't feel the blood of beasts on his skin for too long.

He didn't question this feeling. He just went out and hunted to quench his thirst for blood.

It was then that he realized something was wrong. Something inside of him told him that he should be questioning his sanity.

But why question it?

If there was nothing else to do besides killing, shouldn't it be a good thing that he enjoys it?

At least that way, he wouldn't get bored of the monotony of his life.

But he still ended up questioning it.

He wanted to regain a semblance of sanity.

Perhaps that wish alone meant that he was on the right track.

He hoped so.

He hoped.

It was a good thing that the concept of hope had come back into his life.

He was becoming more like those characters he emulated.

But he hadn't become them yet.

If he had done his job properly, he wouldn't be questioning himself anymore.

He would act as he saw fit, and he would do so with confidence.

It was still uncomfortable. To speak, to act, to show consideration for those around him, it didn't feel like he was himself when he did it.

But he would continue without fail.

Until it wasn't uncomfortable anymore.

Until he became what he was pretending to be.

Chapter 358 Unseen Memories [8]

Constant practice over an extended period of time made that uncomfortable feeling vanish slowly.

He began to embody what he wanted to embody.

Instead of feeling like he wasn't himself, he started feeling like he was becoming someone new.

It wasn't a bad feeling.

And finding references to different shows and novels he used to love in his everyday life brought some flavor to his monotonous life.

Things were looking up.

And then, something new happened.

He felt a strange sensation when he looked at a certain beast.

Something that he felt would help him regain his humanity even more.

That was the only reason he saved it.

Because he was curious about this new stimulation he was receiving.

But that was enough of a reason.

New stimulation was always welcome.

So he saved that beast.

He killed hordes and hordes of beasts that chased it while doing so.

He missed the feeling of being drowned in the blood of his enemies.

It had been a good amount of time since the last time he was able to feel it.

After he did so, he grabbed that beast and ran.

It was exciting.

His blood was boiling, but in a good way this time.

He was being chased.

It was a real dragon. An existence he had only seen in fiction until now.

And on top of that, it was an entity at a level of strength that he couldn't even hope to win against.

He felt like he was back to being the same pathetic person he was when he first arrived in this hellish place.

That pathetic weakling had returned.

Except, this feeling only excited him more.

It was the feeling of death encroaching on him.

It was intoxicating.

He almost stopped running to face that beast. He almost couldn't control his desire to feel death.

Wasn't it so exciting?

The boundary between life and death. Walking a thin line like that could lead to his demise at any misstep.

Wasn't it riveting?

The feeling of being crushed by an opponent and still managing to regain the upper hand. The feeling of blood intertwining as both sides piled up injuries.

He almost stopped in place.

He wanted to die while feeling that feeling.

It was exhilarating. It was a drug that he couldn't curb his addiction to.

He wanted to die at that beast's hands, but he also wanted to live.

As he found himself stuck in a conundrum, he felt a new stimulation.

A new sensation.

His attention was quickly grabbed. He went to find the source of that sensation.

And he found himself in a man-made construct. The first one he had seen in a long long time.

As expected, following the new stimulations he received would always lead him to something fun.

Having fun was the best. It was the only thing he lived for. Even if he escaped the dungeon, he wanted to keep having fun and finding new stimulation like this.

It led to a life that was worth living.

He sat in a chair. It was a good chair. He loved the feeling it gave him.

He looked at the beast he saved.

Should I kill it?

He wanted to kill it.

His body craved its death. His eyes only saw red.

But there was a sensation. A stimulation that he wanted to follow.

That was telling him to keep it alive.

So what should I do?



He stood up and walked over to that beast. It was small. His single hand was easily enough to crush its neck.

If he squeezed a little harder, its bones would snap like twigs.

What a satisfying sound that was.

What a satisfying feeling that was.

There was no blood, but it was still a greatly cathartic feeling.

But he couldn't bring himself to do it.

His curiosity was too strong.

A new stimulation. What would it bring him?

He realized that he only had a single arm.

It had been too long since he lost it. He had gotten used to the feeling of imbalance.

But it had almost led to his death a few times in the beginning.

Not that he minded much.

Death was something he loved to feel.

There were books all along the walls.

Could he still read?

He didn't remember.

But he still went and picked up the books.

Another stimulation.

Information about a world he didn't know, about many things he didn't know.

He became intoxicated with reading. It turned out he could still do it.

He didn't know how much time passed. At some point, that beast woke up.

He had gotten an idea from a book he read.

A companion.

It was an unfamiliar concept.

To have someone else with him. Someone who he could speak to. Someone who he could play with to relieve his boredom.

A companion.

It sounded nice.

It was much better than killing the beast.

Because killing it was only temporary stimulation.

