

Death 2361

Death... and me

Chapter 2361: Zandolf's Clues

The three of them quickly shot through the skies, leaving the city and disappearing into the distance.

Meanwhile, deeper where the devils had control, there were a few ruins from the time the Essence Race roamed these continents. It was only one of the many that could be found everywhere in the central region. This one, in particular, wasn't that big compared to some in more prominent areas.

In any case, the fact this place was still part of the devils' territory didn't matter since anything of value had been taken away a long time ago. That said, these ruins haven't received any visit other than the occasional demon beast for a long time. Devils might appear here once in a while if they were passing by, but they wouldn't dwell here either.

Still, it was exactly in these ruins that a young man walked through, checking the several broken inscriptions and pictures on the walls, seeming to be looking for something. Now and then, he would take a jade slip from his Pocket Dimensional Realm and record a few things before moving to the next part.

A few hours ago, he had received a call and couldn't understand what was being said. However, since he was busy, he simply told whoever called him that he was busy and turned it off. Since the other side didn't try to call him anymore, he immediately considered that whatever was the topic wasn't very important. If it was, they would try to call him many more times. This man, obviously, was the one known as Zandolf, a Divinity Realm expert at the Middle Stage!

Time passed, and Zandolf seemed to get somewhat impatient. 'Hum... I can't be wrong, can I? I'm pretty sure the clues lead to these ruins. Still, I can't seem to find where it is...'

Just like Rean's group, Zandolf was also interested in the Essence Race. He had been investigating it for a long time already. Unfortunately, due to the tight control of the devils, he never had the chance to enter the devils' territory. The devils had done their homework and made sure experts of the Divinity Realm would be found straight away once inside their territories.

However, that wasn't the case anymore. The Realm of Gods' armies had already got rid of such surveillance. Even if it was still in place, it would be simply telling that many Divinity Realm experts were

in their territory now. The Devils didn't need surveillance to know about it. Those Divinity Realm experts were at the very forefront of their armies, after all.

For Zandolf, the war was of little concern. Sure, if he could choose, he would take the devils out of the Realm of Gods. But he wasn't that fervently pushing for a cleanse or anything like that. He helped the war efforts by taking command of his army and choosing a passive instance in this Glondau Continent. He could also be said to be one of the reasons why Glondau hasn't been conquered yet, considering how easy it was to attack. Not that the other armies cared much about this place anyway.

The main reason for him to choose this place was these specific ruins. He had always heard how the Essence Race was blessed by the Universe, capable of cultivating faster than anyone else. Being stronger than anyone else. However, he firmly believed that their cultivation speed wasn't due to their nature only.

It was during some of this research into old records that Zandolf found a peculiar mention. In a Jade Slip that had almost cracked due to its age, he had one chance of seeing a mention of an Essence Race being that almost succeeded in surpassing the Divinity Realm!

One can only imagine how surprised Zandolf was. Everyone knows that the Divinity Realm is the limit of the Lisan Universe. Still, almost all the Peak Divinity Realm experts of Lisan continued to look for a way to surpass this barrier and reach new heights. After all, beings like the Hyeoumu, which was known for being above such limits, existed. There were also theories that if one gather the Universe Foundation Fragments and uses them, one could surpass that limit, too.

Others believe that the Chaos Origin Source could give them such a chance, although no one knows how to get to it.

To Zandolf, the latter two ideas were completely out of reach. To start, no one knows where all the fragments are located. The ones that are known to exist are already in the hands of Peak Divinity Realm experts, with some being outside the Realm of Gods. For Zandolf, who is only at the Middle Stage of the Divinity Realm, acquiring such fragments is simply out of the question. Even if he managed to miraculously acquire the fragments from those beings, where would he find the rest? That said, he never paid much attention to any information regarding the fragments, nor did he care. If anything, they would only bring him endless waves of problems.

What about Hyeoumu? Zandolf was even more skeptical about that monstrosity. Can that really be considered a being of the Universe? Perhaps it is something entirely different. As for the Chaos Source, without any clues, he didn't even know where to start.

That's why he looked and researched for other alternatives. His effort paid off, and he found out about this event regarding the Essence Race. Was it true, was it not? Zandolf couldn't tell for sure. Besides, it only mentioned that the Essence Race Being 'almost' succeeded. He didn't really manage to do it. Nonetheless, it was a lot more realistic than any of the other options.

'All paths lead to the ultimate dao. There is no such thing as the wrong path, just the wrong methods. Even if that Essence Race being failed, he might have truly stepped on something. I need to find his secret...' Zandolf thought. During the many years of war, he had used much of his resources to research the Essence Race, and he eventually ended up in these Ruins. It's just that he didn't know what it was.

As Zandolf looked for these clues, a group of three figures sneaked into the devil-controlled territories, carefully making their way to these same ruins.

Death... and me

Chapter 2362: Total Advantage

Rean had his Light and Divine Sense Bending Skill activated as he traveled with Kentucky and Essefy. After entering the devil race side, their team slowed down a bit as they didn't want to be found for any other reason.

At some point, Rean felt the Divine Senses of devils. Although the war in this continent was quite disregarded by both sides, the devils here wouldn't simply let their guards down. Nonetheless, those Divine Senses were mostly in the Void Tempering Realm and below. The few Space Bending Realm Rean felt weren't anywhere near good enough to break his concealment.

Rean checked his communication badge now and then, and he could see that Zandolf's signal got weaker sometimes, and sometimes it got a little stronger. Nonetheless, it was nowhere near enough to achieve communication. 'Well, at least I know he is staying in the same place.'

'Hum?' Rean then felt a new Divine Sense, this time at the Space-Time Realm Late Stage, much to his surprise. Fortunately, Rean's group was at the very border of that Divine Sense, so it was still easy to bend it. However, what caught Rean's attention was that he could tell that Divine Sense was moving in

the same direction as Zandolf's location. 'Could senior Zandolf be fighting someone there? Or is it coincidence?'

Rean quickly warned Essefy and Kentucky before they increased their pace a little. Rean made sure to not get too close to that Divine Sense either. As time passed, more Divine Senses touched Rean's bending skill. All of them were moving in the same direction even though they converged from different locations. 'Something is definitely wrong.'

