

Void 671

Chapter 671 Second Act [1]

20 shadows populated a discreet corner of the Emperor Bone Sea, nearly unmoving for over a week.

This was the amount of time Damien and Zara had been in Aquazyl, and unfortunately for their pursuers, entering the ancient realm was easier said than done.

"It's impossible for them to just disappear! Don't tell me some random kid was able to sense us and escape?!" One of the men said.

"No, that's impossible. The leader responded. "Not to mention the power difference, I've heard that brat is especially arrogant. Even if he did sense us, he wouldn't run." The leader responded with squinted eyes.

Because Damien was a known special expert, they'd been trailing at a large distance, but this ended up working against them. In the midst of this strange whirlpool formation they surrounded, he'd disappeared.

The problem was that there was nothing within the formation. Even after destroying the Whirlwind Seaweed, they only found empty sea.

Damien and Zara had truly disappeared into thin air.

"Hmph!" One of the assassins harrumphed. "How long do we have to wait? The young master doesn't need to care so much about some insignificant kid, right?"

"We wait as long as necessary." The leader said, leaving no room for questions, "it is not our place to question the young master."

"Leader, we don't have to stay in this area and wait like turtles, though, right? I heard this Emperor Bone Sea is filled to the brim with treasure. Why don't we go explore a little?"

Multiple sounds of agreement rang out, but even this suggestion was rejected by the leader. By his order, they were to wait without entertaining their greed in the slightest.

While he didn't say it out loud, the leader did have some hope. He figured that the special circumstances surrounding Damien's disappearance might mean he stumbled upon some type of treasure.

And if they were able to kill him when he reappeared...

The leader smiled to himself. What one didn't know couldn't hurt them, right?

When the time came, whatever treasures that boy possessed would all be his.

Aquazyl was in an uproar.

The moment the sun vanished over the horizon, the Tephit Clan moved with precision.

Hundreds and thousands of elders were dispatched to the various peripheral branches and subdivisions, arriving to secure them before any sort of attack could take place.

Naturally, each and every one of the elders was a 4th class being.

Still, the plan for the operation didn't change. In fact, it only became more secure.

While the secondary teams were mainly used as a diversion before, that wasn't their only purpose. In truth, a majority of the dirty work was being done by them.

To collapse the Tephit Clan took more than just killing its Patriarch. Every elder, every 4th class figure had to be cut down first, leaving the rest defenseless in front of the other four clans.

The main perpetrators of their slaughter would be the secondary teams.

Currently, while the secondary teams continued to move and destroy Tephit Clan bases, Damien arrived at one of such bases himself.

It was a large town of a couple thousand inhabitants. Their average level didn't seem to exceed 150, and their strength was even weaker due to lack of practice.

Among these regular folk, however, was a group of three men sitting at a bar. If one looked at them, they wouldn't find anything to note. They were completely average in every way.

But to Damien, they stood out like sore thumbs.

'Just the three of you? I'm a little disappointed, I won't lie.'

His body flashed into the bar, his foot crushing the three men's table as he did so.

"Die."

Spatial mana wrapped around the group and separated them into another dimension. The Space-Time River blanketed the separated space, forcing the three men under Damien's control.

Time was the essence of change. With Damien having dominion over its flow, the three men lost control over their faculties. Space was the essence of stability. With it constricting them from every angle, the men couldn't even begin to consider escape,

"Three elders, you might not know me, but I know you. You see, I have a need for your memories, if you don't mind me taking them."

The three elders had only recently been dispatched from the main clan by the Clan Head's most recent order. While their strengths weren't high, their information was crucial.

The three were only around level 230, still in the early stages of 4th class. Against Damien's power, it was impossible for them to resist.

Their bodies soon turned into essence for his growth, their memories entering his mind.

'Mm, this is what I wanted. Even if it's not much, I can see the Tephit Clan's main headquarters. Aside from that...'

The distribution of elders was done in batches, so the three Damien had devoured didn't know about each and every other elder in the field. However, there was a simple fix to this problem.

Damien...just needed to devour more!

He took out a transmission talisman and contacted Feng Yuxiang, directing her team towards the batch he'd just discovered.

While they were being destroyed, Damien went to find a camp unrelated to the one he'd just found, on the hunt for more elders to devour.

In his wake was a ruined city. The previous atmosphere had been shattered by a rain of hellfire that brought its annihilation. As the rules of the Prominence War stated, four Sea God Clans must be entirely extincted for the last to be declared the winner.

In Damien's case...all 5 Sea God Clans needed to meet this end.

'Zara won't be happy if I kill her subordinates...I guess the Sanctuary will welcome another set of residents soon.'

By Damien's estimation, the restriction forcing the Sea God Clan members to remain in Aquazyl only applied to natural exits. If Damien used the Sanctuary to save them, not only would they be shielded by the Void, but they'd also be able to leave freely as long as they remained in the Sanctuary eternally.

Or, at least until Damien claimed control over the Emperor Bone Sea.

Nonetheless, Damien chose the Tephit bloodline to inherit for a reason. It wasn't just because the Tephit Clan was most similar to humanity.

With the grudge the other four clans had against the Tephit, they wouldn't question working together to destroy them.

And if the Tephit Clan was destroyed, as long as Damien remained alive, he would have sole control over the rewards for winning the Prominence War.

In this time, while his forces were working to bring about the Tephit Clan's downfall, his main job was to obtain information.

By devouring elders until there were no elders left to devour, he would understand the Tephit Clan down to its root.

He projected that it'd take a week at most to rouse the Tephit Clan Head's fury to the point of no return.

When that time finally came, he would already know the Tephit Clan from the inside out. There would be no fact hidden from his eyes.

In war against an enemy with a nigh-omniscient level of information, was victory even possible?

Chapter 672 Second Act [2]

The week passed rapidly and was, for the most part, uneventful.

The current battle wasn't like any others Damien had participated in. Rather than actually fighting to the death, more time was spent on information gathering and scouting.

If it wasn't for the threat of total warfare on the horizon, it truly would've been a bland week.

Damien spent this time devouring without limit. Void Mana strengthened itself through the devoured essence and produced Damien a slight bit of Void comprehension when it did while Damien took those elders' memories and put all the valuable information down in one place.

Within the jade slip he populated with information, there wasn't just a relatively detailed map of the Tephit Clan's headquarters, there was also a rough overview of their forces, their positions, and their overall strength level.

Even with all this knowledge, there was a need to plan for the unexpected. As Damien's devoured memories became deeper and deeper, he began connecting a few points that weren't as obvious in individual parts.

One elder might've seen a single strange event, but when three elders saw similar events that somehow carried a cohesive flow to them, was it still coincidence?

'What is he planning?'

From what Damien could gather, Tephit was an extremely secluded man. He rarely left his training room, spending his time immersed in the Emperor Bone Sea for unknown reasons.

Yet, to Damien, these reasons were especially clear. He'd recognized the Prominence War's flawed reasoning instantly upon hearing its structure. If a being who held its power for countless years couldn't do the same, was he even worthy of inheriting the throne?

Mysterious disappearances polluted Aquazyl in recent times, but because of the Prominence War, most people just assumed these disappearances as deaths.

After all, destruction was everywhere. It wasn't strange for an entire city to vanish off the face of the realm without warning.

'Don't tell me this is another sacrificial ritual...seriously, what's with people and their obsession with sacrificing others for...ah, right...'

Damien had seen too many sacrificial rituals in his time. He wanted to question the reasoning these people shared, but he realized he couldn't.

Sacrificing people for power was the basis of the universe's growth system. Even his own Devour functioned on the same basis.

The difference was between practitioners and innocents, but even then, the title of "innocent" was used liberally.

In Aquazyl, everyone was a practitioner. There wasn't such thing as an innocent present.

Personal grudges and selfish power struggles drove Aquazyl's society.

Nevertheless, none of this really mattered. As Damien became more and more well-traveled and discovered the different cultures of the world, he realized that everyone was essentially the same.

'What are you trying to tell me?' He asked no one in particular. The mana in the atmosphere remained just as still as it was before.

His body flashed away. Regardless of the questions in his heart, he had a job to do.

And he would make sure not to disappoint.

"This...this...this...!"

"Amazing! Hahaha, I knew it was the right decision to join you!"

