

Zompiewolf 411

Chapter 411 Guardian Beast (1)

[Now that you're done with that, I have some important news.]

'At least let me wear my clothes first.' Ashton retorted.

After his duel with Atlas, Ashton realised something. There wasn't much he could do without his abilities. Although he strictly used the abilities related to his original genes, he still had to use them to defeat a summon.

Like his final fight on Euphoria, Ashton was worried that the Phantom might also use a similar trick to take his abilities away. That was the only reason Ashton was obsessed with fighting without his abilities.

It was a shame even Otiga was having difficulty locating the source of the 'Power-stripping gas', as Ashton used to call it. Even those at the mercenary Association had never heard of a substance that could preclude someone from utilising their abilities.

However, considering that the second seat holder managed to get his hands on something like that, Ashton couldn't ignore the possibility of someone like Phantom having access to such a chaotic device. After all, he was one of the deadliest assassins in the galaxy.

[The egg. It's about to hatch.]

"What egg?"

[It's not the time to joke. I'm serious!]

"What!?" Ashton shrieked, "But you said it'll take years for-"

[I know, I know, but I was wrong, or maybe something weird is happening. Whatever the case, just take the freaking thing out before something troublesome happens!]

All stray thoughts Ashton was having were immediately thrown out of his head. The egg he got after defeating the hydra was about to hatch at the worst possible time.

The creature from the egg could be enormous for all he knew, and Ashton was not looking forward to explaining to Eula and her family what a draconic creature was doing in their backyard. Keeping the beast on public display will expose him to the Xyrans.

[You got a minute, kid! At least, I think you do.]

'Argh! You should have told me sooner!'

[I JUST REALISED!]

'FUCK YOU!'

[PLEASE DO!]

'...what?'

[...The egg, focus on the egg!]

While Astaroth's words were... quite intriguing, Ashton had no time to waste. Without thinking about it, he spurted out his wings and rushed towards the workshop. The egg was tightly clasped in his hands.

The workshop was the only place Ashton could hide the creature from everyone else. Vulcan would ask him a plethora of questions, but it was the only answer Ashton had in mind.

His training with Atlas had made him used to fly around. Thanks to that, he could speed up more than he had ever before.

[Ahem, I don't want to rush you or anything, but... IT'S CRACKING!]

'Stop YELLING!'

Ashton did not doubt that many people would see him flying towards the workshop topless. He would probably be able to weasel his way out of such a situation compared to what would happen if the egg hatched right then.

Crack!

Ashton looked at the egg and noticed the solid black egg now had numerous white cracks on the surface. The creature could burst out of its shell at any given moment.

"Shit! Just a little more... Please!!!"

Meanwhile, inside the forge...

"Where is that brat? Tsk, maybe I was too lenient with him."

Vulcan wasn't pleased with Ashton's absence. Laziness to living beings was like rust to iron. It can make even the strongest people, when drunk in power, could crumble into nothingness.

While he didn't think Ashton was one to slack off, his absence made Vulcan doubt whether teaching him was the right decision.

"That's it. If he doesn't show up before I finish counting till ten, I might just have to kick him out for good." Vulcan huffed, "Or so I would like to say... Tsk, he's too valuable to be just thrown away. I'll figure out a way to punish him some other way-"

Just as he said that he felt something approaching the workshop at an alarming speed. The workshop was a sacred place for Vulcan, a place where uninvited guests were harshly dealt with. No matter who they were.

Without wasting another moment, he enlarged his hammer and swung it with... 1% of his strength. Any more than that, he would probably end up killing the intruder.

CLANK!

The timing was perfect. Whoever the person flying towards him was, was forced to meet the might of his hammer.

'Huhu... I've still got it.' Vulcan smirked before restoring the hammer to its original size, "Who the hell dared to enter the master's workshop without permission- Brat? What were you- why the hell are you topless? Good physique, though... For your age, that is."

"OUCH!" Ashton verbalised his pain while rubbing his head. Even pain resistance proved to be useless at that moment, "What the hell is wrong with you, old man? Your age finally caught up to you or what?"

Ashton's eyes widened a moment later once the pain subsided. The egg was missing! Ashton began running around the workshop like a possessed man, looking for the egg.

There were broken pieces of eggshells scattered around the place he 'landed', but there was no sign of the egg or the creature within it.

Vulcan had never seen Ashton panicking before. Something was affecting his disciple, and being his master, he couldn't just stand still and not do anything about it.

However, once he saw the eggshells, Vulcan gasped. After spending a better part of his life living with Precursors, he knew numerous things about them. One of which was about the guardian species that they used as pets.

Often, the dwarves gave up their smithy in favour of becoming tamers to look after them. While Vulcan's passion for creation was unmatched by literally anything, it would be a lie to say that the guardian beings never fascinated him.

It was the only reason how he was able to identify that the egg belonged to one such creature. But he vividly remembered the Xyrans destroying all the eggs because they could not tame the guardian beings. Then where did Ashton get his hands on one such egg?

"Oi brat... Be honest with me. Where did you get this egg from?" Vulcan's voice was calm, but his eyes were filled with rage, "If you lie to me, I swear I'll break my vow and kill you right now!"

Chapter 412 Guardian Beast (2)

"What do you mean-"

Vulcan might have wanted an explanation, but his actions contradicted his words. Before Ashton could utter a single word, Vulcan swung his hammer again. But this time, he didn't restrain himself like before.

Even though Ashton's enhanced perception warned him of the attack, there was little he could have done at that moment. Vulcan's attack came too quick for Ashton to even try and evade the strike in time.

Ashton's life flashed before his eyes as the hammer drew closer to his face. But the next moment, it stopped. The attack, which held the power to destroy the entire island, ended abruptly.

"Have you gone mad! What do you think you were doing!?" Ashton barked at the forge master but did not get a reply.

It was at that moment Ashton realised something. Vulcan wasn't the one who stopped the attack, unlike what Ashton had expected. The Dwarf's face had turned red from applying force through his hammer. But no matter how hard he tried, the hammer did not budge from its place.

'Astaroth?'

[I'm pleased that you think someone like me is strong enough to stop his hammer. But unfortunately, that isn't true.]

'Then who?'

Ashton looked around but couldn't find anyone around either. The bewilderment on Ashton's face was quite... amusing. At least for Astaroth, who knew who was responsible for stopping the raging hammer.

It was rare to see Ashton turn bewildered nowadays since there weren't many things that could surprise him. It was the sole reason Astaroth had not said a single word and let Ashton think through his bewildered state for once.

In the meantime, Ashton tried to move past the hammer to see if someone was standing behind Vulcan. But an invisible force blocked him from leaving.