The other Divine Senses were in the Elemental Space Realm and below, so Rean didn't need to be careful with those. They would only feel his group's presence if they truly stayed just by their side. Or, obviously, if they got close enough to feel them with their natural Spatial Senses. Still, knowing where the Divine Senses came from, Rean was able to stay more than far enough from them to stay hidden.

'Are you sure you want to keep going?' Essefy couldn't help but ask. He thought that they wouldn't find any troubles if they were careful. However, it was obvious that they were entering some dangerous place after hearing Rean's reports about the divine senses.

Rean nodded. 'If senior Zandolf is truly in trouble, we might be able to offer some help. Don't worry, I'll make sure that we are always far enough so no one can detect us. If it truly reaches a point where I think it would be too hard to escape, then I'll be the first one to turn around and leave. After all, it is hard to imagine these devils could hold a Divinity Realm Middle Stage cultivator in place.'

The truth was that Zandolf didn't know about these devils converging into his location. He kept walking around while keeping his presence hidden. As far as he knows, no one was supposed to know his location, so he was feeling relatively safe.

Rean then pondered a bit and had an idea. 'You all, follow me. I believe we can get there first.' Rean noticed that the devils weren't traveling that fast. In fact, they were quite slow. Otherwise, he wouldn't really be able to stay in the range of the Space-Time Realm Devil's Divine Sense range.

By using the almost nonexistent signal of the communication system and the maps provided, Rean traced a different route that, although it would be slightly longer, would most likely avoid any of the devils' army in this continent.

Now and then, Rean's group would pass by some scouting devils, but none of them could perceive their presence as they streaked through the skies. This situation continued for a few hours until...

Zash!

Suddenly, a blood light flash came from the ground below, traveling the distance between Rean's group and the ground in an instant! Rean, Kentucky, and Essefy immediately noticed it and dodged, causing them to separate for a moment.

Right after, three devils flew up as their Divine Senses spread. Rean couldn't help but bitterly smile. Those three devils were in the Elemental Space Peak Stage, just like his group. The reason he didn't notice them beforehand was that they weren't with their Divine Senses spread. The moment Rean got close enough for their Natural Spatial Senses to detect him and vice-versa, it was too late.

Those three devils didn't wait for Rean, Kentucky, and Essefy to grasp the situation and immediately attacked. They could now tell that Rean's group had the same cultivation as them. With the devils' advantage in the rich Devilish Energy environment, they were pretty confident they would have the advantage.

Rean narrowed his eyes. He didn't want to waste time here since it would attract even more attention from other Devils. Surprisingly, though, his Divine Sense told him that these Devils were the only ones around 1200 kilometers, which was Rean's Divine Sense's maximum range. 'Sigh... the difference to the mortal realm is so ridiculously high. Back on Sunkan Planet, I could literally cover the entire planet with my Divine Sense. Yet, here in the Realm of Gods...'

Rean quickly put those thoughts behind him and decided before looking at Kentucky. 'If we are fast enough, we can eliminate them before they can warn anyone else. Kentucky, let's do it!'

Kentucky understood what Rean meant, and he quickly started the battle against his opponent.

Essefy, too, was intercepted by the last Devil, and was quickly forced back. 'Shit! If it wasn't for all this fucking Devilish Energy and Dark Element...' Still, he could at least hold his ground.

However, when he looked at Rean and Kentucky, he immediately got worried. 'What is happening?!'

Rean and Kentucky were being completely suppressed. They were indeed fighting with the power of a Peak Stage Elemental Space Realm expert, but they were nowhere near the strength they showed back in the Limigo Region. The two devils fighting them had the total advantage!

Death... and me

Chapter 2363: Turn Around

However, Essefy also noticed that Rean and Kentucky's Domains seemed weird. They were definitely activated, but their power was way below what he experienced back in Limigo. Back then, Rean's Domain, especially, completely negated the devils' domain effects on him. Yet, it seemed to be doing little against these devils now. 'I see... so that's how it is.'

The devils fighting Rean and Kentucky got more confident as they increased the number of injuries on Rean and Kentucky's bodies. Even Kentucky was bleeding from several places with his defense. Both Rean and Kentucky seemed to get more and more desperate, trying to fight back.

Finally, they gave up fighting and immediately turned around to run!

"Where do you think you are going?" Rean's Devil immediately teleported in front of him, using his higher speed with the help of the environment.

Kentucky's one, on the other hand, used a strange ability that seemed to slow Kentucky's flying speed. That way, Kentucky got quite slower than the Devil himself.

Both devils prepared their best attacks and came shooting straight at Rean and Kentucky. However...

Bzzzzz!

Rean and Kentucky's Domains suddenly increased several times in power. Rean's Domain completely nullified both of these devils' domain effects, being them detrimental to their enemies or beneficial to themselves. At the same time, Kentucky's blade feathers got a lot sharper and more resistant, not to mention their numbers increased severalfold.

They then turned around, and their speeds completely changed. In a flash, both Kentucky and Rean were right in front of their opponents!

'Life Fire, Third Form, Flaming Blade Arc!'

'Divine Bird Strike!'

"What?!" Seeing how their domains lost all their capability and how they were completely surrounded by Kentucky's feather, both devils didn't know what to do. Of course, they wouldn't wait for Rean and Kentucky to simply hit them. They also raised their weapons and counterattacks, unfortunately...

Clang, Clang, Crash, Crash! Swish! Bang!

Rean's Dark Star Sword, fuelled by his Sword Aura, Sky Energy, and by being several times better than its level suggested, broke the Devil's weapon in a single go! The Flaming Blade Arc then continued ahead, cutting the Devil in half!

As for Kentucky's, he didn't destroy his opponent's weapon, but he also had sky energy and regal bloodline. The power of his attacker immediately deflected his opponent's weapon, followed by his beak crashing against the Devil's chest! The Devil was instantly broken to pieces!

Essefy and the other Devil, who were still fighting, suddenly stopped after seeing what happened with their Divine Senses. Essefy knew that Rean and Kentucky were hiding their power, but the strength they showed just now was even higher than what they displayed back in Limigo!

It was true. Back then, Rean and Kentucky refrained from using Sky Energy. They only relied on their other advantages, which was already more than enough for the situation since they had many allies and an advantage in numbers.