Maximus and Ria stood with Damien's information jade slip in hand. After reading through it, their shock was more than just immense.

They'd spent countless years attempting to breach the Tephit Clan's security, but were always unsuccessful. The clan members would kill themselves through unknown methods before they could be questioned and the fortress-like defense of the headquarters itself made it nigh-impossible to breach.

Yet, Damien was able to make such a comprehensive report in less than a week?

Unbelievable!

"The raids on Tephit periphery branches and subdivisions are going as planned, but the Tephit Clan Head isn't moving as expected. In fact, he's just sitting back and allowing us to kill his people. Isn't it strange?" Maximus said.

"Ha? That guy is arrogant to the core. He views his clan as a tool to achieve his goals. Why would he care about their safety?" Ria questioned. She didn't understand why this point was relevant.

Damien shook his head in rebuttal. "Even if his personality is like that, it's different this time. Tephit isn't just allowing us to continue killing his troops...he's almost feeding them to us."

The number of elders exiting the Tephit headquarters to fortify the subdivisions hadn't decreased after repeated failures. Stronger forces were dispatched so rarely that they didn't even make a difference in the bigger picture.

The only thing this led to was continuous slaughter of Tephit forces.

"What if...that's what he wants?" Zara suggested. All eyes turned to her for explanation.

Zara felt her breath catch in her throat. She didn't want to be involved in such an important discussion with her lack of ability and eloquence, but she ended up blurting her thoughts out anyway. Now that she was given center stage, she couldn't help but fumble.

Damien grabbed hold of her hand, reassuringly squeezing it and bringing Zara back to reality.

She took a few deep breaths, stabilizing herself and building up courage before saying, "I've been watching the Tephit Clan's movements from the beginning, and they've always been strange. Why fuel rebellion instead of crushing it? Why send weaker forces even after understanding our power level? Why drag out this war instead of ending it before the two uninvolved clans decide to join?"

"As I ask myself, I realize that...maybe Tephit wants the chaos to reach its peak? There are more than just a few methods to use chaos and bloodshed to one's own benefit. And if Tephit is the type of person Ria makes him out to be, wouldn't sacrificing his clan for personal gain perfectly embody his character?"

Ria's eyes widened. "You don't mean...!"

"What other gain could he be wishing for aside from freedom?" Maximus said coldly.

The eyes of the two Clan Heads were terrifyingly chilled. With Zara's line of reasoning helping them see clearer, they couldn't deny this truth.

The Clan Heads of the five Sea God Clans...they'd always known about the shackles of their existence. They were chained to this world and chained to the Prominence War, unable to escape the consistent cycle of death it wrought.

Since they had to suffer, they did their best to ease the burden on the clan members below them. This was the same for every Clan Head that came before them.

The separated battlefields, the loose structure of the clans, these were all for that exact motive.

If Tephit was trying to escape by himself, he was essentially betraying the other Clan Heads and betraying Aquazyl.

They couldn't accept it.

Previously, Maximus and Ria only decided to enter this war and destroy the Tephit Clan for personal gain. Tephit was suppressing them too much, leading their clans into decline. They wanted the power they'd receive from killing him.

However, the situation was different now. If Tephit wanted to escape Aquazyl alone, it wasn't about power or selfishness anymore.

They couldn't allow that to happen.

"Throw away any thought of further preparation. We, the Ruvia Clan, will attack the Tephit tomorrow!" Maximus fiercely declared.

"We, the Oga Clan, will join you with honor!" Ria declared as well.

The two looked at Damien and Zara, waiting for their responses.

Damien smiled. Well, the matters of Aquazyl should be left to the people of Aquazyl. He didn't need to worry about the Tephit Clan's schemes.

All that mattered to him was...

"Attack tomorrow? That's great. I was getting tired of waiting."

Chapter 673 Second Act [3]

The murky black Emperor Bone Sea reflected in the Tephit Clan Head's personal training room was dyed red with the color of blood.

'Almost...just a bit more and I can finally leave this place. I can finally...become a god.'

A light of madness painted his eyes. This escape plan had been brewing for more than just the Clan Head's lifespan. Every Clan Head before him aided in the completion of a plan that was just now coming into fruition.

The reason was simple.

To use blood sacrifice to tear open a hole in Aquazyl was easier said than done. Aquazyl was created by the Sea God, an unmatched existence. Naturally, it took a great deal of time to properly accumulate the necessary sacrifices.

Now, millions of years later, their hard work was finally paying off. With just a few thousand more sacrifices, the crack would be opened wide, allowing Tephit to not only escape Aquazyl, but also to truly control the Emperor Bone Sea.

'Your refusal will not faze me. You will become mine!'

The Tephit Clan Head excitedly licked his lips. The scene on the projected walls around him changed, reflecting the inside of Aquazyl.

Despite the low level of authority he truly held, he could at least spy on the happenings in Aquazyl.

'Ahhh, you've finally decided to come. I've been waiting for so long!'

Tephit excitedly grabbed a transmission talisman and sent a message, ordering all forces to return to the main headquarters and prepare for war.

At the same time, he pushed open the training room doors and appeared in Aquazyl for the first time in many years. His reentrance clearly signified the importance of this moment for him.

A few children thought themselves powerful and decided to wage war against him. In normal times, he naturally would've been extremely irritated by their behavior. But in his current circumstance...

War was just another opportunity.

The main attack force consisted of Damien and Zara, Maximus and Ria, the Sanctuary's 4th class beings, and the most powerful 4th class beings from the Ruvia and Oga clans.

This force didn't have more than 20 people, but it was a team of elites. Those weaker than them would trace their steps and attack the lower-level Tephit Clan members while they pushed forward.

They stood in the middle of a flat plain. The Tephit Clan's main headquarters was surrounded by a large concealment array, making it completely invisible to the outside world.

But to Damien, it almost felt like home.

"There is a three-layer defense system behind the concealment array that tries to beguile and kill anyone who enters. The first layer is an intricate beguiling formation that uses Aquazyl itself as a foundation. If you aren't careful, your mind will be broken by it. The second layer is more material. Tephit Clan guards armed with powerful technology will be waiting there. If your mind becomes too immersed in the formation, they'll move and kill you before you can even react. As for the final layer...just leave that one to me." Damien said with a grin.

"Everyone is aware of the plan, right?"

"Hmph, it can hardly be called a plan. Your only intention is to kill until there is nothing left to kill." Bianca scoffed.

Damien scratched his head sheepishly. "I mean, is there any better way to do things? At this point, our options are pretty limited."

Bianca shrugged and didn't say anything. Of course, there were plenty of other ways to go about this plan. The problem was that every other method would take strenuous amounts of time, time they didn't have.

This full-frontal assault would indeed be the most efficient route to take in their current circumstance, especially due to how knowledgeable Damien had suddenly become about the Tephit Clan.

The main attack force had already discussed this plan countless times in the past day. Now that they were at the enemy base, nervousness and anticipation hit them in waves.

But before they could submerge themselves too deeply in forethought...

"Let's go!" Damien yelled enthusiastically. His body flashed forward, his fist flying through the air!

BANG!

Cracks spread through the air as the sky itself seemed to shatter. An extremely well-hidden concealment array cracked and fell apart, giving way to the Tephit Clan's scenery.

With Damien's knowledge of the clan, finding the array's weak point wasn't difficult at all.

He didn't stop after breaking the array. His body flashed through the beguiling formation. His powerful mental strength protected his mind with everything it had, but even then he could feel himself veering off course.

"Haa!"

With a spirited shout, Damien spread spatial mana around him in a thin web. His awareness infused into this web as he moved, allowing him to better sense the surrounding space.

Ting!

A sudden reaction came from the web's periphery. There, a Tephit guard was slowly making his way towards Damien, armed head to toe with luxurious armor.

Damien grinned. 'If you come to me, that makes things so much easier!'

'Material Shift'

Damien's recent breakthroughs in Dimensional Magic allowed him a supreme ability to manipulate position. Dimensional Shift was this concept used on the grandest scale, shifting the position of the dimension itself.

However, there were smaller and more precise applications of this ability that Damien could use. Material Shift was likely the most practical of them.

Indiscreet spatial mana wrapped around the unaware guard. In the next instant, he found himself directly within the beguiling formation!