But if he took it as a companion, it could entertain him for years to come.

It was a great idea.

He praised himself for thinking of something so genius.

He spoke to that beast. He was surprised that it could understand him.

There hadn't been many beasts that could do so until now.

He knew from experience.

He talked to the beasts often.

He held conversations with them while they fought.

Or at least, he tried to.

But those beasts were stupid. They couldn't understand his words. A few could, though, but it was a shame that they all died by his hands not long after.

Now there was a beast that could understand him. And he wasn't going to kill this beast.

It was exciting. Especially when the pact was formed.

He could feel the beast's thoughts. It was like he could finally hold a conversation.

He didn't just have to talk one-sidedly.

It was nice.

He became friends with the beast soon enough. They became teammates who hunted together.

He fought the dragon. It was a good fight.

The dragon let out its breath.

Dragon's breath felt good on his skin.

The pain was amazing. He almost forgot to defend.

His left side was burned to an unrecognizable state. The feeling of burning was new. Not many beasts could use fire in the dungeon.

It was searing hot, but also extremely cold. How could those two feelings exist at the same time? It was interesting to feel it personally.

The dragon was eventually defeated though. He couldn't help it.

He loved death. He wanted to feel it all the time. He wanted to embrace it lightly. But he never wanted to actually fall into its clutches.

So he had to kill the dragon. It turned out to be a Wyvern instead of an actual dragon, but it was close enough.

Now what?

He had become a 2nd class. He had become more powerful.

But now what?

Continue to descend?

It was getting boring. He wanted something new.

But descending was good.

He saw it in the subspace.

He could escape as long as he kept descending.

Escape.

It was something he had been craving for so long, but why did it feel so empty? He almost didn't want it. He liked his life in the dungeon. He could have fun and follow his desires without any consequences.

The outside world was difficult. Humans were difficult. He didn't want to associate with them and get caught up in their problems.

But wasn't he human as well?

He didn't think of himself as one.

His thoughts were chaotic. He didn't want to leave. The dungeon was comfortable. He knew what would happen every day. There were no surprises.

The outside world was hard. It was new. He would have difficulty adapting.

But what about his mother and his revenge?

It was tedious.

No, he had to do it.

He had to do it.

He was reverting to how he was before.

He was becoming no different than a beast again.



He had worked so hard to fix that. He had worked so hard to become human again even in the slightest.

What was the point of those efforts if he refused to leave the dungeon?

In the end, he descended.

He went against his desire for comfort.

Because the outside world had more stimulation.

It had more fun things that he didn't know.

Even if it was cumbersome, it was still better than his current monotony.

So he descended.

And he finally left the dungeon.

Chapter 359 Unseen Memories [9]

Tears.

He collapsed to the ground. An unending stream of tears was the only thing he could see.

When he felt the air around him, air that wasn't tainted with the smell of blood. It was awkward, but at the same time, it was refreshing.

When he felt the mana in the atmosphere. It wasn't laced with brutality, but rather tranquil as a drifting stream. He felt his mental state clear up just by breathing it in.

There were trees in the surroundings. Green trees and plants. Beautiful plants that weren't laced with poison.

He could only cry.

He couldn't stop himself.

The tears flowed without his permission. It was only after his tear ducts ran dry that he finally stopped.

He stood up.

Now that the tears were gone, he could take the scenery in with fresh eyes.

He walked. He could teleport, but he walked. Teleporting would only lessen the time he could spend admiring the scenery.

It was quiet. The roars of beasts didn't permeate the air at every point in time.

There was a sun in the sky.

No, just the fact that there was a sky was enough.

The dull scenery of the dungeon was gone.

Being surrounded by darkness on all sides was gone.

He had escaped that dungeon.

After 2 years.

2 grueling years of his life that would've otherwise been spent toiling away endlessly on earth.

He felt proud of his achievement.

Though, it also felt a little empty.

Was it just him, or were some parts of his memory hazy?

It felt like he couldn't remember something important.

No, it was many important things.

Something that defined the current him, he had lost it. But what was it?

He didn't remember.

The scenery quickly stole his attention again.

It had been a few hours since he started walking, yet the peaceful feeling was unchanging.

It was awkward, uncomfortable even.

His hands were itching.

Why were his hands itching?

There was something he wanted to do.

What was it?

He didn't know. He just knew that there was something he wanted to do. But the current environment didn't allow it.

His heart was beating rapidly.

His body began to feel weird. Like millions of ants were crawling inside his skin.

Why?

What did he want to do so bad that it caused such a terrible level of discomfort?

He didn't know.

He wanted to know.

His hands were itching. They wanted to move.

He kept walking. Maybe he would find a clue if he did.

In the distance, he saw a beast. It was a lone deer that was grazing in a peaceful meadow.