Here, however, if they didn't play things right and showed their cards beforehand, they would definitely defeat their opponents, possibly even kill them, but it wasn't guaranteed. After all, the environment truly gives a boost to the devils. Too bad that it also boosts Rean and Kentucky when it comes to the excess of Dark Element.

To make sure they wouldn't escape, Rean and Kentucky played the role of being weaker in an environment that 'didn't' help them. When the Devils reached the peak of their confidence, thinking that they would absolutely kill the duo, Rean and Kentucky showed all their cards at once. It was just too late to readapt to the situation and flee.

Zush, zush!

Suddenly, Rean and Kentucky shot forward, flying in the direction of the last Devil.

"Fuck!" How could that Devil not understand what they wanted? He immediately used his full strength to force Essefy back and immediately turned around to run. Unfortunately, that was still not enough.

Kentucky circled around, closing the retreat path of the Devil. In the air, not even Rean nor Roan could beat Kentucky in speed, let alone this Devil. Rean and Essefy arrived right behind.

What happened after that wasn't really a battle. With three against one, they quickly finished the last Devil, putting an end to the battle in this place.

"Phew..." Rean let out a breath. "It worked just as planned. We didn't give them time to use any method of communication, so probably no one knows we killed them."

Kentucky shook his head. "Not really, right? I mean, Elemental Space Realm Peak Stage... They sure have left their Soul Flames somewhere. Now that they are dead, the ones taking care of their flames will notice them extinguishing."

"Oh! There is that too." Rean had to admit Kentucky was right.

Essefy didn't seem that much concerned. "It is fine. We just need to quickly leave this place. Still, I didn't expect to find three such high-level devils in a place like this."

Rean nodded as he activated his Light and Divine Sense Bending Skill. Right after, they began to fly away once again. "I also found it strange, especially the fact they weren't using their Divine Senses. It seems

like there is an encirclement happening around the area where senior Zandolf is located. Of course, we might have been just unlucky and met a small group that was flying somewhere else."

Essefy didn't believe it. "That's too much of a coincidence. Although I hope that to be the case, we should be ready to find even more Devils. Let's increase our speed. If the same thing happens again, then we will know."

Rean and Kentucky nodded before Kentucky spoke. "In that case, jump on my back. I'm definitely the fastest when it comes to flying."

Neither Essefy nor Rean complained, and they hopped on Kentucky's back before the bird shot into the distance.

As they flew, Essefy finally found the chance to comment. "Still, I couldn't believe you guys were hiding your strength. Even if you took those devils by surprise, that far surpasses what someone like me can do."

Rean smiled. "We have some tricks."

Seeing that neither Rean nor Kentucky wanted to talk about it, Essefy didn't insist. Everyone had their own secrets, and he wasn't different. "Alright then. How far until we reach senior Zandolf's location?"

Rean checked his communication badge. "Shouldn't take more than thirty minutes at this speed."

Death... and me

Chapter 2364: The Underground

Fortunately, that battle didn't last long, and with the trick used by Rean and Kentucky, they didn't spend much energy either. Thanks to that, their group finally arrived at the location shown by Zandolf's badge.

Rean looked ahead, somewhat surprised. "Ruins? What kind of ruins are these?"

Essefy shook his head. "I don't know. Still, they are obviously extremely old. Judging by the structures, the buildings were gigantic back when they were standing. Yet, pretty much only the bases remained."

It was then that Kentucky noticed something. "Goku, look there. Can you see that symbol on the big wall?"

Rean and Essefy looked over and saw the picture of a colored burning flame. Immediately, Rean's eyes lit up. He had obviously done his homework about the Essence Race. That symbol was the mark of the Essence Race, which were basically beings of Essence Energy. "So, senior Zandolf is also looking for the Essence Race..."

Essefy then reminded Rean. "Goku, there is no time to dwell over thoughts. We took a roundabout route and arrived faster. However, don't forget that many devils are coming to this place. We need to find Zandolf and get out of here."

"Oh, right!" Rean immediately nodded. He quickly checked his badge, trying to pinpoint the exact location of Zandolf in these Ruins. However, the signal was indeed too weak in this place. All Rean could tell was the general location. "He is somewhere in the center of these ruins... However, these ruins expand for hundreds of kilometers. Where exactly he is, I'm not sure."

Kentucky immediately flew into the ruins. "Then let's start already. If even we don't know where he is, let alone the devils coming here. By the way, can we use our Divine Sense? It should be enough to cover the entire Ruin."

Rean nodded. "Let's do it. If senior Zandolf feels our Divine Sense, perhaps he will come out. The only problem is if he decides to keep hiding. With the difference in cultivation, there is no way we can detect him with our Divine Sense."

The reason they didn't do it so far was simply because they didn't want Devils to feel them. But now that they are here, they might as well give it a try.

All three of them spread their Divine Senses. Soon, they covered the entire ruins' extension... or so they thought it would. "What is this?"

Their Divine Sense wasn't being blocked. It could enter the buildings, pass through the walls, and reach the underground. Yet... everything was gray! Even things there were right in front of Rean's group still looked like nothing more than a gray mist in their Divine Sense. "So weird... I've never seen such a way of stopping Divine Sense," Rean commented.

Essefy agreed with him. "Indeed. If I didn't have my eyes open and could see everything around us, I would be completely blind by what I'm seeing in my Divine Sense."

"This isn't too bad," Kentucky mentioned. "If things are like this for us, then it will be the same for the devils coming here. I don't think they were responsible for this situation. Otherwise, senior Zandolf wouldn't have stayed here. The only problem is that Zandolf definitely won't be able to feel our Divine Senses now."

"There is no other way. Let's go to the center of the ruins and start looking," said Rean.

Meanwhile, Zandolf was still unaware of the events outside. At that moment, he had found an underground passage. He felt himself quite lucky. It was because of how old the ruins were that he managed to identify that hidden passage. Otherwise, he would have passed by it without noticing.

As he went further down, the structures around him changed. Everywhere in the ruins, you could see the colored flame of the Essence Race. Yet, after he entered this place, those pictures changed into a cube with several patterns over it. Of course, those were just images on the wall, so Zandolf couldn't tell exactly what that cube was. He had seen many treasures that had cubic shapes, too.