Damien's body took the guard's original position. Using the boost he'd received from this move, Damien shot forward and increased his momentum!

Material Shift allowed him to toy with the position of material objects, whether they were living or nonliving. If he wanted to, Damien could use this skill to easily transport his every team member past the beguiling formation.

But this wasn't his job.

Damien's target...was the Clan Head himself.

But before that, he had to take care of something else. He zoomed past the secondary defensive layer of armored guards and arrived at the third layer. Unexpectedly, this layer was actually a large wall of murky black water.

This water was from the Emperor Bone Sea.

Not only would the water itself harm intruders through poison and other nefarious methods, the beasts and plants residing within were terrifying in their own right. Damien had personally experienced their ferocity, so he knew not to downplay this defensive layer.

However, in the end, this was merely a spark of the Emperor Bone Sea, not even enough to be quantified as a fraction. If he showed fear in front of this tiny piece, how could he confidently claim the entire sea in the future?

His hand reached out and brushed against the sea wall's surface. Pitch-black mana exited his fingertips, snaking along the wall.

'Devour it all. And don't worry about portion sizes. There'll be plenty more to eat after this.'

Void Mana jumped and danced in jubilation upon hearing his words. In its excitement, its foggy form became more material, resembling the gaping maw of a terrifying and unknown creature.

In the next second, the maw emitted a soul-snatching suction force, forcibly devouring the Emperor Bone Sea wall whole.

Chapter 674 Second Act [4]

While Damien made a beeline for Tephit, the rest of the main attack force split off into their own roles as well.

The Tephit Clan kept a loose structure like the other four clans on the surface, but their actual internal structure was extremely hierarchal. Anyone who fell out of this line would be executed without mercy.

The Tephit Clan had two Great Elders at the late-middle stages of 4th class, roughly around level 330, tens of High Elders at around level 300, and countless normal elders who were between levels 200 and 300 in strength.

The only Law Comprehension their bloodline allowed them was the same Law Comprehension that the other four clans used, just utilized with different methods.

Knowing these two facts made facing them far easier. Firstly, Maximus and Ria would fight against the Great Elders. They were both incredibly strong and held extreme familiarity with the strange laws of Aquazyl. They would take care of the two Great Elders faster than anyone else.

The Sanctuarians were in charge of the High Elders. Their strength lay mainly in the uniqueness of their laws, giving them an advantage during first contact. In a race against time like the current raid, they needed to capitalize on this advantage as much as possible.

The rest of the regular elders of the two clans would fight against the regular elders of the Tephit Clan. With these bases covered, there wasn't much left to do besides carry out the plan to perfection.

Of course, there was one more job. Zara moved silently through the battlefield. Her beast form stood at its smallest height, no different in size than a wolf cub. As she ran, her shadow split from her body and materialized into a copy of her.

The two versions of Zara moved in opposite directions, avoiding direct confrontation as much as possible.

Their job was completely unrelated to everyone else's. In fact, it was something only known to her and Damien.

But in the end, her role in this raid was likely even more important than Damien's, despite the fact that he was facing the Tephit Clan Head himself.

Maximus and Ria made it through the beguiling formation not long after Zara. Their steps were light and rapid, their location already set.

Boom! Bang!

A jet of mana and a fist shot out, pulverizing the two Tephit guards who tried to stop them. Passing the secondary defensive line, they prepped themselves for the most terrifying third.

But when they arrived, they only found empty space.

"T-that terrifying black wall is..." Ria muttered.

"M-mm, it's gone..." Maximus said, equally shocked.

They thought they'd grown accustomed to Damien's ferocity, but they were sorely mistaken. The terrifying black wall that used to reside in this space was a harrowing defensive measure and the main reason none of the other clans had been able to invade the Tephit.

That black wall contained a deathly energy that invaded one's body and corroded them from the inside out. This energy was so subtle that it was impossible to notice until the final stages of decay when one's body ceased functioning.

Not to mention, there were countless other dangers lurking within the water wall.

The clans of Aquazyl viewed this wall not as the Tephit Clan's property, but as the mark of the sovereign.

But now, in front of their eyes, that mark of sovereignty had vanished. They didn't know how Damien did it, but it was clearly his doing.

"Tch, it's not a good feeling being surpassed so much by a child," Ria mumbled in complaint.

Maximus smiled lightly and patted her on the head. "Well, there isn't much we can do about that. Shouldn't we just be content that the younger generation is surpassing the old?"

Ria pushed his hand away with a blush, replying, "hmpf, don't think I can't see through you. You're just acting nice because you know he can't compete for sovereignty."

"I can't argue with that," Maximus shrugged, "but it's true that I respect him. If this raid ends in success..."

He didn't finish his words. Instead of posing hypotheticals, he'd much rather move into action.

The duo pressed their feet against the ground and pushed off, flying through the water with precision and speed that land dwellers could never replicate. Before even Damien reached the Clan Head, they were already at the Great Elders' abodes.

"Raka, Tilis, come out and fight me!" Maximus yelled.

"Hmm, so it has finally begun. Our time...has also come..." an aged voice rang out from within.

"Time...aye. It has truly been so long." A second voice joined it.

The residence's door opened slowly, revealing the figures of two old men. They were both unremarkable in appearance, but both Maximus and Ria's eyes hardened when they saw them.

"Stop working with Tephit. Join us and get away from his schemes. Only then can you live...teacher!" Ria yelled.

Raka and Tilis, two old men who had lived for untold millennia. They were not only elders of the Tephit Clan, but also the adored teachers of almost every Clan Head alive today.

One day a few hundred years ago, they broke their neutrality and joined the Tephit Clan. Nobody was able to find out why, nor did the two leave any hints.

In the end, the two didn't even help the Tephit Clan in any way. Their actions were incomprehensible.

But still, the two old men didn't budge on the decisions they made. Others...didn't need to understand their reasoning.

Tilis smiled warmly as he looked at the two Clan Heads. He remembered when they were still children who didn't even know how to use mana.

"Seeing how you two have grown...I'm truly overjoyed by your progress. And it seems you've found solace in each other. With the way you used to fight, who would've ever guessed?"

"Ha, your vision is too narrow. I predicted their matrimony long ago, you just never listened to me."

"E-elders!" Ria shouted in embarrassment. She glanced over at Maximus, only to see the dumb smile that had lit up his face.

"What? The two of you obviously want each other. Why are you hesitating so much?" Tilis said slyly.

The blush on Ria's face reddened. The two of them weren't even married yet! It was true they'd had more than just a little fun, and it was true that they cared for each other abnormally, but the Prominence War and their responsibilities didn't allow them to calmly accept marriage.

Nevertheless, there wasn't time for idle conversation at the moment. As much as she wanted to speak to her former teachers, Ria understood her priorities.

The Tephit Clan needed to be exterminated. Until that happened, they needed to delay the two elders. They already knew that defeating them was impossible.

Maximus was the same. Marriage might not have been possible at the moment, he would have all the time in the world to consider it in the future. For now...

The two flared their auras and readied themselves. To fight against the beings who raised them and taught them to fight in the first place...

Whether emotionally or technically, this fight would be extremely difficult for them.

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Maximus acted first.

Despite the positive feelings he held for his old teachers, his clan came before anything else. He wouldn't hesitate even if it was his own mother in front of him.

His fist shot out, projecting a jet of mana that blasted towards the two elders.

Boom!

Aquazyl's waters imploded wherever the beam went. The residence the two elders stayed in was destroyed just like that, but the individuals themselves weren't harmed at all.

Aquazyl's mysterious laws encompassed many different concepts, but the main ones were the five that the Sea God Clans embodied.

The Oga Clan embodied brutality, the mentality of the sea that allowed its ecosystem to thrive.

The Tephit Clan embodied intelligence, the ultimate goal of all sea life. Intelligence didn't come easy to them, but when it did, they became unimaginable monsters.

The Hubo Clan embodied fortitude, the reality of the sea. Without fortitude, even a mindless beast would be driven insane. In the depths of the sea where even light couldn't exist, fortitude in both mind and body was incredibly important.

The Verxis Clan embodied darkness, yet another reality of the sea.

And finally, the Ruvia Clan...embodied the flow of mana itself.

The concepts embodied by the five clans influenced their mana and caused its form to change drastically. At its core, each and every one of them was using a variation of Water Laws.