"What is going on here?" Ashton mumbled.

A moment later, Vulcan seemed to have calmed down and restored his hammer to its original size. After taking a deep, he suddenly fell to his knees. It didn't feel like he was paying attention to anybody; instead, the aura around him felt like that of a caring parent.

It was then Ashton noticed something; a small puppy had wrapped itself around his feet.

"What the... Wait, is it what I think it is?"

[Yup. That's the one inhabiting the egg till now. Isn't he cute?]

Ashton gently lifted the little guy in his arms to get a good look at it. The creature shared an appearance similar to a Shiba Inu, but his tail was at least thrice as long as his body.

But on a second glance, his fiery red fur made it seem like he was a fox more than a dog. He also had a white ring of fur around his neck that appeared to emerge from a translucent gem embedded in his neck.

"Wow... His fur is quite soft." Unbeknownst to Ashton, he had been smiling like an idiot since the moment he picked the creature up in his arms, "it suits your cute face."

"Kyu~" The little guy agreed while snuggling within Ashton's arms.

The creature also seemed to have accepted Ashton as his master or parent or whatever because the moment Ashton picked him up, he immediately settled within his arms before falling asleep.

"No wonder I lost my composure for a moment. I apologise for almost killing you, kiddo." Vulcan shook his head, completely ashamed of his actions, "As much as I would like to blame it on the Shinno, I'm the one who lost my composure."

"Shinno?" Ashton asked.

"That's the name of the species that creature belongs to," Vulcan replied while pointing at the dog-fox creature, "They are mystical beings, one of the only creatures capable of learning and using magic since birth."

He continued, "It was for that reason that they were one of the favourite pets the Precursors ever owned. I thought they were extinct now... But I guess I was wrong again."

"You seem to know an awful lot about them?" Ashton said while smiling, "Since you attacked me and all, why don't you tell me more about them as compensation?"

"You sly brat," Vulcan let out a sigh which turned into a smile when he saw the sleeping creature, "fine, I'll tell you what I know about them."

Although Ashton could get enough information about Shinno through his [Detection] skill, he decided to ask Vulcan as it would help diminish the tense atmosphere around them.

Most of the things Vulcan told him were on point, and Astaroth filled the gaps that the Dwarf couldn't. There was a reason why the Shinno erected a barrier to stop Vulcan's attack.

It was to protect his 'parent'.

Like most dogs back on earth, the Shinno were highly overprotective of the ones they valued, which was why most of them had been killed by the Xyrans when they launched their invasion.

Ashton didn't have a hard time imagining how tough the battle would have been for the Xyrans. After all, a newborn of the species managed to stop the attack of an S-grade being without breaking a sweat.

"Although they possess strong defensive abilities, only a fool would ignore their offensive capabilities. See the colourless gem embedded around his neck? You can say that's his power source, more or less." Vulcan continued, "We used to say they were one of the most dangerous species to work with, excluding the Hydra for obvious reasons. They can also mess with someone through their psychic abilities.

"Whenever they are close to evolving, the gem would shine, blinding everyone around it and change colour. A black gem means the Shinno has evolved to the highest level and cannot evolve anymore."

"I see," Ashton mumbled while gently stroking the Shinno's head.

If anyone saw them, they'd probably think Ashton had known the creature for a long time when it had only been half an hour at most.

"Thought of a name yet?" Vulcan asked.

"Since he's an expert in protecting me... How about... Aegis?"

Chapter 413 Soul Imprint

"Why the hell are you idiots sulking now?" Ashton asked his summons.

The subconscious of the summons was connected with Ashton's. Technically, their subconscious was linked with [Valhalla], the domain Ashton used to store his undead summons, and since Ashton was the owner of the domain, their subconscious was indirectly linked to his own.

That's why his summons could also feel whatever he felt or did. Even emotions like love and care could be felt by them. Through this connection, the summons knew how important Anna was to him when he started having feelings for her.

Around this time, they realised that Aegis had gotten closer to their master's heart even though he hadn't served him for a single day; they began moping. Well, most of them did, except Atlas and Raven.

While Atlas didn't give a fuck about Ashton's personal life, Raven wasn't bothered by Ashton's affection towards Aegis because he knew he was nothing more than a servant to Ashton.

In contrast to Aegis, they who had been serving Ashton day in and day out were treated like soldiers. Apart from Sven, none of the five summons shared a deep connection with Ashton, even though they had quite literally given their 'lives' to him. Well, it was more like he took their lives, but details like that were no longer relevant.

'Are you fuckers seriously getting jealous of a pet?' Ashton reprimanded them through their shared psychic connection, 'Grow up, you idiots! Learn something from Atlas. On second thought, don't learn anything from him. That bastard still wants me dead.'

Atlas smirked while sitting comfortably inside the domain.

Valhalla was created as a single unit of space. But as Ashton tamed more summons, the space was divided into several territories, with each summon having their own place to live.

The stronger they were, the bigger their territory was. It went without saying that Atlas had the most extensive territory amongst everyone else, and no one dared to challenge him.

In other words, if Ashton was the god of the domain, then Atlas was the king. However, unlike Atlas, who quite literally didn't care about Ashton, the rest of the summons fought over their master's affection rather than territory.

"We have waited long enough!" Celeste yelled at the top of her lungs, "It's time to decide who is the most loyal to the master."

"Yeah!"

"What the heck are you idiots talking about?" Ashton yelled back at them.

Apart from Atlas and Gokung, none of them was even inside [Valhalla] at the moment, and they wanted to fight? Was it even possible? The only logical explanation was they would return to the domain and fight endlessly amongst themselves.

Ashton did not want this to happen. After all, he had assigned all of them crucial duties. None of which could be abandoned for a trivial farce.

"Oi, I have trusted you fuckers with important tasks. Don't you dare abandon them and return to the domain!" Ashton warned them, "If I find you did something you shouldn't have, I'll kill you myself!"

As soon as she heard this, Celeste's eyes began shining brightly. Ashton knew the masochist within her would act like this, so he hastily altered the statement.

"Everyone but Celeste. Ahem..."

"That's not fair, master!"

"Life isn't fair; deal with it."

[But aren't they dead?]

"You want to join them?"

[...Oi bastards, calm down. Don't disturb your master.]

Astaroth's sudden change made Ashton chuckle. He was expecting the Xyran to retort, but his reaction was surprising.

At this point, Sven, who had been protecting Anna this entire time, spoke up.

"You don't have to worry about that, master." Ashton could almost visualise Sven's smile, "We don't need to abandon our posts in order to fight amongst ourselves."

Sven's words piqued Ashton's interest. Mainly because this was the first time he heard about [Valhalla] from its residents.