Finally, he reached a big gate, with both sides having giant pictures of the same cube. 'Could this be it?' He couldn't help but think, excited. He then checked around to see if he could find any traps. Unfortunately, without the help of Divine Sense, he truly couldn't check things more deeply. To make things worse, he wasn't a formations master. He could only rely on his instincts, tricks, and experience.

Zandolf then took several small puppets from his Pocket Dimensional Realm. He then reached for the exit, staying far away from the door. Finally, he released the puppets, ordering them to step everywhere around that door. He couldn't tell if puppets would work, but it was better safe than sorry.

Yet, even though the puppets walked everywhere and touched everything, nothing happened. Zandolf narrowed his eyes, wondering if this was the wrong place. 'No... I also have to think about these ruins'

age. Formations made so far back probably wouldn't last to this day. If there is something to protect this entrance, it probably has lost its power a long time ago.'

In the end, he decided to release a few demon beasts as well. If the problem was that the puppets weren't living beings, then the Demon Beasts surely would activate whatever might be there.

As Zandolf did his checks, Rean, Kentucky, and Essefy were feeling quite helpless above the ground. "Now things got complicated. Senior Zandolf's Signal disappeared a few minutes ago, and I can't pick it up anymore."

"At least we didn't find any dangers until now," Kentucky commented.

Essefy understood why. "This was the devils' territory, and the devils only cared about the living souls they got. All living beings in their territories are concentrated in well-controlled zones. Ruins like this ended up empty, so we won't find anything here unless someone set up a trap or something like that in advance."

Essefy then looked at Rean. "Still, why did his signal disappear?"

Rean pondered a bit before saying. "Although the signal is weak, it still reached these ruins. That said, the only place where the signal would have trouble is..." Rean then pointed down. "The underground."

Death... and me

Chapter 2365: Residential Area

Everyone felt troubled after hearing that. "Underground... That would be difficult."

Rean nodded. "When there isn't a communication tower nearby, the badges can still communicate with each other as long as they are close enough. At this distance, the signal between badges should definitely be stronger than the signal shared by the communication tower. I was planning to contact senior Zandolf once we got here in the central area. However, even the signal between badges isn't working, showing that he is quite deep underground, or he isn't in these ruins anymore."

Essefy and Kentucky didn't believe Zandolf left. It would be too much of a coincidence. "What do we do-"

"Shy, quiet!" Rean then stopped them from talking. Right after, he looked in a certain direction. There, he saw three devils flying, although they weren't coming straight for them.

In this place where the Divine Sense only showed a gray mist, one could only rely on their natural spatial perception or their eyes. Rean's group was standing on air at the moment, so their vision could reach much further away than the natural Spatial Perception.

Following that, Rean, Kentucky, and Essefy moved aside, letting the devils pass by. With Rean's Light Bending Skill, they would only be found if they got too close for the Natural Spatial Perception of others to see them.

After the Devils left, Essefy asked the two. "So, what do we do now? These two should be just the start. More and more devils will arrive as time passes. If we weren't sure the devils were coming for these ruins before, now we definitely are."

Rean narrowed his eyes, trying to think about a solution to quickly look for Zandolf. After all, they might get close to some devils without noticing, just like it happened on the way here. 'It would be so good if Luan was here now...'

Rean then retrieved his communication badge with his fake name in the army and began to mess with it. Kentucky and Essefy looked at that, not knowing what he was trying to do. However, Kentucky knew that Rean was pretty much the guy who created these badges in the Realm of Gods, so he probably had some idea.

A few minutes later, several of the tiny runes of the badge were exposed, while Rean used many of his own Circuitry Formation runes to create a few connections. Finally, a jumbled communication badge that shined with Divine Energy and Electricity appeared.

"What is that for?" Essefy finally couldn't hold back and asked.

Rean smiled, although he didn't seem that confident. "What I did here was to simply add more power to this badge. That way, its signal should be able to go much deeper into the ground. However, it will also pretty much turn the badge obsolete after I'm done with it. Fortunately, I have another communication badge I acquired back in the humanoid territories, so I can use that one instead."

"Can you find Zandolf's location with it?" Kentucky asked as well.

"That depends," Rean answered. "If he is too far or too deep for the amplified signal to reach him, then we can only give up and leave this place. But if it works, at least we can give it another try. Let's hope it is the latter."

Finally, Rean activated the communication badge, and several sparks began to come out of it.

Essefy shook his head. "It's going to break..."

Rean didn't pay attention to him as he used his real communication badge to check the results.

Pak!

Finally, a small burst of Divine Energy came from the communication badge as it split into countless pieces. It was truly gone for good that badge. However, Rean sighed in relief. "Found him. Zandolf is twenty-three kilometers in the left direction and 11 kilometers underground from that point."

Kentucky, with the best vision of the group, quickly looked in the direction Rean mentioned. "Are you sure? All I can see there are some very small buildings, most likely used by some insignificant beings back when the Essence Race was alive. Kind of a residential area of sorts."

Rean nodded. "I'm sure it is there. Can you see any fighting going on? When we came, we were afraid that we might find senior Zandolf fighting someone, so we need to check first."

Kentucky paid attention and shook his head. "No, it is very calm there. I can see a devil passing by, though. Just like you said, the devils are arriving little by little. But other than that, there is nothing."

Besides, if senior Zandolf, a Middle Stage Divinity Realm cultivator, was fighting, even you would be able to see it from such a short distance."

Rean nodded. As long as they were careful to avoid the devils, there shouldn't be much of a problem unless they once again bumped into some hiding devils. "Let's go!"

Twenty-three kilometers was nothing for them. Even moving slowly, it only took a minute to arrive. Still, it was just like Kentucky mentioned. The ruins seemed to be from long-gone common residents. Most were left with just a few stones, while some still stood in some ways. "We can only check one by one..."

Kentucky shook his head. "There is no need. I found which one senior Zandolf probably entered already."

"You did?" Essefy and Rean looked at Kentucky.

Kentucky then explained. "I can see traces on the ground, although they are very subtle. You should thank your gods that you have a Divine Demon Bird like me with such great sight. Hahaha!"