Suddenly, he snapped.

Ah, that's right.

He knew what he wanted to do.

He disappeared.

Blood spurted into the air.

That deer's heart was in his hand.

It was still pumping as if it didn't even realize that it had been removed yet.

His eyes were red. The amethyst color that usually shared his irises was gone.

He looked at the beating heart in his hand.

Blood kept flowing from it and dripping onto his body.

He licked his lips. It looked too appetizing.

His teeth had already grown into fangs.

He bit into the heart.

He tore into it.

Voraciously, he devoured.

The taste of blood on his tongue, it helped calm that itching feeling that had been irking him.

But it wasn't enough.

His attention soon turned to the corpse of that deer.

It met the same fate as its heart.

But it wasn't enough.

He wanted more.

Blood.

He couldn't go a few hours without seeing it.

His awareness spread.



He found another beast.

He continued his hunt. He devoured everything.

His gluttony was insatiable.

The beasts in the surroundings had already felt the presence of a predator.

They began to flee with all their might.

He wanted to pursue.

But suddenly, he felt impact on the back of his head.

It was his companion. That beast he had picked up in the dungeon.

The impact helped him come back to his senses.

He looked down at his hands.

They were covered in blood. His body was soaked in it too.

He felt a cold chill run down his spine.

Was this him?

Didn't he get better? Didn't he overcome his bestial instinct?

It seemed he had overestimated himself.

He didn't tame the bestial instinct, he just merged with it.

It was still there, baring its fangs in full force.

He only realized it now.

His heart was cold. He couldn't go on like this.

Maybe he shouldn't return to society.

Humanity probably wouldn't accept him.

What if he started craving the blood of humans? What if he ended up devouring their hearts as well?

Maybe they'd hunt him to the ends of the earth.

He found a stream.

He bathed in it. He cleansed himself of the blood and grime that covered his body.

He looked into the water and saw his reflection.

He looked...human.

He didn't look like a beast.

He looked human, but he wasn't human.

But maybe, just maybe, he still had the chance to become one.

Or at least, to become more like one.

He put away his thoughts. He re-entered his character.

No, it wasn't a character anymore. It was just him.

He didn't want to stay in the forest any longer.

It made him crave the blood of beasts even more.

So he left.

He raced at full speed to anywhere that had civilization.

This way, he could take his mind off of his predicament.

He didn't even realize he was avoiding the problem.

He soon forgot about it entirely.

When he felt the clean air around him, when he felt the serene mana in the atmosphere, when he felt the lush grass brushing against his feet as he ran...

It helped him forget all those things he no longer wanted to remember.

But things didn't always go the way he wished them to go.

The memories all came flooding back together.

The memories of the dungeon and the memories of the actions he had just taken.

The memories of his weakness and the memories of his insanity.

But that wasn't it.

Memories he didn't have beforehand. Memories of things that would happen in the future.

They all came rushing back to him at once.

His name...he had seen it on the status screen many times in the dungeon.

He had even yelled it out while fighting against beasts.

So why couldn't he remember it?

His name...

What was his name?

It felt like something important was happening.

He stopped in his tracks. His companion stopped with him.

They were in the middle of a vast open plain. There were mountains in the distance, and even signs of human activity.

But he didn't pay it any mind.

He stared into empty space.

The space in front of him.

There was something there.

Something important.

Something he hadn't grasped yet, but something he desperately needed to grasp.

But no matter how hard he looked, there was nothing there.

This time, he couldn't just ignore it and continue on.

There was something there.

His name.

Was it there?

He needed to know it. He couldn't live if he didn't know it. He tried to check his status window, but there was no name there.

He could've sworn he saw it before.

What was it?

He needed to grasp it.

Whatever was in that space in front of him.

He reached out his hands.

He tried to grasp it.

Whatever it was.



He needed to grasp it.

Chapter 360 Trauma [1]

A pair of eyes watched him from the void. They had been watching ever since the start.

The owner of those eyes desperately wanted to look away. He wished he didn't have to view the scenes he was viewing.

But he couldn't. No, he wouldn't.

He knew it in his heart. These scenes were something he needed to witness. If he turned away now, he would be no different than the pathetic man that tried to kill himself after only a few days of hardship.

No, he couldn't think of it like that. That was part of the problem.

The man who had entered the dungeon was no different than a normal person. For him to not go insane and not die in those days before his mutation was an incredible achievement, even with all the luck that went into helping him do so.

Discounting that achievement was something he would no longer do.

He didn't remember.

The scenes he was being shown, he didn't remember them.

The way he remembered things was nothing like what he was watching.

It was humiliating seeing this new version of events.

But he knew. This version of events was the truth behind what happened. What he didn't remember, it was suppressed by his own subconscious.