"What do you mean?" He asked.

"There's a reason why we can resurrect after being destroyed, master." Sven explained the situation in detail, "It's because we, as residents of Valhalla, can never die. Essentially, the moment we step foot in Valhalla, it stores a fragment of ourselves to recreate us whenever we 'die'."

"However, thanks to your evolution, we discovered that we can control our respective fragments even when we aren't in the domain." Celeste continued, "We are even using the fragments at the very moment to chat amongst ourselves. That's how we can fight amongst ourselves without stepping a foot back into Valhalla."

"Interesting..." Ashton mumbled while playing around with Aegis, "I never knew a simple skill like [Valhalla] could have such a hidden effect. I would have never known about it if it hadn't been for all of you."

[Same here.]

Astaroth kept rambling on and on, but Ashton wasn't paying attention anymore. Instead, his mind was focused on running countless scenarios in his mind.

Since there was a fragment of soul imprinted on the domain itself, is it possible for someone to forcefully imprint their soul and live forever without being turned into a summon?

Before he could come up with an answer, another realisation hit him; this time, even Astaroth was interested in what Ashton was thinking.

"Since the precursors created all these abilities-"

[It should be possible they evaded death when we attacked them!]

If that was the case, then the Precursors were essentially immortals. This could also explain why they did not fight back when the Xyrans attacked them.

It was simply because even if the Xyrans 'killed' them, they wouldn't die, and instead, they'll be revived in the place where their souls had been imprinted!

"But if that was the case, why would they let your kind live?" Ashton mumbled, "It wouldn't be tough for them to seek revenge on a species."

[Maybe it was in their nature to avoid conflicts? I mean, for all we know, they had lived in the galaxy for billions of years; it could be possible that they got bored of violence and left that life entirely?]

"Either way, this... The theory is quite interesting. If only we found a way to restore souls, maybe I can revive my father as well!"

[Ashton...]

The excitement of reviving his father blinded Ashton momentarily. Soul Imprinting was a technique even the Xyrans had no idea about; therefore, the chances of Ashton finding more about it was slim to none.

"You're right. I shouldn't let my excitement blind me." Ashton shook his head, "Well, at least I know there might be a way to reunite my parents."

Chapter 414 Honey Trap (1)

It had been a long and tiring day for Ashton. It started with the revelation of Phantom's plan. Then he got busy selecting a few candidates who could protect Eula, followed by the duel with Atlas and Aegis's birth. Even he couldn't believe all of it happened on the same day, and the day was yet to end.

[You forgot about the fight amongst your summons.]

"Right... to think those maniacs would actually end up fighting amongst themselves." Ashton shook his head.

Even though Ashton did not see his summons fighting as it happened within Valhalla, he could still feel it all. It almost felt like he was witnessing a duel but through radio.

Sven, Celeste and Gokung were the only ones who participated in the duel. Since Celeste was the weakest in terms of physique, she used her head and let Sven and Gokung duke it out first.

But it wasn't like she was completely ignoring the action. After every few moments, she would launch a random spell in the direction of whoever was winning. She did it to ensure that both Sven and Gokung dealt as much damage to each other as possible.

Celeste's plan was going well, but only for a short time. Soon enough, Sven realised what the shadow sorceress was up to and conveyed the information to Gokung.

The next moment, Celeste found herself in an unfavourable position as both Gokung and Sven simultaneously attacked her.

She tried her best and eventually managed to subdue Gokung through her shadow abilities. But she couldn't control Sven, who defeated her after some hardships.

Even though Ashton did not witness the duel with his eyes, he was still pleased with the performance of his summons. In a way, the fight made him realise the strong as well as weak points of each of them.

For example, Gokung had the strength and defence of a titan but lacked the capability to see through the enemy's plans.

On the other hand, Celeste was a quick thinker who could come up with unthinkable strategies to put herself in a favourable position in a battle. But her lack of defence was concerning. Besides that, she had the explosive ability to subdue even the most brutal bastards.

Last but not least, Sven. His presence of mind on the battlefield far exceeded anyone amongst the summons. Despite possessing the talent to turn even the most unfavourable situations into opportunities for himself, his strength and stamina were his shining points.

"It's a shame Raven and Atlas did not participate in the fight. It would have been interesting to analyse them along with the rest." Ashton mumbled, "At least I have this cute guy with me."

"Kyu~" Aegis happily smiled while rubbing his head with Ashton's.

While the summons were fighting amongst themselves, Ashton learned about the second ability Aegis possessed. Other than the [Absolute Shield], he also possessed the epic ability called [Mimic].

The description of the ability was pretty simple. Aegis could completely mimic the appearance and behaviour of up to 10 species as long as they fit his proportions.

This ability was a lifesaver for Ashton as he no longer had to hide Aegis because he was a legendary being. Which also meant he didn't have to leave the little guy in the forge as Vulcan suggested.

[Who would have thought the old bastard had a weak point for cutesy creatures? Judging by how sternly he behaves with everyone else, I thought he would give a hammer to Aegis and yell at him to start hammering something.]

"Pfft~ it does seem like something the old man would do." Ashton smiled, "Hm... To possess legendary and epic abilities since birth, the little guy truly hit the genetic lottery, didn't you?"

"Kyu!"

"Damnit, why are you so cute!?"

Sadly, [Absolute Defence] and [Mimic] were the only abilities Aegis knew. But according to Vulcan, possessing two abilities since birth was quite rare, even for a Shinno, so there was that.

The only demerit of the [Mimic] skill was that it blocked Aegis from using [Absolute Defence] while he was mimicking some other species. But that demerit wasn't too bad, considering it was an epic skill.

[Tsk, pointing out the flaws of an innocent kid. Had it been me, I would never let anyone criticise Aegis, let alone do it myself.]

"Yes, you're the perfect role model for children." Ashton scoffed, "You're the last person in this galaxy someone would trust their child with."

[Oi, are you trying to say that I'm a bad influence on kids?]

"Looks at me. Do I need to say anymore?"

[...]

"Thought so." Ashton smirked, "Also, I've been meaning to ask you something. Are you gay?"

[Look, what I said back then was a mistake. Both of us were panicking, and we said things we shouldn't have. So let's forget about it and move on-]

"But are you?"

[...kid, I'm sorry to disappoint you. But I'm a 100% straight guy.]

"More like straight-up gay." Ashton shrugged, "You know, I don't have a problem with it. You'd pair well with Laihud once you get your body back."

[That healer guy? I never thought he was fascinated with men.]

"He is. That's why we are headed there."

[What does his inclination has anything to do with us?]

"Because he's the one Phantom will most likely target first."