For the Oga Clan, their mana influenced their blood more than anything else. Whether it be the terrifying bloodlust they could admit or the red aura they used to enhance their bodies, all of their abilities stemmed from blood.

As for the Ruvia Clan, because their concept was far more esoteric, the breadth of their creativity was naturally greater. However, a commonality among them was their skill in ranged attack methods.

Maximus himself didn't use any flashy techniques or special skills to reach his position. Rather, it was his extreme control over mana that allowed him to do so.

"Oh—"

The dispersed mana from his attack gathered again just as the elders began speaking once more. A secondary explosion went off, encapsulating them within.

"Ria, we can't hold back. We have to go all out from the beginning!" Maximus stated solemnly.

His body began to change, morphing into a more bestial form. Unlike what one would expect from Maximus considering his stature and personality, the form he morphed into was incredibly lithe, almost feminine in its charm.

The Ruvia Clan was descended from Sirens. It was rare for Sirens to reach the Godbeast level since their bloodlines weren't that powerful, but the same wasn't the case for the Ruvia Ancestor.

Her bloodline was incredibly potent, and while she was a Siren, her evolution into a Godbeast was close to a complete species transformation.

When Maximus changed his form to embody her strengths, the amplification of his mana heightened considerably. Not only that, but he also gained a myriad of new abilities he couldn't use in his base form.

Without waiting for the explosion to die down, Maximus charged into the fray and locked onto Tilis. His aquamarine eyes shone with a light of power as he ferociously tore his claw through space.

Three massive gashes formed and took material form, aiming directly for Tilis!

The waters parted, slashed apart by the claw. The atmosphere threatened to collapse under its terrifying power. Just as Maximus told Ria, he didn't plan to hold back at all.

Even if it meant wasting mana, he would defeat his former teacher.

Not only for the sake of the plan, but also for personal validation. If he could defeat Tilis, it meant he'd truly grown as a practitioner and as a person. Even if he didn't want to admit it, Raka and Tilis were some of his ultimate goals.

The elder smiled when he saw the attack. "Your skills have improved. Still, this level isn't enough to injure me."

Tilis waved his arm, causing the water around him to solidify. The frightening mana claw was dispersed into nothing as it impacted the horribly solid water wall.

"You...are just as amazing as before." Maximus complimented.

There was a reason Tilis and Raka were teachers to every Clan Head that existed during their lifetimes. In truth, nobody knew which Sea God bloodline the two originated from.

This was because the abilities they used didn't align with any of the five existing clans. Instead of using their bloodline traits to influence the water and attack, they directly used their mana to connect to and control the water.

This was unheard of. It was like they were surrounded by a constant domain that solidified their area of influence.

Nevertheless, their strangeness made it possible for the five clans to trust them. Their existence wouldn't cause harm to the power balance between them, a power balance that had been firmly established over the course of many hundreds of thousands of years.

In this case, rather than bringing the two elders down, wouldn't it be better to borrow their expertise to train the young into capable leaders?

That was exactly what the five clans did. Maximus, as the Ruvia Clan's Clan Head, was well aware of this fact. Whether it be power or charisma, he couldn't beat them in either.

Maximus gritted his teeth. He knew it wouldn't be easy from the start, but even though it was a probing attack, the ease at which Tilis dispersed his mana didn't make him happy at all.

"It's not that I'm amazing, it's just that you haven't grown into your strength quite yet. Come, show me how you've improved since I saw you last. I hope this isn't the extent of your capabilities." Tilis responded casually.

"Haa!"

Maximus let out a fierce battle cry and began attacking again. His lithe form gracefully danced through the water. His movements created a strange sound that resonated with the surrounding water and amplified, ringing continuously through the area.

'Siren's Song!'

The shrill dinging sound became more and more pronounced. The water began to vibrate in accordance with the frequency, becoming a minefield for anyone who stepped in it.

And though he didn't move, Tilis was included in this area of effect.

Ding~!

A sudden shockwave spread, centered on Maximus' body. The ripple spread through the water and caused it to break apart as if it was solid. Tilis pushed his arm forward and erected a mana barrier, blocking a majority of the impact just as easily as he had prior.

But unlike Maximus' previous attacks, he was prepared this time. When Tilis' barrier lowered, the vibration suddenly increased exponentially, surrounding him with a bombardment of sound attacks.

"Hahahaha! Good, looks like you've learned to properly utilize your bloodline!" Tilis commented with joy.

"However, you're still too green to catch up with your teacher."

Tilis waved his hand once more. The waters stilled instantly. That alone was enough to offset Maximus' attack.

After all, sound needed a medium to travel. If that medium was frozen, it'd be frozen as well.

The reason Tilis and Raka took the teacher role amongst Aquazyl's denizens wasn't just because of their strange prowess and origins.

Rather, it was also the fact that no matter how one tried to attack, it was nearly impossible to hit someone who could control the attack's medium.

Within Aquazyl, Raka and Tilis were nigh-invincible.

Chapter 676 Second Act [6]

While Maximus did his best to match up to Tilis, Ria was having the same problem against Raka.

Her body was covered in bright red aura, her fists flashing in a flurry of destruction.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

The water around her exploded with the pressure of her punches, littering the surroundings with imploding air bubbles. She threw hundreds of punches with every spark of time, her scaled fists enough to shatter the bones of any early 4th class that was struck by them.

To Raka, however, these punches were still child's play. His body moved without wasting the slightest bit of energy. Every minute change in his position led Ria's fists to miss by a large margin, leaving her body riddled with openings.

Raka didn't attack even though he bought himself plenty of opportunities. Rather than acting like an enemy on the battlefield, his demeanor was just that of Ria's former teacher.

"Your punches carry good weight, but you are still attacking the present. Haven't I already told you? You must battle the future instead."

Ria's eyes hardened. Just as he said, she always had a problem with foresight. Her battle instinct allowed her to fight with precision and never worry about energy usage and efficiency, but her tendency to get too absorbed in combat usually ended with her losing track of the fight. She attacked not while predicting her opponent's moves, but instead while attempting to force them into stillness.

This strategy worked on those she could overpower, but failed miserably against those at her same level or higher.

In fact, the reason she couldn't soundly defeat Zara before their bloodlines were revealed was partially due to this weakness.

Nonetheless, Ria continued attacking. She acted like she paid no attention to Raka's words, but the way her eyes darted around unlike before clearly countered her facade.

She was trying. She wasn't able to control herself perfectly, but she at least found herself on the right track.

Raka's movements didn't change, but Ria's fists got closer and closer to hitting him. At some point, the rapid exchange of punching and dodging transformed into one of punching and blocking.

Ria's fists were met by Raka's open palms. Each punch's energy was dispersed into the ground or redirected back into Ria's fists.

Bang!

Ria felt her bones rattle as her own force was multiplied and sent back into her body. Gritting her teeth, she sent out another punch.

Raka blocked it as always, but in that instant, he found a foot directly in front of his chest! Ria's body had spun without him noticing, her leg snapping like a whip as its power concentrated and shot towards Raka.

Boom!

Raka's body was pushed back. Two thick lines were dug in the sand below as he slid.

When he finally halted his momentum, he patted his body clean and smiled.

"Good, it looks like you still know how to improve. Now come at me again. Let's fix those bad habits of yours one by one."

With Ria and Maximus occupying the two Great Elders, the remaining forces of the Tephit Clan actually weren't that much of a problem.

Once the Sanctuary group made their way out of the defensive formations, they directly confronted the tens of High Elders populating the Tephit Clan.

They were already gathered, after all.

The 5 Sanctuary leaders and 5 helpers from the Ruvia and Oga Clans faced the group of 30 or so High Elders without fear.

In fact, the second they arrived in front of the group, Elvira snatched a bead from her pocket and threw it into the air.

A wave of spatial mana spread through the area. Within seconds, space was sealed off by a Dimensional Cage, trapping the entire group inside.

This bead was made by Damien, carrying the same concept as the pocket dimension he created to transport the Sea God Clan troops during the day. It was an extremely intuitive item that could greatly benefit its user if utilized properly.

After all, Damien didn't use much of his own comprehension to fuel the bead. Instead, he set down the groundwork that allowed the Dimensional Cage to form, leaving the rest of the process for the user themselves.