Rean didn't seem in the mood for that. "Stop the bullshit and bring us there."

"Gotcha!" Kentucky immediately dove down, flying straight for one of the small residences still standing. As soon as he arrived in front of it, he transformed once again, changing into his humanoid form.

Rean and Essefy nodded. They could now see what Kentucky meant by traces. They could see a few foot marks in front of the small residence entrance. "Let's enter."

Death... and me

Chapter 2366: Meeting Zandolf

At first, there wasn't anything strange inside. It was a pretty common residence with a few rooms, probably for a bigger family. However, Rean's eyes were set on a table in the corner of a room, and he could see another symbol of the Essence Race there. Well, a small part of it since the table covered most of the symbol.

Kentucky and Essefy were also there, quickly noticing the same thing. But above all, they could see signs that the table had been moved recently. They pushed the table back and finally saw a small crevice at the now fully available symbol. Rean put his hand inside and felt like he pushed something forward.

Brummmmm...

As soon as he did it, a passage began to open on the ground on the sides. It mixed so well with the ground that they truly wouldn't have noticed it if it didn't open. Their Divine Senses didn't work, so it truly only looked like a normal floor.

A set of stairs led down, covered by the darkness as there was no light inside.

"Should we go, then?" Kentucky asked.

Essefy pointed at the table they moved. "Let's put it back so that others won't see any difference. We don't know if some devils will end up coming here or not, after all."

Rean and Kentucky nodded, quickly moving the table back to its place. They also made sure to wipe all any traces of their passage there, doing a much better job than Zandolf did. Well, Zandolf truly didn't expect anyone to come to this place, so he didn't pay much attention to it.

Rean's group then started to make their way down. A moment later, the passage behind them closed, returning the residence to its previous form as if nothing had happened.

Further down in the underworld, Zandolf was breathing heavily, with his body covered in injuries. He felt like he had just escaped a calamity, looking in fear at the gate at the end of the room.

Back when he was trying to see if there were any traps, neither his Demon Beasts nor his Puppets seemed to activate any retaliation. He then called them back and sent them into his Pocket Dimensional Realm. Although he kept his guard high, he still decided to approach the gate and check it up closely.

However, as soon as he stepped into a specific rage, the two cubic symbols on the door shined. Rays of colored light shot out at speeds that even a Middle Stage Divinity Realm like Zandolf was helpless

against. Those rays easily pierced through his protection barrier, showing that the energy behind that attack far surpassed his abilities.

Zandolf did his best to dodge while using all his Spatial and Time powers to shoot back. Still, those rays of colored light seemed to disregard all of that. If not for Zandolf's own experience to avoid his vital parts, he truly might have died just there and then. Yet, the door didn't stop and shot more rays of colored light, trying to not give Zandolf a chance to escape.

In a fraction of a second, Zandolf had to choose which rays of light to take head-on while retreating as fast as he could. Finally, he seemed to exit the range at each the trap on the door worked, and the colored light on the cubic images disappeared. The various injuries on his body were those rays that he simply didn't have the time to avoid completely. 'Holy shit! Just what kind of mechanism is that? Is it a formation? But can a formation be this strong? Perhaps just a Peak Divinity Realm could put me through such danger. No, maybe not even them!'

In the end, Zandolf felt like he should turn around and just leave. However, seeing that the attacks stopped, he calmed down while keeping his eyes on the door. Then, he began to recover on the ground while thinking about what he should do. Those injuries were quite deep, and the power of those colored rays of light was still lingering inside his body, so he would take some time to finish it.

It was exactly during this time that a group of three appeared on the other side of the corridor that led into that room. Naturally, they were Rean, Kentucky, and Essefy. "Hum? There seems to be light ahead."

Rean was holding a sphere of light element in his hand to see the things around him since there was no light in that place. After more than one hour going down and some wrong turns, they finally arrived here. Ahead, they could see a colored light that illuminated the room.

However, more than anything else, they saw the middle-aged man sitting on the ground, recovering from many injuries on his body. "This... Senior Zandolf!"

Zandolf was taken aback, not expecting to suddenly hear his name in a place like this. "Who is there?! Show yourself!"

Rean and his group quickly came out, showing that they had no ill intentions. "Senior Zandolf, we have been looking for you for a while already. We finally found you!"

Zandolf narrowed his eyes as he kept his guard high. He doesn't remember to have ever seen any of those three. "Are you part of any of the Realm of Gods' Armies?"

Rean quickly nodded. "Yes, we were told by senior Gardo about you. I'm after information about the Essence Race, and especially trying to find a member of them alive. Senior Gardo told us that you had commented something with him many years ago, so I decided to come and ask you directly. Yet, when we tried to contact you with the communication badges, the signal was just too poor. We couldn't understand anything that you said."

Zandolf immediately remembered a while ago. He did indeed receive a call but couldn't understand the other side either. "So it was you... for you to have my number, that means you got it from the formations masters in my army sight." Zandolf finally dropped his guard a little. "Still, that doesn't explain how you got here. Speak, what is happening?"

Death... and me

Chapter 2367: Kentucky Will Stay

Rean then proceeded to explain how he used the communication badges to find his location. He also showed him his own army badge, now broken, used in a last effort to find his location underground. "Then we arrived above in that residential area, where my Demon Bird friend here found your traces. Once inside, it wasn't too hard to find the passage since you left more traces there, too."

Zandolf narrowed his eyes. "I wasn't expecting anyone to appear, so I didn't pay attention to that. Still, what bothers me more than anything else is that you said the Devils are all converging in this location. That doesn't make any sense. Even though I didn't quite hide myself once inside these Ruins, I definitely did be careful on the way here. Not to mention that only another Divinity Realm expert could possibly notice my presence."

Rean pondered a bit before asking. "It was senior Gardo who told us about you. Maybe it was because of him?"

Zandolf shook his head. "Back then, the devils were still in control of this territory. Because of that, I wanted to form a team to explore the Essence Race Ruins, and I would only be confident if I had at least another two or three Divinity Realm experts with me. That's why I approached Gardo and the others. But in the end, none of them wanted to risk entering the devils' territory, so I gave up. Besides, I still had no idea about this place at that time, so there is no way Gardo would know it either."