Ashton then proceeded to explain his reasoning to Astaroth. The more he talked, the more his words made sense.

Laihud was still in the closet. The only reason Ashton was able to know about him was through his [Detection] skill. But in hindsight, his behaviour towards Vimur made Ashton think that the team's healer had a thing for the tank.

"Phantom is a piece of shit who plays with his prey's emotions, and guess what? Someone like Laihud is the easiest target for him." Ashton finished his explanation.

"I am 73% sure Phantom will target him first. But rather than stopping him and allowing him to rethink his plan, we'll use Laihud to lure him in and deal a decisive blow. That bastard likes to play with the heads of others. Let's see how he likes when he gets played for a change."

Chapter 415 Honey Trap (2)

"And I foolishly thought this job would be a piece of cake now." Vimur spat out in frustration.

Since no other mercenary was aware of Phantom's declaration of 'war', Ashton had to inform them about it. It would be an understatement to say that none of them was pleased with the revelation.

Ashton did not reveal every detail about the letter and just informed them what they needed to know. While having his faction hunt for Phantom was a stealthier way of handling things, it would take them ages to reach the level of the mercenaries.

For that reason, Ashton decided to include the mercenaries in his plan. But what he forgot to take into account was his teammate's reactions.

The Phantom was a well-known name in the galaxy. There were a couple of reasons why even after having a multi-million Yenos worth of bounty over his head, no one wanted to mess with him.

Firstly, it was next to impossible to find him. However, even if someone managed to get a hold of him, the Phantom's ruthless lust for blood made it impossible for anyone to come back alive after he had set his eyes on them.

Even millions of Yenos were not enough for anyone to needlessly endanger themselves. But Ashton had no idea about it.

"Why is everyone so afraid of him?" He asked everyone, "He might be sneaky and somewhat strong, but it could be possible to get him if we all worked together!"

"You probably haven't been in space for long." Miska, the elven sharpshooter, remarked, "The Phantom isn't someone our team can handle."

"I concur," Laihud chimed in, "Think about it yourself, had it been so easy to capture him, then why no one bothered to do it till now?"

'No, it's not the right time to reveal my cards just yet.' Ashton thought, 'For all I know, that piece of shit could already be among us. I have to be careful not to alert him just yet.'

[I already scanned them using Detection. Phantom isn't amongst them.]

'Still, he could always kill one of us and get to know about the plan. The risk isn't worth it right now.'

Ashton had the perfect trap to take care of the Phantom once and for all. But not telling anyone else about it was an essential component of his plan. After all, Laihud wouldn't be much of bait if he knew he was the bait to lure that bastard.

However, judging by the look on their faces, it seemed most of them had already given up. If this was the situation by simply mentioning Phantom's name, who knows what these idiots would do once they come face to face with him?

[In my opinion, you shouldn't trust them to come forth at the time of need.]

Ashton silently agreed with Astaroth. Even though he would like to think his comrades wouldn't betray him, it was better to plan ahead while keeping the worst-case scenario in mind.

At the moment, Ashton probably knew the most about Phantom. More than any intelligence organisation did. That being said, telling them what he knew about Phantom would only make them cast wary eyes on him. That's why it was best to keep what he knew to himself.

After all, he wanted the Phantom to fall into the trap, which would suit his own benefit. Not the other way around.

"Be as it may, it doesn't mean we can neglect our responsibility as Miss Eula's escorts." Vimur slammed his fists on the table, "We have defended this place for a week. It would be a shame to give in to our fear when the end is in our sights."

"I-I agree with Vimur." Laihud immediately jumped to tag along with Vimur.

'Of course, you do.' Ashton couldn't help but smile.

Vimur was a prideful warrior. Obviously, he wouldn't run in his time of need, especially when the enemy's words hurt his ego. That's why Ashton exaggerated the things Phantom said in the letter about none of them being worthy enough of his attention.

Vimur's pride would get easily hurt by words, which would prompt him not to back down. Ashton used it to manipulate him into joining the fight against the Phantom.

'As long as Vimur comes along, Laihud will follow. Sometimes, my genius scares me.'

[Too bad it's only sometimes.]

'You're lucky in busy handling things right now.'

[Why do you think I offered my two cents in the first place?]

'...'

Even though Vimur and Laihud agreed to join Ashton to try and capture Phantom, the rest were still sitting on the fence about it. However, since Ashton wanted help from only some of them, he came up with an idea.

"Three of us and our factions should be enough to handle Phantom." Ashton mumbled, "As for the rest, you should focus on defending the mansion from the Metal Sharks."

As soon as Ashton finished speaking, the entire room began whispering. Ashton was giving them an easy way out.

While he and the two idiots were busy committing suicide, they would only need to do what they had been doing till now. The people from Metal Sharks would inevitably attack them again, and since they were familiar with handling them, it was the safest place to be.

The rest of the mercenaries immediately agreed to take care of the 'main problem'. Just like Ashton wanted.

[To think the safest place would be the battlefield... Things have certainly changed a lot.]

'They think it's the safest place, but who knows, maybe Phantom would decide to make an explosive entrance rather than a stealthy one.'

[So you mean-]

'That cocky bastard would do whatever he can rub salt on my wounds for when he 'defeats' me.' Ashton had a familiar sadistic smile, 'I can't wait to see the expression on his face once I take care of that bastard.'

[Now, now, don't get overconfident yourself.]

'I know, I know. It's just that thinking about him makes my blood boil.'

Chapter 416 Question Master (1)

In a flash, three days had passed. Apart from occasional attacks from the Metal Sharks, nothing of significance happened. Except for one thing. Ashton had officially chosen ten members from the guards to join his faction.

Surprisingly, those who didn't get selected weren't salty about it. It could be blamed on Ashton's rigorous selection methods. To be fair to the candidates, Ashton reduced the time limit of his 1-on-1 duel to thirty seconds.

But none of them could even last ten seconds despite being given a head start. However, someone did come close to outlasting the time limit.

His name was Jenó. When Ashton first saw him, nothing stood out about him. However, Ashton soon realised even [Detection] skill wasn't absolute.

[Detection] could inform him about the stats and tendencies of the opponent, but it did not tell Ashton how the person would use those stats to their advantage.

At first, Ashton was leaning towards not accepting Jenó. Fortunately, he changed his decision after exchanging blows with him. Why? Simply because Jenó used his brain instead of non-existent muscles.

Jenó knew he would never be able to lay a finger on Ashton, let alone defeat him. He was unlike the rest, who went all-out thinking they could 'defeat' or even deal a blow to Ashton.

As a result, instead of senselessly fighting, Jenó prioritised his survival over victory. Right before his turn, he had swept up some sand and filled his pockets with it.