The man who forgot his name, the one who stood in the plains of Apeiron, he reached out to the void. He called out to the man who was watching him.

So the man in the void sighed. He exited his hiding place and appeared before the one calling out to him.

The one who forgot his name was in shock. Seeing the thing he was reaching out for, seeing the answer to the questions he had, he didn't know what to say.

So the man in the void spoke instead. He spoke with a detached smile on his face.

"I know what you're thinking. Yes, you are me, but I am not you. In a sense, we are two different people."

The man from the void didn't wait for his counterpart's response. He spoke as if he alone was in this world.

"I didn't remember it at all. When I think back to those days, the scenes I see are extremely different. Some stuff is the same, the blood world, meeting Zara, I remember all those things. But it's the thought process, the inner workings of my mind at the time that I had forgotten.

"Perhaps I subconsciously suppressed those memories. It's the same for the memories of those first 5 days...that pathetic version of myself, and even the version of myself that had descended into madness, I locked them all away.

"It was a coping mechanism. If I allowed those memories to stay, what would I have become? It seems my brain decided that it was too much. For the sake of returning my humanity, everything I didn't want to remember was thrown away.

"But what did that do to me? I have to admit that due to that, I was indeed able to return to society, but I can't say it was all for the best. Those memories, the trauma associated with them, caused many problems that I still to this day am working to solve.

"At least I know that my insanity was quelled for the most part. That thirst for blood that you have right now...it doesn't act up very often. It's shown itself a few times in the past few years, but it's insignificant in the grand scheme of things.

“But even without that insanity, I feared myself. I subconsciously feared the side of me that had forsaken humanity, the side of me that would’ve devoured a human if it meant tasting new stimulation.

“And while fearing that side of me, I was also incredibly ashamed of the pathetic side of me that was showcased in those first 5 days. Because in the deep recesses of my heart, maybe I believed that I was still that pathetic person.”

The man from the void looked at the sky. He didn’t realize that the man who forgot his name was slowly fading.

“Due to my insecurities and my fear, I mainly caused problems for myself. But Rose also bore a great deal of that insecurity. Even though I boldly took her as my woman, I never treated her as such. But that’s something I’ve been regretting for a long time now.

“It was only now, after seeing my old memories again, that I realized I had wronged somebody else even more.”

Elena.

Before he was stranded in the dungeon, he held feelings for her that he repressed due to their social situation and his own family situation.

However, upon being forced to endure the psychological torture that the dungeon’s atmosphere had on an ordinary person, his mindset became chaotic.

He resented her.

Even in the memories he was shown, his resentment wasn't portrayed as much as it should've been.

Most likely because it had been suppressed even at that time, only existing in the deep recesses of his mind.

But it still existed. It didn't go away just because he didn't think about it.

In fact, every time he thought of his hatred for Jin back then, his hatred for Elena grew as well.

It wasn't even a conscious thing. If he had control over it, he would've put a stop to it immediately.

But he didn't, so it kept growing.

That immature part of him that wanted to push all the blame onto someone else, it chose Elena as the receiver of his misguided grudge.

He hates himself for doing that. But it was all in the past. He didn't have the ability to change it.

When he entered the Eternal Secret Realm and went through that illusion trial on Godspark Mountain, he was able to experience a timeline where the world didn't change, where he and Elena could grow their childhood love into something real.

It was only at that time that his subconscious hatred was assuaged slightly.

So when he met her again on earth, he was able to talk to her like he did before. He was able to treat her as a friend.

But because of his subconscious grudge, he wasn't able to feel the same love for her that he once did.

He was reminded of it during that illusion trial, but he couldn't feel it himself. The only "love" he felt towards Elena was towards the version of her in that trial.

So he neglected her.

He ignored her feelings and continued acting as her best friend.

It was a cruel thing to do.

He thought it was because he was still sorting out his feelings for her, but he only now knew the real reason.

It was the immense guilt and regret he felt because of how he used to think of her in the dungeon. That subconscious hatred for her and the hatred for himself because he thought of her like that.

He couldn't fix it though.

Because he simply didn't know.

He could go and say that it wasn't his fault because of this. He could find a number of excuses to justify his actions towards her.

But he wasn't going to do that.

He accepted it fully.

He was a scumbag. A scumbag who had walked over his best friend's feelings and treated them like they were worthless.

Maybe he didn't even deserve Elena anymore.

But he didn't care.

There was only one way he could make it up to her. He resolved himself the second he came to the realization.

Elena was his woman. Regardless of what others said, regardless of anything else, she would be his woman. And he would right his wrongs by giving her the world.

No, even the world was too small.

If she so wished it, he would conquer this entire universe and gift it to her on a silver platter.

Just to prove his sincerity.