The more powerful the user, the sturdier the Dimensional Cage.

With Elvira being the most powerful of the Sanctuarians, her usage of the bead ensured that their range of combat wouldn't spread to an unmanageable degree.

"Attack!" She roared. Unlike Maximus and Ria, this group had no reason to converse with the enemy.

Elvira charged without waiting for the rest to follow. The seafloor burst open as terrifyingly thick vines of seaweed and other aquatic plants manifested and tore towards the High Elders.

BOOM!

The vines slammed into the ground, creating massive shockwaves that pushed the elders away from each other. At the same time, these vines divided the battlefield in a way most beneficial to the attacking force.

After her work was done, she shifted her trajectory and shot towards the elders with the strongest mana signatures. Her hands balled into fists, and covered in light green mana, they hurtled forward at frightening speeds.

Even water didn't seem to inhibit Elvira's movements.

Catastrophic explosions rang out every time her attacks made impact. Elvira's destructive power was terrifying, especially considering her racial qualities as an elf.

Aside from that, the new terrain she was experiencing allowed her to not only utilize many different plant species she'd never seen before, but also to heighten her comprehension through this same method.

The current Elvira...was nothing like the small Elf Queen who resided in the 3000 Beast Mountain Range.

"Haaa!"

A spirited shout left her mouth. She jumped in the air, raising her leg above her head and slicing it down with precision!

Bang!

An elder's arms were shattered instantly as he attempted to block. His body shot backwards from the momentum, but before he could fly too far, a vine burst forth from the ground and caught him.

The life essence remaining in the body was slowly being squeezed out, used as fuel to strengthen the surrounding plant life.

But could the elder allow this? Even without his arms, his legs were still just fine!

A mana-infused kick tore through the vine holding him captive. The elder panted for breath, his face pale. Despite his escaping so early, the vine still managed to suck a good portion of his life essence away.

He was no longer fit for combat.

Luckily for him, Elvira was occupied by another two elders before she could chase after him. As she forgot his existence, the elder backed away slowly, attempting to flee from the battlefield. Until...

BANG!

His body was squashed into paste by the White Dragon King's petrifying fist. Rather than a direct attack, this elder was killed as collateral.

Bai Yuxuan charged light mana into his body and accelerated to untold speeds. The white draconic scales covering his body forcefully raised his bodily strength to another level, turning his fists into weapons of mass destruction.

Bai Yuxuan didn't even attack the now-dead elder. Merely, the residual force from his fist was something the already crippled elder no longer had the power to resist.

Feng Yuxiang and Bianca worked together in a flurry of fire and ice, rapidly heating and cooling the surrounding water to create pressurized explosions that filled the air and blocked off any escape route for the besieged elders.

Lucius and his maid dashed around the battlefield like flickering shadows, rapidly decapitating any elder hanging on the verge of death.

The combination of the Sanctuary's six 4th class beings was ferocious to the maximum, leaving little to no room for the Sea God Clan members to act.

This fight was supposed to be long and grueling. It was supposed to be a fierce struggle of life and death that was barely winnable even with their extreme power levels.

Yet, how come these outsiders made it look so easy?

Chapter 677 Finale [1]

The Tephit Clan's main headquarters was in shambles.",

In a mere half an hour, the defenses had already been more than just breached. Following the elite team's entrance, a drove of weaker practitioners entered the fray, taking to the stage and slaughtering any Tephit Clan member they saw.

At the forefront of this charge were characters like Feng Qing'er, Lunaria Snow, and Elitra. This trio of women especially stood out amongst the crowd, showcasing their beauty and prowess with grandeur as they bulldozed through the Tephit Clan.

Lunaria's ice was extremely harrowing to these residents of the sea. Compared to those in the Emperor Bone Sea, Aquazyl's denizens were incredibly sensitive to mana, even more so mana they'd never encountered before.

Ice Laws were a variation of Water Laws, and in a sense were weaker. Because ice only accounted for a single state of water, it naturally didn't have the flexibility of pure Water Laws.

However, Water Laws didn't have much attack power. The Tephit Clan was particularly weak to this power.

The Tephit Clan's mana moved similarly to the residents of the unnamed world under Niflheim. Their mana didn't translate well externally, forcing them to use ingenuity to counter this weakness.

They relied on technology more than any other clan, and in most cases, this fact gave them a massive advantage in strength and tactics.

Against Ice Laws, however, they didn't have much of a counter. Ice was perfect for corroding the internals of a machine. Even more so if that machine was surrounded with water as was the case for any instrument in Aquazyl.

3rd class soldiers fell like flies in front of Lunaria. It got to the point where even those at the peak of that level were unable to touch her.

At that time, a sudden change took place.

The Ice Phoenix Runes that surrounded Lunaria's body shifted and morphed into a cocoon that swallowed her whole. A flurry of World Energy rushed in from all sides, trapping her inside an impenetrable barrier.

Lunaria had been fighting without pause for over a week now. In this climate where her ice element thrived, she found her comprehension increasing at a rapid pace.

Her bloodline purity was already more than enough. She didn't have a need to evolve further. Now that her comprehension had caught up to her bloodline and bodily strength...

Her Baptism was finally underway.

Feng Qing'er's eyes widened when she noticed this.

"Everyone! Protect Luna and make sure nothing can bother her! When she finishes her Baptism, we have one more 4th class to lead us to victory!"

Her words were received with a loud hoorah. The allied forces' morale was heightened greatly. After all, who wouldn't be excited to watch a Baptism? Not to mention, the person being Baptized was an ally!

To say Feng Qing'er wasn't jealous of Lunaria's advancement would be a lie. As someone who was desperately waiting for her own opportunity to advance, she would of course feel negatively seeing others reach that benchmark before her.

But this was Luna, this was her best friend. Lunaria and she had been together since they were young. Never once did they separate.

Even when they quarreled, they never let a disagreement stand between them.

This case was the same,

'Luna may have achieved her Baptism before me, but I'll make sure to reach Divinity before she can!'

This was Feng Qing'er's predominant thought. Rather than letting jealousy cloud her mind, she used Lunaria's achievement as fuel for her growth, determination to compete even harder.

She hadn't received her Baptism yet, this much was true. But it was also true that the amount of fire elemental energy in the surroundings was nill. Even if she was already qualified to receive a Baptism, it would be impossible for her to actually undergo it until she returned to either the Sanctuary or the outside world.

Feng Qing'er's mana flared. Her bloodline burned fiercely as she let out flames of reincarnation that even burned through the mana-filled water around her.

She'd been focusing on training by allowing her flames to be suppressed by the atmosphere until now. But with Lunaria taking a major step ahead of her, she could no longer hold back.

Reincarnation Flame, the Flame of Samsara, it wasn't something a mere Aquazyl could suppress. Only if the Sea God himself arrived to stop her would this happen.

Burning Fire Phoenix Runes manifested one after another, painting the sky in a terrifying red light. The water burned, turning into flame.

"If I can't ascend to the heavens right now, then I'll spend my time sending the rest of you to hell. Just be happy it isn't me being Baptized right now."

The surrounding Tephit Clan members looked at her in shock.

Be happy?! With the way she was slaughtering them, how could they ever even consider it?! And based on her words, was the woman undergoing Baptism even more terrifying than even her?

"Destroy the World Energy Barrier!" Someone shouted.

The Tephit forces moved with haste to accomplish that exact purpose.

But their charge only made Feng Qing'er's smile widen.

'I was getting worried since we weren't given Dimensional Beads to use, but this is great. Luna...is the perfect bait to lure these suckers into my trap!'

Feng Qing'er's finger itched. To pull the trigger...she would wait until all available parties were gathered first.

The main building at the very center of the Tephit Clan's main headquarters was shaped like a modern skyscraper. Stained glass windows lined its surface, rising up into the sky and painting the word below in a mural of various colors.

This building was usually heavily populated not only with elders, but also common workers who took care of the clan's security in the Clan Head's stead.

But today, only two were present.

They sat at the peak of the skyscraper overlooking the Tephit Clan. Across the table from one another, they calmly sipped tea and watched the ongoing chaos.

"This is interesting..." the larger man said. His eyes panned away from the destruction as if it meant nothing to him. "I knew this day was coming, but I never expected to proceed with such an amusing turn of events."