Once the round began and Ashton got close enough, Jenó unleashed his deadliest attack and threw a handful of sand into Ashton's eyes. But rather than capitalising on Ashton's temporary disability, Jenó decided to use the crucial moments to create distance between him and Ashton.

He planned to repeat the process till the timer hit zero. Unfortunately for him, Ashton had long since given up depending on his sight. The rest of his senses were just as honed as his vision.

Even before Jen0 got another chance to spray sand into Ashton's face, the match was over. He thought it was over. It came much to his surprise when Ashton not only accepted him into his faction but also gave him the position of second-in-command.

Ashton's faction was much smaller than the others, with only ten members, excluding him. But he wasn't going for numbers in the first place.

In fact, the entire recruitment process was a front for him to look for people who could be a hindrance to Phantom or had some ability to protect Eula from the assassin. Once they were prepared, Ashton handed them a few weapons made by Vulcan.

Vulcan naturally wasn't going to budge on the topic, forcing Ashton to get his hands dirty. The old man could refuse him, but how could he refuse Aegis's cute face?

The overall situation in the mansion was better than ever before. The guards had become quite dependable in accomplishing assigned tasks.

The only thing bothering Ashton was the Phantom. It had been days since Ashton killed the doppelganger sent by that bastard, and he was yet to make another move. Ashton could feel he wasn't the only one thinking something was amiss.

The mercenaries who used to sit and thoughtlessly chat amongst themselves were now getting wary of each other. Ashton had long since predicted this scenario.

Phantom wasn't someone who would fight pretty. Instead, he was a master of psychological warfare. Instead of showing himself, the bastard would cause mistrust to flare amongst sworn allies and strike when the relations are at the worst.

This was the reason why Ashton did not want unnecessary people in his vicinity. Having needless additional manpower in this situation was the worst option a strategist could come up with. Amongst hundreds of people, Ashton only trusted a dozen.

[At least the frequency of the attacks has increased recently. That Phantom guy might be planning on attacking sooner than you think.]

"I hope so." Ashton remarked solemnly, "These people won't last for long otherwise. Give them a day or two, and they'll be after each other's throats."

Ashton's hunch couldn't have been more accurate because, soon enough, a fight broke out in the barracks. Usually, he wouldn't have paid any attention to it, but right now, even the littlest spark of distrust could cause an explosion within the mansion.

As a result, Ashton rushed to the site, only to find Vimur and Laihud were trying their best to control the situation. Surprisingly, the ones fighting weren't the mercenaries or the guards as Ashton had expected but the servants living inside the mansion.

'Oh right, I forgot the servants used the barracks along With the guards. But now, the building was used strictly to house the guards.' Ashton sighed, 'Still, it's better to contain these idiots before things go out of hand.'

"You soldiers have no right to stop us from using 'our' rooms as we please!"

One maid yelled at the top of her lungs while the rest cheered her on.

"We are not stopping you from going anywhere," Laihud tried to calm down the raging crowd, "but this room is being used as an armoury for the soldiers and the mercenaries. No one is allowed to enter without explicit permission. Please try to understand-"

'A maid wants to enter the armoury when no one has had a problem with it before. It's a bit strange.'

[I concur. Something seems a bit... off.]

Ashton used [Detection] on the maid in front and... Didn't notice anything suspicious. However, the abnormal behaviour of the maid caught him off guard. She was sweating, even though the wind was pleasantly cool.

"Calm down, please!" Laihud yelled, "If you do not cooperate with us, we might be forced to use physical means to stop you."

"Now you want to attack us?" The maid yelled back before turning to her colleagues, "I told you these people are up to no good. A few servants have been missing since morning, and instead of helping us look for them, they threaten us. Are you still going to stand like we're in the wrong?"

Even if the majority initially intended to stay obedient, upon thinking about the soldiers laying a hand on them, everything quickly turned chaotic. The servants began resisting and attacking the soldiers. The entire place was a mess.

Upon hearing two people were missing, Ashton immediately went into action.

"Raven, have you seen anyone enter from the beachside?"

"No, master. I have not."

"Damn it! Take the skeletons and search the beach for anything suspicious!" Ashton yelled as he rushed towards the mansion, "Celeste, where is Eula?"

"Taking a shower at the moment."

"Alright. Do not let anyone get close to her until I'm there, understood?"

"Affirmative."

"This bastard caused a diversion." Ashton yelled through his gritted teeth, "I was laying a trap for him, but the bastard had no intentions of targeting anyone but Eula."

[You thought you outsmarted him, but he outsmarted your outsmartness. Tsk, too bad that fucker will have to die. I kind of like him already.]

"Now is not the time for your remarks, Astaroth," Ashton mumbled, "Aegis, transform into the biggest and most vicious creature you can and follow me!"

"Kyu~ Roar!"

"You're not escaping this time."

Chapter 417 Question Master (2)

"What's going on outside?" Juno asked another member of Ashton's faction.

"It's nothing important. Just the servants have gone mad, and they think we're behind the strange disappearance of their people and causing a fuss about it." The guard replied, "I don't think it's anything requiring our attention."

Jeno shared different views than the guard. Unlike them, Ashton had already informed him about the significant threat they'd have to face.

Ever since Jenö got to know the Phantom was their target, he had extensively studied every piece of information regarding the silent assassin he could his hands on.

The disappearance of the servants did not seem a coincidence to him. It was possible that the Phantom had killed them and used it as an excuse to lit a fire of resistance among the servants.

"I didn't think the servants have the guts to pull off something like this," Jenö mumbled while scratching his chin, "Consequential or not, ask someone to keep an eye on the entrance of the mansion. No one except our faction members should be allowed to enter or exit the mansion."

"On it."

Upon being selected, they were assigned one job: To protect Eula and keep an eye on her at all times. So far, they have accomplished their task without problems, but now the peaceful period they had come to cherish was over.

"Sir, the comms are offline!" One of the guards reported, "We can't connect with anyone outside the mansion!"

"Tsk, this is bad." Jenö clicked his tongue as the reality of the situation dawned on him, "Send someone and call Commander Reaper right now! It can't be a coincidence. Also, inform everyone else to assemble in front of Lady Eula's room. Our worst fears might have come true... The silent assassin is here."

"Fuck!" The guard yelled and rushed towards the gates, "Seal the gates! No one enters the mansion!"

At the moment, there was no one within the mansion apart from Eula, her mother, and the guards. Most guards and mercenaries were preoccupied with handling the protest led by the servants, and it was the perfect opportunity for someone to strike them right now.

'I should have known. The servants didn't act out without reason. Someone must have instigated them. Just when we thought things were going smoothly.'