"That sounds weird indeed..." Rean and the others agreed with Zandolf there.

Zandolf then looked at Kentucky and Essefy. "Goku's badge is broken, but your badges are still working fine, right? I just want to confirm you are truly related to the Realm of Gods' Armies. Can you take them out for me to check?"

Kentucky and Essefy nodded and quickly showed Zandolf the badges. They then used the number they got from Zandolf, and sure enough, Zandolf's communication badge received the call now that they were this close to each other.

Zandolf nodded, satisfied. "Very well. If you want to talk about the Essence Race, then I'm totally open about it. After all, I was pretty much the only one who cared about it anyway, so it is nice to see someone else interested. However, it will have to wait. You guys should leave this place and return to the army. If the Devils are converging here, it is possible that Divinity Realm ones will appear, too. I can't even guarantee that I'm safe, let alone that I can protect you all. We are quite deep into the devils' territory."

Rean, obviously, didn't want to go. "Senior, can't we help with whatever you want to do? I truly want to be able to find a living Essence Race member."

Zandolf narrowed his eyes as he looked back at the gate with the two cubic symbols. He was quite lost at what to do. He could try to attack it from a distance and see if he could break the defenses. However, there were many problems involved in it.

First, he doesn't know if he can destroy something that can possibly kill him instead. Even if he can, there is no guarantee he wouldn't activate some self-destruction feature system, ultimately destroying what he was looking for. Or perhaps the simple fact he destroyed the entrance would cause the entire place to simply crumble down for being too old, reaching the same result.

Last but not least, depending on how much commotion he generates here, he might catch the attention of the Devils outside. "Hum? The devils outside...?" Zandolf then turned to Rean and the others. "You said you found this place by following the traces I left behind. Are they still there?"

Kentucky quickly answered. "Nope! This time, we made sure that not a single spec was out of place before entering this place."

Rean and Essefy nodded. If even Kentucky, with his eyes, couldn't find a flaw, then there should be nothing back to lead the devils here.

Zandolf sighed in relief. "That's good." I still don't know how the devils got here, but they shouldn't find this place easily. I myself took several weeks to reach that residence above, and I worked very hard on the clues I found in other ruins to get to this place."

Zandolf then made things clear. "If you want to stay and help, I don't mind since I do need some new ideas. However, I will not protect you if things get too dangerous for me. As you can see, I almost died here already. If I can't even keep myself alive, let alone help you keep yours."

Kentucky didn't need to hear it twice. "Great! In that case, you guys go ahead. I'll wait for you here and make sure the devils don't follow you." At the same time, he thought to himself. 'Are you kidding?! A fucking Middle Stage Divinity Realm guy almost died in this shit! There is no way I'll step a single foot ahead!'

Rean glanced at Kentucky, totally understanding what he was thinking. However, he didn't mind since it was indeed necessary to have someone watching their backs. "I'm following you, senior. I don't need anything you find inside. All I want are clues of where I can find a Living Essence Race member."

Zandolf nodded. "I was the one who spent countless efforts to find this place, so I obviously wouldn't give you anything. At least not anything I thought to be valuable. However, if it is just clues to find Essence Race Members alive, then I don't care. If anything, I'll help you look for such clues since I have a lot to ask them, too."

Rean and Zandolf then looked at Essefy. "What about you?"

Essefy pondered a bit. He looked at the gate in the distance, seeming to be conflicted with something. In the end, he simply nodded. "I'll go with you too. I'm already here anyway..."

Zandolf was satisfied with the answer. "Good. Then, first, let me tell you about that gate."

Death... and me

Chapter 2368: Maintenance

Zandolf then told Rean, Essefy, and Kentucky how he got his injuries. "In the end, it seems like controlled units can't activate the gate's defense mechanism. Perhaps there is something that checks one cultivation or some other requirement for the gate to attack."

Rean and Essefy looked at the door and had absolutely no intention whatsoever to get close to it. Zandolf almost died, which meant they would die for sure if the door attacked them. "Have you seen any other we could take, senior Zandolf?" Rean asked

Zandolf shook his head. "No. But then again, you can see what appears in our Divine Senses. Perhaps I simply missed some other hidden passage since I couldn't use it."

Well, on their way here, Kentucky was with them. If there was something that could be seen with the eyes, Kentucky would probably have noticed. Rean then contacted Sister Orb, asking her about the issue. 'What do you think, Sister Orb? Is it some formation?'

[If it is, it is way above what the system can detect,] Sister Orb said. [I wouldn't be surprised if that was the case, though. I mean, this gate almost killed Zandolf. A formation capable of making the Divinity Realm Middle Stage cultivator die in an instant is definitely above the Divine Level. Obviously, that would be a Legendary Level one.]

'What about you, Roan?' Rean knew Roan was watching, so he asked.

'Hard to say,' Roan answered. 'For now, try asking Zandolf about these cubic images. They are colored, just like the colored flames of the Essence Race, but it is a cube. Perhaps there is a clue behind it.'

Rean didn't waste time. "Senior Zandolf. We have seen ever since we entered this place that instead of the flame symbols, there are now these colored cubes, including the two on the door. What can you tell us about it?"

Unfortunately, Zandolf was clueless. "I wish to know that myself."

"Then how did you find the clues that led to these ruins?" Rean continued his questions.

Zandolf pondered a bit and started to tell what he knew. "After the war started, I finally had the chance to explore the Essence Race Ruins in several locations. Through my research, several times I saw these specific ruins being mentioned... No, to be more specific, it wasn't the ruins themselves. Instead, it was a member of the Essence Race that lived here."

He continued. "This Essence Race member was called Huban. From what I found, and also the reason for my research, he was an Essence Race being that almost succeeded in surpassing the Divinity Realm. I don't know about the details, but I do believe this Essence Race found some alternative way to make this attempt. That's what I'm looking for."

"Knowing that this Essence Race called Huban lived here, I waited until our army finally advanced enough. Now that we are close, I came to check. I spent quite a long time in these ruins, looking for the clues of Huban. I went into pretty much all the main buildings... or what was left of them. But in the end, I found nothing."