His eyes landed on the man across from him. That man was indifferent sipping tea, savoring its taste as if nothing in the world could harm him.

"You actually dared to show up. Aren't you afraid I'll slaughter you where you stand?" Tephit pressed on.

"Do you think you have the ability?" The man questioned back casually.

Tephit's eyes widened. His mouth widened into a grin as he struggled to suppress his laughter.

"You're quite the amusing one, though I already said it once. Nevertheless, you must have your reasons for visiting me so cordially. Isn't that right, Mister Damien Void?"

Damien's indifferent eyes glanced over to the Clan Head. "Fine, if you want to skip the small talk, I'm extremely happy to do so. I've come here with a single proposal for you. Your fate resides on your answer."

"How fun," Tephit responded with a smile. "Tell me, then. What is your question."

Damien nodded. With utmost seriousness painting his face, he spoke.

"How do you feel about coming to work under me?"

Chapter 678 Finale [2]

"How do you feel about coming to work under me?"

Damien's shocking words were only heard by the two of them. Unbeknownst to the others, Damien's plan was never to kill Tephit.

In the many days he spent devouring Tephit Clan elders, he was able to piece together a story that none other than him could see, the story of the Tephit Clan Head that would never be revealed to the masses.

Comprehending this story allowed him a different perspective on the happenings of Aquazyl, and at the same time, made him consider changing his approach.

Even the meeting between the two had been set up many nights prior. Damien used a special contact signal known to the Tephit Clan's elders to do so.

"Work under you? That's quite a comical thing to hear from a junior, don't you think?" Tephit teased with a smile. He didn't seem to take Damien's words to heart.

"You know as much as I do that I'm not joking around. Look below, do you think your plans will succeed even with the current scene?"

Tephit glanced at the ongoing violence and shook his head. "How could you comprehend my plans? Even this much is within my expectations."

"I never said your expectations didn't account for this circumstance. Rather, I'm saying your expectations have been wrong from the start."

Tephit's eyes hardened, but before he could speak, Damien continued his previous thought.

"I don't know how long you've lived and planned this route, but your sacrificial ritual won't open the gate you wish it to. Even if you make your way out of Aquazyl, you will not be able to control the Emperor Bone Sea."

"The Sea God's descendants; this is what you lot like to call yourselves. But someone like you who has lived countless lives as your soul transfers from one body to another should understand just as well as I do that this legend is false."

"You're saying the Sea God doesn't exist?" Tephit questioned.

"No. The Sea God definitely existed, and so did the five Godbeasts your clans descended from. However, the two had no relations with each other. While you are indeed Godbeast descendants, you are not Sea God descendants. If you were, the current problem you face wouldn't exist."

"And that problem is...?"

"Naturally it's your inability to control the Emperor Bone Sea."

The two became quiet. Tephit thought over Damien's words with utmost seriousness. Despite how much he wanted to throw this youth's ideas away as nonsense, he couldn't bring himself to do so.

After all, everything Damien said was right.

The Tephit that existed now was the same Tephit who led the clan hundreds of thousands of years ago. Every time his lifespan neared its end, he would bring a child with great talent under his wing and steal his body, continuing his life past its natural limits.

With the breadth of experience he gained through all the time he spent alive, he'd also come to certain conclusions. These conclusions were the reason why he chose to sacrifice everyone and escape in the first place.

The Sea God Clans were fakes. Their pride in their bloodlines was based on a foundation of lies. In reality, the Sea God Clans were tools used by the Sea God to maintain Aquazyl until its natural successor arrived.

Tephit was unresigned to this outcome. He refused to be cannon fodder for someone else's growth. He wanted to escape and use his authority to rule the Emperor Bone Sea, breaking the vicious cycle he'd experienced so many times.

But...now he was hearing that his efforts were all in vain?

"I know how you're probably feeling right now, but you can't let your doubt and unwillingness control you. Listen to my proposal properly and make a decision. If you still wish to continue forward after that conversation ends, we will fight to the death."

Damien spoke with certainty. He had a certain grasp on Tephit's character. While he was willing to use any means necessary to achieve his goals, he wasn't an inherently bad person. He was just someone forced to the extreme by his horrible circumstances.

Damien wanted Tephit under him. He wanted to create a civilization in the Sanctuary's seas, a civilization that would grow and flourish into a grand army that could help him in times of need.

It was true that the Sanctuary was a separate realm compared to the Real Plane. Residing within was just as entrapping as living in Aquazyl. But in the Sanctuary, the decision to leave always existed. This was the key point Damien wanted to use to convince Tephit.

Tephit was a man who yearned for freedom. To use freedom to tempt him into moving according to Damien's wishes was his main goal and plan in coming to the Tephit Clan.

"It feels like this is a moment where I should let pride cloud my vision so I can fight you...but for some reason, I can't convince myself to do so," Tephit said with a wry smile.

"I'm old now. Did you know? When a soul goes through the strain of possessing a new body, it takes more than just a little damage. Possession is something that can only be done once unless you wish to lose a part of yourself."

"I, however, have undergone possession five times already. My emotions have been numbed, even the determination I started with had been diluted to a primal instinct. I try my best to cover my weaknesses and emote to my best capabilities, but this only serves as a reminder of how grand my ambitions used to be. Nowadays, I only move with a faint sliver of hope that I will accomplish something in this life."

Tephit gazed up at Aquazyl's sky.

"How can I verify that what you say is true?" He asked Damien.

Damien shrugged. "You can't. I have absolute confidence in my assumptions, and judging from your reactions, you've made the same guesses in the past. Just because you suppressed those thoughts in fear of their truth doesn't make them invalid."

Tephit nodded. Everything Damien presumed had once been presumed by him. Still, it was difficult for him to make a decision.

After all...

"It's already too late. The sacrifices needed to complete the ritual will be completely filled once the Tephit Clan meets its destruction. At this point, is it even worth turning away?"

Damien smiled. This was exactly the final nail he needed to strike into the coffin.

"That's fine then, let's do it that way. I'll accompany you to the end, and when you see your plan's failure with your own eyes, I'll take you in. How does that sound?"

"It sounds awfully manipulative," Tephit replied with a smile.

"Is it manipulative if I tell you my goal from the start?" Damien asked with the same smile.

"Fair enough."

Tephit sighed in exasperation. He was truly too old to keep carrying the facade of a young and crazily ambitious leader. He'd been doing so for such a long time, he found it refreshing to speak to someone who understood his identity.

Looking at Damien, he was forced to sigh in wonder. Just the fact that the latter sat here, not only in front of him but also in Aquazyl in general, showed the degree of talent he held.

He was someone who'd ascend to the peak one day.

'Maybe...I'll be able to see something spectacular before I die if I follow him...'

The wild thought came to Tephit's mind. He was well aware that his current life was his last. If he transferred his soul even one more time, his ego would be lost in the process.

"Come, then. Let's see how true your words are."

Tephit resolved himself to a decision. He and Damien sat in silence thereafter, drinking their tea and watching the ongoing events take place.

The Tephit Clan's role was almost over, and while the ending of the war Damien started was a bit lackluster due to Tephit's attitude, he didn't mind this at all.

After all, the lackluster nature of this conclusion only meant that his planning was without flaw. When events flowed properly, nothing like the Fifth Primal Sovereign's surprise explosive death would occur.

And if Damien was able to truly plan things to such precision, it only meant that his ability to properly use his intelligence was rising.

Nevertheless, besides a little pride, Damien didn't feel much.

His celebration could wait until Tephit stood under his rule.

Chapter 679 Do Not Unlock

The contents are just old chaps again its pointless to waste money on it

The murky black Emperor Bone Sea reflected in the Tephit Clan Head's personal training room was dyed red with the color of blood.

'Almost...just a bit more and I can finally leave this place. I can finally...become a god.'

A light of madness painted his eyes. This escape plan had been brewing for more than just the Clan Head's lifespan. Every Clan Head before him aided in the completion of a plan that was just now coming into fruition.

The reason was simple.

To use blood sacrifice to tear open a hole in Aquazyl was easier said than done. Aquazyl was created by the Sea God, an unmatched existence. Naturally, it took a great deal of time to properly accumulate the necessary sacrifices.