While Jen0 was busy thinking about the events of the day, from the corner of his eyes, he saw a maid enter the mansion.

'What's a maid doing here? I told them not to let... Wait... What is that lady dragging behind her?'

It was too late when Jen0 realised what was going on. The maid crushed the guard's head before chowing down on it. A moment later, the maid's form changed. Within moments the innocent-looking maid turned into a guard.

"Blegh~!"

The sight made Jen0 empty his bowels. But it turned out to be a mistake. The Phantom had not noticed the needless spectator gawking at him; sadly, that wasn't the case anymore.

"Damn it!"

Jeno realised his mistake and made a break for it. But he had severely misjudged Phantom's strength. All it took was a leap for Phantom to catch up to Jeno. However, instead of attacking him, Phantom locked his gaze on him as if he was looking for something deep within Jeno.

"Hey, are you okay?" The murderer asked in the most caring tone Jeno had ever heard.

For a moment, Jeno couldn't help but wonder whether his eyes had deceived him. How can someone with such a calm and caring voice kill someone else? There's no way this would be possible... right?

"I-I'm fine," Jeno replied in his trance-like state.

Sadly, the moment he answered Phantom's question, the calm and caring expression on his face that Jeno had grown fond of disappeared instantly.

Instead, it was replaced by a disgusting look. Phantom was staring at Jeno as if he wasn't any different from a pile of repulsive smelling garbage.

But that wasn't all; Jeno could sense the aura around Phantom had gotten stronger the moment he answered his question.

"Could it be-"

"It's already too late, even if you have figured it out." Phantom smiled while carefully running his fingers through Jen0's hair, "Huhu, I was going to kill you either way, but your panic-stricken face made my resolve waver. Maybe I should play with you for a while instead, don't you think?"

"Your powers-"

Jeno tried to push Phantom away, but suddenly, he had no strength in any part of his body. His entire body felt as if it was made out of jelly. A moment later, he collapsed on the floor, unable to lift a finger.

"Aren't you curious?" Phantom sniggered, before grabbing Jen0's chin at a speed that couldn't be seen, "Should I tell you? Hmm... Should I? Haha!"

'The touch!'

Jeno's body was paralysed, but his mind was in overdrive. It only took him a couple of seconds to realise what had happened. The bastard must have injected some poison while playing with his hair.

'Damn it! Is this the end?'

"On second thought, playing with you will be a waste of time." Phantom removed his hand from Jen0's chin and curled up to launch a punch, "May you have a terrible journey to the afterlife."

A blue light erupted out of thin air and concealed Phantom's fist in its entirety. Jen0 knew it was time for him to kick the bucket, but he couldn't bare to see the light that would inevitably end life.

Phantom released his attack, and the flames surrounded Jen0. Slowly eating away at his life force. At least that's what he thought, but strangely enough, the fire didn't hurt him... Not even a little bit.

In Jen0's religion, it was rude for someone to see their death, or to be more accurate, it was forbidden to see the Grim Reaper as he did his job. It was the reason why Jen0 had closed his eyes in the first place.

But since it didn't feel like he was 'dying', Jen0 defied the rule and opened his eyes. He saw a reaper in front of him, but not the one he was expecting.

"C-Commander?"

Jen0's eyes widened in shock. Ashton was standing before him, and the flames Phantom had shot his way were circling Ashton like a tornado. It was indeed a magnificent sight.

"Stop bawling and get out of here while you can," Ashton instructed before turning towards Phantom, who was still smiling like the cocky bastard he was, "As for you, this place shall be your grave."

"How touching... This soap opera almost makes me want to puke my guts out." Phantom replied while licking his lips.

Chapter 418 Question Master (3)

—
Name: ???

Species: Carbon-based Space Farer (Active), Mimic (Active)

Status: Mimic

Class: Question Master

Subclass: Shadow Assassin, Enhancer

Title: [Slayer of a 1000 Souls], [Evil's Personification], [The One Who Died a 100 Times], [Slayer of Ancient Ones]

Age: ??

Gender: ??

Grade: C+ tier (Evolution is possible) [Can rapidly increase when specific criteria are met.]

Affiliation: Self.

Level:

> Carbon-based Space Farer Level: 119 (27%)

> Mimic Level: 129 (27%)

Abilities:

> Self Duplication

> Inhumane Adaptation

> Astral Body Materialisation

> Life Drain

[Extend to view 6 more]

Trait:

> Limitless Grower

—

"Huhu. I didn't think I'll meet you so soon." Phantom sniggered.

Ashton was filled with rage the moment he saw Phantom. It was likely that the one before him was yet another body-double.

[Calm down. Your rage isn't going to finish him off any sooner.]

The two were in battle mode as soon as their eyes fell on each other. Ashton immediately activated [Blood Armour]. Had he been late for even a moment, his body would have been full of holes as Phantom open-fired on him.

Phantom's quickness was much higher than Ashton had predicted. His Perception saved his ass for once, but Phantom wasn't done yet. In an era of advanced weaponry, Phantom was carrying old weapons, which could only mean one thing.

[It seems he's aware of your immunities.]

Most modern weapons utilised lasers as their primary ammo. Whether it be plasma swords or plasma pistols. Since Ashton was immune to [Fire] and all associated elements, the modern weapons posed little to no threats to his life.

'That bastard knows much more about me than he divulged earlier.' Ashton clicked his tongue as a bullet managed to graze his face.

"Where's all your bravado gone to now? Haha!" Phantom shrieked amidst the endless barrage of bullets, "I thought you would pose more of a threat to me, but it seems you're nothing special after all!"

Upon sensing danger creeping up on him, Ashton made a break for the nearest window and jumped outside without a second thought. Despite how much he wanted to kill Phantom, Eula's safety took precedence over anything.

However, Phantom was onto him even before Ashton's feet touched the ground. His enemy was on a completely different level than Ashton had anticipated based on his previous encounter with Phantom's puppet.

[His class... It's quite an extraordinary one.]

'What do you mean?'

[I might have found out why he's so strong. He's a Question Master. Basically, whenever someone questions him or someone replies to his question, a percentage of their power gets transferred to him.]

"What? Was your kind smoking weed while coming up with classes?"

[...I don't know about it myself.]

Ashton was beyond furious. At least he wasn't clueless about Phantom's mysterious growth. Phantom struck him again, and Ashton's newly regenerated blood armour shattered again.

No matter how hard Ashton tried, he couldn't sustain the armour for long. While Ashton wasn't delusional enough to think the fight against Phantom would be easy, he had not expected it to be utterly one-sided like it had been so far.

[You can't keep using Blood Armour over and over, the mana cost of the skill has already gone beyond permissible levels!]