"It was then that I had an idea. If such a secret really existed, I wouldn't really leave it where anyone could find it. But then again, where could I even start? There are hundreds of kilometers of ruins, after all. Finally, I found a clue in one of the ruins that said that Huban didn't only stay in his confinements. He often went out to talk with the cultivators, demon beasts, spirits, and his own Essence Race members who lived in these ruins back when it was a city. He seemed to have no prejudice against anyone."

"The rest you can probably imagine. If Huban even spent time with the weak beings, perhaps there was something where these weak beings lived in the past. I checked quite a few thousand still-standing residences until I finally saw that table. Now, here I am."

Rean and Kentucky weren't that surprised. All Divinity Realm experts have been looking for a way to surpass the Divinity Realm itself. They just didn't expect the Essence Race to have almost succeeded in it. "Sigh... I can understand why you are here, but that gives us no clues of how to get past this gate."

Rean then looked at Essefy, who seemed to be in deep thought. "Have you figured something out?"

"Ah!" Essefy was taken aback for a moment. "Well... the Essence Race has been wiped out such a long time ago. I was just wondering why this gate's protection mechanism is still working. Can a formation really last this long? Besides, we can't forget that the environment has been changed by the Devils. There is plenty of Devilish Energy and high concentration of Dark Element in the air."

Rean understood. "That's weird indeed."

Zandolf, still feeling lost, asked. "What are you talking about?"

Rean then explained. "What Essefy meant was that talking about was that with the environment as it is, any formation from back then would have long since deteriorated. It truly has been too long, and the Devilish Energy and Dark Element would make even the best of formations crumble down by now. After all, if the formation isn't made with these two energies in mind, they would absorb these energies and get damaged after a while."

Essefy nodded. "But this gate still has the power to kill senior Zandolf. Isn't that weird?"

Zandolf narrowed his eyes. "Could you mean..."

Rean nodded, seeing that Zandolf understood. "The only way for it to still be working... is that someone kept up with its maintenance." Of course, Rean didn't mention that Sister Orb couldn't feel the presence of any formation in this place. However, he didn't discard the possibility that there is a Legendary Level formation that the system can't detect.

Zandolf found it hard to believe. "Could it really be there some Essence Race members are alive on the other side of this thing?"

"Perhaps..." Rean shrugged his shoulders. But in any case, he might have found exactly what he was looking for.

Death... and me

Chapter 2369: Unexpected Movement

Rean also added. "To be honest, the weird issues aren't that only. For example, why can't we see anything other than this gray mist in our Divine Senses? If you think about it, why didn't the devils investigate it further? Suppose they couldn't find an answer to this mist in our Divine Senses. What stopped the Divinity Realm devils from blowing everything up to ensure it wouldn't be a problem in the future?"

Zandolf bitterly smiled. "That might also be related to why the devils are here now."

"Exactly," Rean nodded. "There might be a reason why the devils left this place standing. Maybe... just maybe... they aren't after you, senior Zandolf. Instead, because your army is advancing, they decided to give it another try at this place to figure out its secrets or something like that."

Zandolf then looked at the gate in the distance. "Well, regardless of the reason, I still don't see a way past it. I can blow everything up as well, but it would be idiotic if it means I will destroy what I'm looking for."

Rean then looked at the two sides of the gate. There, there were another two small symbols of the colored cube. Rean then had an idea. "Let me step forward and give it a try. Senior Zandolf, what was the distance that activated the gate?"

Zandolf thought Rean to be crazy to wanted to approach it. Nonetheless, since he was without ideas, he might as well let him try anything. "Fifty meters. Once you enter the fifty-meter range, the gate will activate."

Rean nodded while he talked with Sister Orb. 'I'm going to get close so I can check how it works. Sister Orb, if you see it releasing any attack, immediately bring me into the Soul Gem Dimensional Realm. Your reaction as part of the system is much faster than my own, after all.'

[It is still somewhat risky, you know? What if the attack is faster than I can react? It even hit Zandolf, after all.]

'Well, so what do you suggest? To simply look at it forever?' Rean asked back.

[No, but you could ask someone else,] Sister Orb commented. [Did you forget? There are plenty of cultivators and demon beasts in the Soul Gem Dimensional Realm.]

Rean narrowed his eyes. 'But that would mean to sacrifice someone else.'

[On the other hand, if you die here, the universe will be done for, and then everyone will die. I think I don't need to tell you what weighs more, do I?]

'Just go already,' suddenly, Roan's voice echoed. 'You aren't the type to accept such an arrangement anyway, so I would rather not waste my time here.'

Rean was surprised to hear that. However, his expression turned black right after. 'You're just looking for a chance to get rid of me, aren't you?'

'That too,' Roan didn't hide his intentions at all.

Rean was speechless.

'However,' Roan continued. 'If you don't go, I go. We need this Essence Race member. If you are too afraid, swap with me.'

'Forget it,' Rean shook his head and began to walk forward.

Everyone looked at Rean while they took several steps back, all gathering at the entrance of that room, ready to flee.

Finally, Rean stopped right before the fifty-meter mark, taking a deep breath. Then, with another step, he got into the range of the gate's attacks.

Immediately, the two cubic images on the two doors of the gate began to shine with colored light. Rean immediately stopped, watching it nervously. 'Pay attention, Sister Orb, pay attention!'

Finally...

Zash, Zash!

Two rays of colored light immediately shot in Rean's direction. It was just like Zandolf mentioned. Their speed was absolutely incredible, not something Rean could hope to dodge.

In that fraction of a second, Rean hoped for Sister Orb to be fast enough. Yet... Sister Orb did nothing. Rean only looked at those two rays of light with despair and closed his eyes.

But then, a second passed, then two, then three... Rean then opened his eyes, finding it weird that he wasn't killed by the rays of colored light.

Only then did he notice. Right in front of him, a colored object floated, having absorbed the gate's attack into itself. "This..."

Rean, Kentucky, Roan, and Sister Orb identified that object with a single glance. 'The Hyeoumu's Shell!'

Indeed, at the critical moment, the shell came out of the Soul Gem Dimensional Realm on its own, something that even Sister Orb didn't expect to see. However, seeing that the two rays of colored light changed direction to strike the shell, Sister Orb refrained from bringing Rean into the Soul Gem Dimensional Realm. [Don't ask me how it happened. This thing moved on its own!]