Now, millions of years later, their hard work was finally paying off. With just a few thousand more sacrifices, the crack would be opened wide, allowing Tephit to not only escape Aquazyl, but also to truly control the Emperor Bone Sea.

'Your refusal will not faze me. You will become mine!'

The Tephit Clan Head excitedly licked his lips. The scene on the projected walls around him changed, reflecting the inside of Aquazyl.

Despite the low level of authority he truly held, he could at least spy on the happenings in Aquazyl.

'Ahhh, you've finally decided to come. I've been waiting for so long!'

Tephit excitedly grabbed a transmission talisman and sent a message, ordering all forces to return to the main headquarters and prepare for war.

At the same time, he pushed open the training room doors and appeared in Aquazyl for the first time in many years. His reentrance clearly signified the importance of this moment for him.

A few children thought themselves powerful and decided to wage war against him. In normal times, he naturally would've been extremely irritated by their behavior. But in his current circumstance...

War was just another opportunity.

The main attack force consisted of Damien and Zara, Maximus and Ria, the Sanctuary's 4th class beings, and the most powerful 4th class beings from the Ruvia and Oga clans.

This force didn't have more than 20 people, but it was a team of elites. Those weaker than them would trace their steps and attack the lower-level Tephit Clan members while they pushed forward.

They stood in the middle of a flat plain. The Tephit Clan's main headquarters was surrounded by a large concealment array, making it completely invisible to the outside world.

But to Damien, it almost felt like home.

"There is a three-layer defense system behind the concealment array that tries to beguile and kill anyone who enters. The first layer is an intricate beguiling formation that uses Aquazyl itself as a

foundation. If you aren't careful, your mind will be broken by it. The second layer is more material. Tephit Clan guards armed with powerful technology will be waiting there. If your mind becomes too immersed in the formation, they'll move and kill you before you can even react. As for the final layer...just leave that one to me." Damien said with a grin.

"Everyone is aware of the plan, right?"

"Hmph, it can hardly be called a plan. Your only intention is to kill until there is nothing left to kill." Bianca scoffed.

Damien scratched his head sheepishly. "I mean, is there any better way to do things? At this point, our options are pretty limited."

Bianca shrugged and didn't say anything. Of course, there were plenty of other ways to go about this plan. The problem was that every other method would take strenuous amounts of time, time they didn't have.

This full-frontal assault would indeed be the most efficient route to take in their current circumstance, especially due to how knowledgeable Damien had suddenly become about the Tephit Clan.

The main attack force had already discussed this plan countless times in the past day. Now that they were at the enemy base, nervousness and anticipation hit them in waves.

But before they could submerge themselves too deeply in forethought...

"Let's go!" Damien yelled enthusiastically. His body flashed forward, his fist flying through the air!

BANG!

Cracks spread through the air as the sky itself seemed to shatter. An extremely well-hidden concealment array cracked and fell apart, giving way to the Tephit Clan's scenery.

With Damien's knowledge of the clan, finding the array's weak point wasn't difficult at all.

He didn't stop after breaking the array. His body flashed through the beguiling formation. His powerful mental strength protected his mind with everything it had, but even then he could feel himself veering off course.

"Haa!"

With a spirited shout, Damien spread spatial mana around him in a thin web. His awareness infused into this web as he moved, allowing him to better sense the surrounding space.

Ting!

A sudden reaction came from the web's periphery. There, a Tephit guard was slowly making his way towards Damien, armed head to toe with luxurious armor.

Damien grinned. 'If you come to me, that makes things so much easier!'

'Material Shift'

Damien's recent breakthroughs in Dimensional Magic allowed him a supreme ability to manipulate position. Dimensional Shift was this concept used on the grandest scale, shifting the position of the dimension itself.

However, there were smaller and more precise applications of this ability that Damien could use. Material Shift was likely the most practical of them.

Indiscreet spatial mana wrapped around the unaware guard. In the next instant, he found himself directly within the beguiling formation!

Damien's body took the guard's original position. Using the boost he'd received from this move, Damien shot forward and increased his momentum!

Material Shift allowed him to toy with the position of material objects, whether they were living or nonliving. If he wanted to, Damien could use this skill to easily transport his every team member past the beguiling formation.

But this wasn't his job.

Damien's target...was the Clan Head himself.

But before that, he had to take care of something else. He zoomed past the secondary defensive layer of armored guards and arrived at the third layer. Unexpectedly, this layer was actually a large wall of murky black water.

This water was from the Emperor Bone Sea.

Not only would the water itself harm intruders through poison and other nefarious methods, the beasts and plants residing within were terrifying in their own right. Damien had personally experienced their ferocity, so he knew not to downplay this defensive layer.

However, in the end, this was merely a spark of the Emperor Bone Sea, not even enough to be quantified as a fraction. If he showed fear in front of this tiny piece, how could he confidently claim the entire sea in the future?

His hand reached out and brushed against the sea wall's surface. Pitch-black mana exited his fingertips, snaking along the wall.

'Devour it all. And don't worry about portion sizes. There'll be plenty more to eat after this.'

Void Mana jumped and danced in jubilation upon hearing his words. In its excitement, its foggy form became more material, resembling the gaping maw of a terrifying and unknown creature.

In the next second, the maw emitted a soul-snatching suction force, forcibly devouring the Emperor Bone Sea wall whole.

While Damien made a beeline for Tephit, the rest of the main attack force split off into their own roles as well.

The Tephit Clan kept a loose structure like the other four clans on the surface, but their actual internal structure was extremely hierarchal. Anyone who fell out of this line would be executed without mercy.

The Tephit Clan had two Great Elders at the late-middle stages of 4th class, roughly around level 330, tens of High Elders at around level 300, and countless normal elders who were between levels 200 and 300 in strength.

The only Law Comprehension their bloodline allowed them was the same Law Comprehension that the other four clans used, just utilized with different methods.

Knowing these two facts made facing them far easier. Firstly, Maximus and Ria would fight against the Great Elders. They were both incredibly strong and held extreme familiarity with the strange laws of Aquazyl. They would take care of the two Great Elders faster than anyone else.

The Sanctuarians were in charge of the High Elders. Their strength lay mainly in the uniqueness of their laws, giving them an advantage during first contact. In a race against time like the current raid, they needed to capitalize on this advantage as much as possible.

The rest of the regular elders of the two clans would fight against the regular elders of the Tephit Clan. With these bases covered, there wasn't much left to do besides carry out the plan to perfection.

Of course, there was one more job. Zara moved silently through the battlefield. Her beast form stood at its smallest height, no different in size than a wolf cub. As she ran, her shadow split from her body and materialized into a copy of her.

The two versions of Zara moved in opposite directions, avoiding direct confrontation as much as possible.

Their job was completely unrelated to everyone else's. In fact, it was something only known to her and Damien.

But in the end, her role in this raid was likely even more important than Damien's, despite the fact that he was facing the Tephit Clan Head himself.

Maximus and Ria made it through the beguiling formation not long after Zara. Their steps were light and rapid, their location already set.

Boom! Bang!

A jet of mana and a fist shot out, pulverizing the two Tephit guards who tried to stop them. Passing the secondary defensive line, they prepped themselves for the most terrifying third.

But when they arrived, they only found empty space.

"T-that terrifying black wall is..." Ria muttered.

"M-mm, it's gone..." Maximus said, equally shocked.

They thought they'd grown accustomed to Damien's ferocity, but they were sorely mistaken. The terrifying black wall that used to reside in this space was a harrowing defensive measure and the main reason none of the other clans had been able to invade the Tephit.

That black wall contained a deathly energy that invaded one's body and corroded them from the inside out. This energy was so subtle that it was impossible to notice until the final stages of decay when one's body ceased functioning.

Not to mention, there were countless other dangers lurking within the water wall.

The clans of Aquazyl viewed this wall not as the Tephit Clan's property, but as the mark of the sovereign.

But now, in front of their eyes, that mark of sovereignty had vanished. They didn't know how Damien did it, but it was clearly his doing.

"Tch, it's not a good feeling being surpassed so much by a child," Ria mumbled in complaint.

Maximus smiled lightly and patted her on the head. "Well, there isn't much we can do about that. Shouldn't we just be content that the younger generation is surpassing the old?"

Ria pushed his hand away with a blush, replying, "hmpf, don't think I can't see through you. You're just acting nice because you know he can't compete for sovereignty."