'I didn't want to use it here, but we have no option.'

Ashton closed his eyes and entirely depended on [Perception] to defend himself. To equip [Hydra's Armour], he first needed to create space between them. Unfortunately, his opponent had other plans.

Within moments, Phantom had wasted all of the bullets he had. Blood drizzled out of the countless open wounds plastered all over Ashton's body, yet he was still standing on his feet.

"Impressive!" Phantom's eyes shone, "I'll turn you into the strongest puppet ever created in this galaxy!"

"You talk too much..."

Ashton's eyes turned crimson red as he lunged at the enemy. Before the final [Blood Armour] faded, Ashton activated [Revenge Strike]. All of the damage from the bullets healed immediately as he punched Phantom straight in the gut, and he was flung back into the mansion.

Without wasting any time, Ashton chased after Him. But by the time he arrived at the wreckage of the broken wall, no one was there.

"Where the hell is he?"

[Ashton, don't!]

Astaroth knew what Ashton was going to say next. Unfortunately, he couldn't warn him in time as a question escaped Ashton's mouth.

"I'm right here!"

—

[Class ability of Question Master is in effect. Question Master will inherit 20% of the target's overall stats.]

Damage: +23

Armour: +28

Stealth: +22

Stamina: +31

Agility: +22

Intelligence: +40

HP: +2300

Mana: +1600

A bloodied hand burst through the wreckage and grabbed Ashton's knee before crushing it into pieces effortlessly. Ashton's legs gave out, but the nightmare had just started.

In his hastiness, the thought of donning [Hydra's Armour] had completely slipped Ashton's mind. Phantom kept attacking Ashton. Blood poured from his mouth, and his vision shook. Ashton was having difficulty focussing on Phantom's strange, irregular fighting pattern.

Every blow got heavier. Even Ashton's troll-like regenerative abilities failed him at this point. By now, the news of Phantom's arrival, coupled with destruction of the manor, had attracted the attention of the mercenaries who came rushing to aid their comrade.

However, they couldn't believe their eyes. Ashton was lying in the pool of his blood. Almost beaten to an inch of his life. Vimur's eyes connected with Ashton. The horror in his eyes was enough to send shivers down their spine.

"Everyone, form a defensive parameter around Ashton. Laihud, forget about the rest of us and focus on healing Reaper." Vimur immediately started barking orders to everyone.

Vimur might have seen the horror in Ashton's eyes, but he had no way of knowing the true meaning behind his twisted expression.

The more people there were, the higher the possibility of them asking and answering Phantom's questions. Moreover, panic and terror always make a mess within people's heads. This leads them to be confused, and this confusion makes them question everything.

It was a feast for Phantom and the start of a bloody massacre.

Chapter 419 Precursor Slayer (1)

It barely took any time for Phantom to strike again. This time he wasn't playing around. As he had no interest in anyone except Ashton, he had no intention of playing with them.

Within moments, Phantom had wiped out a third of the guards simply because they couldn't keep their mouths shut. Thanks to that, Phantom had become unstoppable.

"No matter the species, all living creatures are predictable." Phantom chuckled while licking the blood off his fingers, "In the face of death, all they can do is ask stupid questions, which I gladly answer."

Phantom was pissed because his play time with Ashton had been interrupted, and he needed an outlet to let his rage flow. The crowd saw his creepy expression, and the newbies were immediately scared shitless. Still, none of them backed down.

"Oh, maybe all of you are somewhat interesting." Phantom licked his lips, "It's weird, you see. I'm not used to fighting all-out battles, but I guess there's a first time for everything, don't you think?"

"Cut the crap and get here so I can crush your head with my hands!" Vimur yelled back.

Unfortunately, Phantom perceived Vimur's words as an answer to his question. Just like that, Phantom got even more robust. Copying a move from Vimur's skillset, the bastard charged straight into the guards.

Bodies were thrown everywhere like a bunch of sacks. Phantom's charge ended abruptly when Vimur stopped him with his bare hands. At least it looked like he did, but in reality, Phantom had stopped himself because he noticed something more interesting.

"What is a Gryphon doing here of all the places?"

It was Aegis in the form of a gryphon, but Phantom didn't know that. Sighting a Gryphon was a rare opportunity, let alone fighting one. Phantom's eyes shone as he forgot everything about the mercenaries and the guards and headed straight towards the flying beast.

Although Vimur's warrior ego was a bit hurt, he knew it was a crucial opportunity to gather their troops. At the same time, Laihud got the critical chance to heal Ashton.

However, as soon as Laihud got close to Ashton, the latter grabbed in hand and pulled closer till his ears were close to Ashton's mouth.

"Do not... reply to or ask that bastard... anything." Ashton weakly mumbled, "The more you talk, the stronger... he gets."

"What? How is that even-"

"Don't ask questions." Ashton cut Laihud off as he forced himself back on his feet, "Take the guards, and get Eula off the planet now! I'll stall the bastard."

"You'd be better off committing suicide," Vimur intervened, "We have already lost a lot, and I sure as hell ain't letting you die a meaningless death here."

However, Laihud knew running away with Eula was their best option, considering how strong Phantom had become. After quickly patching Ashton's wounds as much as possible, Laihud grabbed Vimur's arm and made a break for Eula's room.

"We'll be right back with more reinforcements," He said, "Try not to die on us till then."

Ashton nodded, and all of them went their separate ways. Aegis was still stalling Phantom as the bastard hurled fireballs one after another toward the creature.

[Phantom's power up can't be endless. The fucker is bound to lose the enhancements if you stall him long enough.]

'There's no point in it. The guards had already asked a lot of questions.' Ashton gritted his teeth, 'Not to mention, he's quite a sly bastard. The moment I start stalling, he would know exactly what I'm up to.'

[That's true. So what do you plan on doing?]

'Plans? When have any of those actually worked for us?'

[You have no chance of winning against him head-on.]

'Won't know if I don't try.'

[You're one crazy bastard.]

'It takes one to know one.' Ashton smiled.

Without wasting more time, Ashton charged at Phantom.

[Wolf's mark has been activated.]

'Here goes nothing!'

"You should have escaped while you had the chance," Phantom mumbled without even looking in Ashton's direction.

The next moment, his punch blew a hole through Ashton's torso. Blood drizzled out of Ashton's mouth, but his fighting spirit was as strong as ever. He swung his claws one last time and managed to gauge Phantom's right eye out.

"YOU FUCKING PIECE OF SHIT!!!" Phantom yelled out, clasping his bloodied face.

Ashton fell to the ground. Although he could still sense everything around him through Perception, his physical senses had gone numb. Phantom had gotten a lot stronger; Ashton knew that. However, he had never imagined he would get one-shotted like this.