Zandolf looked at that from the back and couldn't believe there was some treasure capable of stopping that attack. Even he, with his armor and Divine Origin Energy protection, was easily pierced through. "Goku, what is this thing?"

Rean wanted to answer. However, the gate didn't simply stop attacking. After all, it did attack several more times while Zandolf retreated to the back of the room before.

Zash, Zash, Zash, Zash, Zash...

More and more colored rays of light came from the door, but they all ultimately changed direction and hit the piece of shell. Rean could tell that the shell wasn't really blocking the rays of light. Instead, it was absorbing them, getting more and more brilliant.

Rean then took several steps back, coming out of the fifty-meter range. Yet, the shell continued to float in there, not being the real target of the gate cubic images.

That scene continued for a whole minute, which Rean had already used to retreat to the entrance as well. If things went south, he would flee with everyone else.

However, the colored shine of the two cubic images on the gate seemed to lose its power. Finally, the rays of colored light stopped, returning the environment to the previous silence.

Clack...

Hyeoumu's shell, now without anything to absorb, fell to the ground right after. It's just that it was now shining more than the gate, obviously filled with the gate's attacking energy.

Death... and me

Chapter 2370: Opening

Rean carefully approached, once again telling Sister Orb to be ready to pull him in. He got inside the fifty-meter range of attacks, and the gate seemed to come alive again. However, the colored shine of the two cubic images only lasted a fraction of a second before disappearing once again. Obviously, it tried to attack the newcomer, but it didn't have more energy to do so.

Rean then collected the piece of Hyeoumu's shell, looking at it with curiosity. "To think his shell had such a feature... I wonder if it would be the same against other types of attack as well."

Seeing that Rean was fine, Zandolf and Essefy approached as well, obviously looking at the item in Rean's hand. "Just... what is this thing?" Essefy asked.

Yet, Zandolf narrowed his eyes. "This thing... I feel like I have seen something similar in the past..."

Rean looked at Zandolf, not surprised by that comment. "Senior is at the Divinity Realm, so you definitely know about Hyeoumu, right? The ridiculously gigantic creature that holds the Realm of Gods on its back."

"Ah!" Immediately, Zandolf recognized the item. "It is part of the floor of the Continental Barriers!" Zandolf was in the Divinity Realm, so he was obviously privy to the secret of the Realm of Gods. "But... I always heard Hyeoumu absolutely hates anyone bothering him. Even we had to pay a huge price to convince him to turn off the release of energy that turns into the Continental Barriers. The last one I heard to touch his shell was completely wiped out of existence."

Rean mentally bitterly smiled. Zandolf wasn't wrong. They truly did almost get wiped out by Hyeoumu. Fortunately, Soul Gem came out and helped them settle the matter. However, he also couldn't tell that they went down there or anything else, so he had another excuse. "I don't know about this bad temperament of Hyeoumu. What I know is that this piece of shell came from him. Sure enough, senior Zandolf confirmed it now. I bought this piece of Hyemoumu's shell a long time ago in an underground auction, so I don't know who was the previous owner either."

Zandolf wasn't an idiot. He didn't know if Rean was telling the truth or not, but he wouldn't simply believe it. Nonetheless, the fact that Rean was here at least confirmed to Zandolf that Rean wasn't the one who first got that piece of shell... or so he believed. "I see."

Rean didn't mind whether Zandolf believed him. Instead, Rean simply offered that shell to Zandolf. "If senior wants it, this junior doesn't mind."

However, Zandolf immediately shook his head. "No need. Since it is yours, then it is yours. I haven't fallen to such a point yet."

Instead, he just looked at the gate in front of them. "Now then, the danger on this side is over. How do we open this thing?"

Essefy wanted to ask more about this creature holding the Realm of Gods. It was the first time he heard about it. However, seeing that Zandolf didn't insist on the topic, he could only put his curiosity aside for the moment.

Zandolf approached the gate carefully, ready to once again bite the bullet and run. Still, even though the gate seemed to be trying to activate the cubic symbols, it didn't find the energy for it. Zandolf then touched the gate, trying to push it open. Unfortunately, it was too hard, even for him, with his cultivation. His full strength didn't make it even budge. "Physical strength seems to be out of the question."

Rean then got on Zandolf's side. "Maybe it is. How about the two of us try it together?"

Zandolf glanced at Rean. He could use much more Divine Origin Energy to strengthen himself, so Rean shouldn't have even a tenth of his physical power. Adding Rean or any of the others to the equation wouldn't make much of a difference. Still, it wasn't like he had a better idea. "Alright, but don't expect much."

Rean smiled, and they both put their hands on only one of the two doors of the gate. After all, why try to open both? Immediately, Rean's Starlight Body Cultivation was activated. Not only that, Rean's Sky Energy also ran through his body, increasing his physical strength to a frightening level. Kentucky might have the highest defense, but if it was pure strength, Rean and Roan definitely weren't much different from him.

Right after, they used their full strength to try to push it open.

Paq, paq, paq...

Several sparks began to come out of the joints of the gate, showing signs of being opened. Rean was still not as strong as Zandolf with all his methods, but he certainly wasn't that far. Zandolf's eyes lit up, not expecting Rean's addition to truly make such a difference. He put even more effort into trying to push for that last bit of necessary power.

Yet, the gate continued not opening, much to their distress. Suddenly...

Bang!

The head of a Divine Bird hit the part of the gate above Zandolf and Rean, helping them. Naturally, it was Kentucky who had a similar strength as Rean when going all out.

Crack, crack, crack...

The sound of something moving finally came out, and the gate door they were pushing forward began to move slowly. Seeing that result, even Essefy, who wasn't that good with physical strength, joined the effort.

Hrummmmmm...

The sound of stone dragging against stone came out, and the door finally opened. As soon as it reached an opening big enough for people to pass, Zandolf pulled out a strange piece of metal from his Pocket Dimensional Realm, positioning it between the opening of the two gate doors.

Bang!

Finally, Rean, Kentucky, Essefy, and Zandolf let the door go, and it immediately tried to close shut. However, with that metal there, it couldn't push its way through, keeping that space where one could use to pass.