"I can't argue with that," Maximus shrugged, "but it's true that I respect him. If this raid ends in success..."

He didn't finish his words. Instead of posing hypotheticals, he'd much rather move into action.

The duo pressed their feet against the ground and pushed off, flying through the water with precision and speed that land dwellers could never replicate. Before even Damien reached the Clan Head, they were already at the Great Elders' abodes.

"Raka, Tilis, come out and fight me!" Maximus yelled.

"Hmm, so it has finally begun. Our time...has also come..." an aged voice rang out from within.

"Time...aye. It has truly been so long." A second voice joined it.

The residence's door opened slowly, revealing the figures of two old men. They were both unremarkable in appearance, but both Maximus and Ria's eyes hardened when they saw them.

"Stop working with Tephit. Join us and get away from his schemes. Only then can you live...teacher!" Ria yelled.

Raka and Tilis, two old men who had lived for untold millennia. They were not only elders of the Tephit Clan, but also the adored teachers of almost every Clan Head alive today.

One day a few hundred years ago, they broke their neutrality and joined the Tephit Clan. Nobody was able to find out why, nor did the two leave any hints.

In the end, the two didn't even help the Tephit Clan in any way. Their actions were incomprehensible.

But still, the two old men didn't budge on the decisions they made. Others...didn't need to understand their reasoning.

Tilis smiled warmly as he looked at the two Clan Heads. He remembered when they were still children who didn't even know how to use mana.

"Seeing how you two have grown...I'm truly overjoyed by your progress. And it seems you've found solace in each other. With the way you used to fight, who would've ever guessed?"

"Ha, your vision is too narrow. I predicted their matrimony long ago, you just never listened to me."

"E-elders!" Ria shouted in embarrassment. She glanced over at Maximus, only to see the dumb smile that had lit up his face.

"What? The two of you obviously want each other. Why are you hesitating so much?" Tilis said slyly.

The blush on Ria's face reddened. The two of them weren't even married yet! It was true they'd had more than just a little fun, and it was true that they cared for each other abnormally, but the Prominence War and their responsibilities didn't allow them to calmly accept marriage.

Nevertheless, there wasn't time for idle conversation at the moment. As much as she wanted to speak to her former teachers, Ria understood her priorities.

The Tephit Clan needed to be exterminated. Until that happened, they needed to delay the two elders. They already knew that defeating them was impossible.

Maximus was the same. Marriage might not have been possible at the moment, he would have all the time in the world to consider it in the future. For now...

The two flared their auras and readied themselves. To fight against the beings who raised them and taught them to fight in the first place...

Whether emotionally or technically, this fight would be extremely difficult for them.

Chapter 680 Finale [3]

While Damien and Tephit were having a relatively relaxed time at the top of the Tephit Clan's main building, the battlefield only continued to grow more violent.

Elvira and the Sanctuarians stood against what remained of the Tephit Clan's High Elders, a group of only ten. The other twenty were already one with the ground.

The inside of the Dimensional Cage was still. The Tephit Elders no longer had the courage to attack after seeing their comrades get cut down like vegetables. Their hesitation wasn't strange at all.

As for the attacking force, they didn't move either. While it would be simple to kill off these last few elders, the group decided to instead take time and recuperate any lost mana or injuries they'd acquired during the battle. They didn't know what risks they would have to face after leaving the Dimensional Cage's protection, so it was best to be safe.

Still, the outcome of their fight was all but decided. With no chance at resistance, the remaining High Elders would die the second the attacking force decided to strike.

This overwhelming scene translated to all parts of the battlefield. The regular elders of the two clans struggled against the Tephit elders alone, but with their advantage in numbers, overpowering the enemy became light work. Even the third-class beings were slaughtering their way through the Tephit Clan.

Under Damien's forces' leadership, the losses were kept to an absolute minimum. Compared to the Tephit Clan's losses, they were entirely negligible.

The most eye-catching scene, however, was naturally Lunaria's Baptism.

The swirling World Energy Barrier drew the attention of countless elites who flocked over to witness it, but these people were all struck down by Feng Qing'er and her followers.

None were able to get near Lunaria's Baptism site. And even if they did, it was unknown whether they could survive the biting cold that was slowly permeating the area.

Within the World Energy Barrier, Lunaria was facing the Baptism of a Phoenix, a trial known as Rebirth.

Unlike humans who changed classes every time they ranked up, beasts would experience bloodline evolution. This method of strengthening would put them on the path to becoming Godbeasts, whether they followed the path of their ancestors or forged their own.

Just like Feng Qing'er experienced rebirth to unlock her Reincarnation Flames, Lunaria had to do the same to unlock her latent bloodline abilities.

In particular, the Ice Phoenix Clan's Life Flames.

Lunaria already had access to a preliminary version of this flame. Her natural Ice Flames already carried a hint of life energy, which was also what allowed her to utilize Ice Phoenix Runes to her convenience. However, this was, at the end of the day, still just a preliminary version.

The rebirth of an Ice Phoenix was a multiple-stage process where Ice Laws and Life Laws would engrave themselves into a young phoenix's psyche and body, empowering them and providing them the comprehension they needed to continue forward.

But naturally, they needed to prove themselves before they could access any of these boons. Lunaria was in the process of undergoing extreme torture by Ice Laws. Her body was ripped to shreds, and her mind was corrupted to the extreme.

Yet, regardless of what was thrown at her, she remained stoic. This was a natural trial she'd been prepared to overcome for many years now. With it now dawning upon her, the only thing for her to do was complete it as she planned many times in the past.

And she would do so in just a single hour.

The only person missing from the ongoing chaos was Zara. Unlike the rest, the task she'd been assigned...wasn't related to the Tephit Clan at all.

Rather, it was to ruin the plans of a single person.

Zara's main body and shadow clone set off in different directions, melding into the surroundings and sinking into the ground.

She arrived in an underground area that not many had access to. Here, the culmination of Tephit's life's work was present.

A large tube holding an unknown greenish liquid sat in the center of the room. Multiple mana-powered consoles surrounded it from every direction, each having a different purpose.

Underneath the tube was the outline of a portal. This was where every bit of power Tephit claimed from blood sacrifice was stored.

Zara had found this place relatively easily, sure, but that was only due to Damien's strict guidance. He wasn't just aware of the internal layout, but also the weak points in every security measure in place to guard this area.

If she had even a little bit less information, she would've died trying to infiltrate this forbidden area.

Looking at the portal outline, Zara was reminded of Damien's words.

"I want to recruit Tephit into the Sanctuary. That old geezer's knowledge and breadth of vision surpass even the oldest of the 3000 Beast Mountain Range's refugees. If he becomes a part of our force, the level of equipment and technology we possess will increase to a completely different level."

"Tephit is too smart. Even if his original plan fails, he'll surely have multiple countermeasures in place to ensure an overall success. If there is even an ounce of success in his schemes, he won't be willing to submit. Despite his nihilistic viewpoint, he's quite the stubborn old man."

"I don't plan on lying to him. It's true that no matter what he does, the Emperor Bone Sea won't submit to him. But...Tephit's main wish is freedom, not control. Even if controlling the Emperor Bone Sea is impossible, the power he's collected until now is enough to open a portal to the outside world. This much is already enough to make recruiting him impossible."

"Zara, I will go speak to him personally and try to recruit him, but while I do so, I need you to do an even more important job..."

"Destroy any chance of his plan's success. Make it impossible for him to reject our proposal. It may be cruel, but it is simply the way of the world. Just like he is willing to use any means possible, I am the same."

Damien didn't try to justify his actions to her. He'd grown past that point long ago. Everything he did was for the sake of his and his family's future. There wasn't a single minute that went by without him thinking of how to destroy the Nox so they could live peacefully.

Unfortunately, his personal power wasn't enough to change the tides of war, nor did he have the time to grow to a level where it was.

His best bet was to create a terrifying force that could demolish the Nox, crushing their race into extinction.

If he ever met a person he felt worthy of this force, he would recruit them. That was the end of the story.

Tephit fell into this category as well. Not only because of his technical ingenuity, but also because of his possession ability. To Tephit, possessing another body was a death wish.

But to Damien...

As long as he could increase [Heal]'s prowess until it could heal even souls, what else did he have to fear?