"Damn it... You were right." Ashton smiled weakly, "I should not have jumped in."

[Eh, what's the point of crying over spilt milk.]

The disappointment in Astaroth's voice was unmistakable. Even to Ashton's fading mind. Somehow, the lack of Astaroth's taunts made Ashton unhappy, and at the same time, it made him feel like Astaroth had a plan.

[Well, you are right about that. You have two options, bleed out and say hasta la vista, or switch places with me, and I'll use Admin privileges to heal you back, as I did back on earth when you lost your eye.]

'What's the... Catch?'

[Since Lucifer won't be able to cover our tracks anymore, using Admin Privilege as vital as saving a life wouldn't go unnoticed by the Xyrans. In other words, it'll be like announcing, "Hey, dumbasses! We're here!"]

Astaroth meant that he'd buy some time, but in the end, the Xyrans would hunt him down. Ashton wasn't delusional enough to think he was strong enough to take on the Xyrans. Regardless of his decision, he would end up in the same place he was.

Suddenly something fell out of the sky. Aegis was rushing to save his master, but he wasn't alone. From the corner of his eyes, Ashton saw someone small rushing toward him. Someone with a hammer twice as big as the one carrying it. Ashton did not know how to feel at that moment.

"You brat, I let you be by yourself for a second, and you get your stomach drilled by a pesky little ant?" Even though Ashton was just a step away from death, Vulcan barked at him, "Hold on. I'll fix you up for good."

Chapter 420 Precursor Slayer (2)

"At least one of you has something in their biological penthouse," Vulcan said while pointing at Aegis, "While you were busy acting like the overconfident jerk that you are, he practically dragged me here."

Vulcan took a few steps toward Ashton before facing Phantom. Although he said he would fix Ashton up, the forge master did not have any ability to fulfil his words. However, he wasn't backing down either.

What he had was knowledge, which he had promptly shared with Aegis. It was a skill scroll, the last artefact he had kept from when his father had abandoned the art of smithy to become a tamer.

The scroll worked just like the ability pages worked back on earth. The scrolls held power to grant someone the ability stored within them. Similar to the skill pages, the scrolls could only be used on creatures of mythical origins, not anyone else.

Despite how it might look, Vulcan's intentions to keep the scroll with him weren't noble. Instead, he despised his father and kept the scroll with him as a reminder of his father's failure in protecting the Precursors.

"To think something I kept to fuel my rage would eventually come to use like this." He smirked, "Fate does work in mysterious ways. Go on, little one, heal your master. I'll make sure no one interrupts you."

'Thank you...'

Ashton wanted to say it aloud but was too weak to do anything. But his gaze was enough to convey the message to both Aegis and Vulcan. However, their reunion was ruined by the Phantom, who couldn't be more pissed at the turn of events.

"I'm sick and tired of you interfering bastards!" Phantom roared and charged right towards Vulcan.

Unlike Ashton, Phantom had no means of assessing Vulcan's true strength without exchanging blows with him. Otherwise, he would have known not to ever cross paths with someone like Vulcan.

"Pesky ants like yourself should know to stay in place in the presence of Giants," Vulcan growled before swinging his hammer.

Till now, Phantom has taken pride in his speed. However, this time his speed had failed him. One moment he was charging toward the dwarf, and the next, he was lying face first on the ground.

At the same time, Aegis changed into his original form. The white fur around his neck began glowing, and within a moment, all the blood Ashton had lost slowly flowed back into his body.

His pale complexion was slowly changing, but Ashton could feel his mighty pet struggling. The more Aegis used the ability, the faster his size was shrinking. But being loyal to his master, Aegis kept at it.

Phantom's meal was about to be snatched from him, and just the mere thought of it made him go berserk. His lust for Ashton's blood had blinded him to the point he could no longer perceive the power gap between an S ranker and himself.

"Tsk... You are a rowdy one, aren't you?" Vulcan sighed in disappointment, "I don't know why you are hell-bent on killing him, but I can't let my disciple die in my presence."

"You wrinkly old fart, I'll kill you if that's the last thing I do!"

Saying so, Phantom let out a stream of hellfire from his mouth. The black flames roared and took the shape of a dragon as Vulcan was about to get hit. Even then, the old dwarf seemed to be dying of boredom.

"If only I got an obsidian every time I heard someone say that to me, I would be the richest person in the galaxy," Vulcan replied as he vigorously began rotating the hammer in front of him.

"It's of no use, old man!" Phantom happily yelled at the top of his lungs, "The undying flames are absolute. Nothing they touch is left unscathed-"

Phantom was sure of his victory. However, a moment later, the broad smile on his face vanished entirely. Not only did Vulcan survive his ultimate move, he also tamed the hellfire.

The dragon which Phantom had proudly conjured turned out to be nothing more than a plaything for Vulcan.

"How is this possible?" Phantom mumbled and collapsed on his knees.

"You're a thousand years too young to defeat someone like me." Vulcan laughed, "Be glad I took an oath not to kill anyone but the Xyrans, or you wouldn't be talking anymore-"

"Huhu... HAHA!"

Phantom's unexpected reaction threw Vulcan off a bit. The laugh irked him so much that he would kill the bastard right then and there if he could go against his oath.

But then Vulcan noticed something strange. The aura around Phantom got absurdly strong. Although it wasn't comparable to an S-ranker like him, it was enough to decimate anyone except him.

"You fell right in the trap I laid for you." Phantom continued laughing, "The stronger my opponent is, the stronger I get. How do you think I was able to obtain epic and legendary abilities that I possess?"

"What kind of absurd ability is this?" Vulcan got serious, but to his surprise, Phantom's power grew even more.

Ashton was still unable to speak; therefore, he couldn't warn Vulcan about Phantom's ridiculous class abilities in time. Now that Phantom had asked and answered three questions, his power levels were at least 60% of that of Vulcan's.

By this time, Vulcan more or less guessed what was going on and sealed his lips for good. However, the damage was already done.

No one except Vulcan could end Phantom now, and Vulcan wasn't going to kill him because of his oath. The situation couldn't have gotten any worse than it is now.

Vulcan was aware of this and kept thinking of ways to clear the mess he had created. But no matter how hard he thought about it, only one option appeared in front of him. The option that he couldn't pick, no matter what.

"I had never had this much fun since that night when I killed a god!" Phantom snarled.

"A god?" Vulcan knew what asking a question meant, but curiosity got the best of him.

"An ancient race. Since you are quite old, you might have heard of them." Phantom broadly smiled, not knowing he was digging his own grave, "The ones known as the Precursors."