

Death 921

Death... and me

Chapter 921: Other Plans

Back on Rean's side, Duran was approaching the region below the centermost star at an incredibly quick pace. However, other than the demon beasts of this realm, he hasn't found or met up with anyone else. "This place is too fucking big!"

Rean agreed with him, shrugging his shoulders as he said, "Nothing we can do about it. We didn't expect this place to have a dimensional realm to start with." Rean then pointed above as he continued, "In any case, we're getting close. Perhaps you'll find more Zasfins there or maybe some of the Divine Demon Beasts."

Duran didn't like the idea of meeting the Divine Demon Beasts first, but it was still better than not finding anyone.

A few hundred kilometers behind them, Kentucky and Celis kept following Rean, using Kentucky's connection with him. "I wonder what Rean wants to do in that direction. Or maybe it's Duran who decided to go there."

Celis shook his head as he listened to Kentucky. "I don't know. Perhaps they think they can find the Bestial Blood Pond there. After all, it does seem to be the center of this dimensional realm."

Behind them, far, far in the back, Frin and Roan weren't having any issues whatsoever. The demon beasts that saw them would immediately stop anything they were doing and pursue the duo. However, after Roan noticed that, he took his White Star to gather Light Element and used Rean's Light bending skill.

Both him and Frin disappeared from the demon beasts' vision, and it seemed like they couldn't use any other detection method either. "This is good enough. Once we meet up with the others, we can think about what to do with these demon beasts."

All in all, everyone in Rean's group, including Red, wasn't in much danger at the moment, so they were calm. Then again, there was one guy who didn't like what was happening, the crimson-eyed being close to the World Beast Formation. "How can he simply disappear like that? Was there anyone on this planet capable of using such a skill? Although I can feel where they are, the demon beasts can't." However, he

wasn't that much concerned. "Anyway, I just wanted to get rid of an annoying fly in advance. It's not like he can find all my Soul Submission Orbs anyway."

The being then ignored Roan and Frin before he looked at the other demon beasts and Zafins wandering in the realm. "Oh! Now, that's interesting. Hehehe!" The being's eyes shone with red light for a moment as more dark energy left his body. It didn't head to the World Beast Formation, though. Instead, it disappeared in the direction Phex was located. Not only that, but he released two more streams of dark energy that disappeared in two other different directions.

Two more days had passed as Duran and Rean focused on their travel when suddenly, they noticed another city in the distance. Of course, this was the first city they had seen since they arrived here. Roan and Frin were the ones who found the first one. For the two of them who didn't know what to do at the moment, that city was a clue, so they entered it straight away while maintaining vigilance.

Little did Duran know, but Kentucky was right behind him. Kentucky also used Rean's Light bending skill and reapproached Duran and Rean once again, maintaining a distance of twenty kilometers or so from the two. Kentucky was still a Demon Bird and a Divine one at that, so he had excellent vision. Twenty kilometers wasn't anything difficult for him. Without the help of Spiritual Sense, Duran couldn't feel the bird and the tree's presence at all. Naturally, Kentucky saw the city even earlier since he was flying high in the skies. "Rean and that guy are entering the city. What do you think?"

Celis pondered in silence for a bit before saying, "Let's follow them inside. Just keep flying high and use that concealment skill of yours."

However, just as the two groups were about to enter the city, Kentucky and Rean's attention were caught. 'Roan's close!'

You couldn't underestimate a Silver Fenrir, after all. Two days was more than enough for Frin to finally catch up to the group. 'It finally connected again. How's your situation, Rean?' Obviously, Roan asked Rean's conditions straight away.

'I'm fine, but that Duran Hafel caught me. We're entering a city at the moment.' Using that same connection, Rean then explained everything he had found so far.

Roan narrowed his eyes in response, asking, 'Can you see any demon beasts close to the city you're talking about?'

Rean gave a quick look around before answering, 'No, there's none. Why?'

Without wasting time, Roan explained to Rean the problem with the spheres with the red eyes that he and Frin found in the past. 'You should ask Duran to retreat straight away. If I'm not wrong, this sphere doesn't try to take control of humans or Zafins. It kills them straight away.'

Rean pondered in silence for a bit before a playful smile appeared on his face, saying, 'You said that the soul attack doesn't work straight away, right? I can work with Dark Element to drive it out. Then, I better let Duran keep moving forward. Once his soul gets attacked by that sphere with the red eye, that'll be my chance to escape.'

'By the way, how long will you take to arrive here?' Rean asked soon after. 'Since you just entered the range for our Soul Connection to work, you're still 3000 kilometers away, right?'

Roan went silent for a bit as he calculated the speed they were moving in before answering, 'We can't fly at the moment, so even a Silver Fenrir will be dragged down by quite a lot. At Frin's top speed, it will still take around two hours to arrive where you are.' Roan wasn't opposed to Rean's idea to use the sphere's soul attack to run. After all, Duran might simply change his mind and get rid of a future problem that was Rean.

However, Rean didn't plan to flee after escaping Duran's hands at all. With that, he told Rean, 'I have other plans for Duran. Don't worry, just make sure you catch up to us.'

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Chapter 922: Rush

Naturally, Duran couldn't hear Rean and Roan's conversation, so he gradually moved in deeper into the city. This city obviously looked different from the previous one. However, one thing remained the same. Anything they touched would crumble down immediately. Duran felt somewhat sad as he thought he could find something useful here.

Of course, Rean and Duran also found bones as they moved through the city, which also crumbled from the slightest touch. That only made Duran more aware of the possible danger as he kept his eyes peeled for everything. "Do you know anything about this place?"

Rean shook his head, saying in response, "As if! However, this city creeps me out with all these skeletons. Are you sure you want to stay here? Perhaps it's better to wait outside." Of course, Rean was only saying that to keep the suspicions away from him.

Duran shook his head in response. "No can do. We need to understand the area we're in more clearly. We might be able to find something in this city."

"Can you let me go then and go on this search alone?" Rean asked.

Duran snorted straight away. "Ha! As if!"

Duran continued to move around the city until he finally decided to head to its center. There, the biggest buildings could be found. Rean then looked at all the towers and stores in the area, trying to see which one of them would radiate the red light Roan talked about. 'Could it be that this city doesn't have one?'

Sadly, that wasn't the case. When Duran passed through a big street, Rean finally saw the red light at the end of that road. Duran narrowed his eyes as he also noticed that thing. Nevertheless, because Duran was far from it, the red light emanating from the building wasn't affecting him. As for Rean, he was ready to use Dark Element to destroy that force.

"I guess you don't know what's emanating that red light as well, huh?" Duran asked.

Rean shrugged his shoulder, saying in response, "If I said I knew, would you believe me?"

"Fair enough." Duran knew Rean was right. As far as they were concerned, Rean might simply lie to him about it and make him lose something. He could only trust his own strength as he approached it to examine the source.

'It's here!' The duo finally got close enough to the building in the distance for its soul-controlling power to reach them. Without wasting time, Rean took his Dark Star out and used it to gather Dark Element to drive the energy out of his mind.

However, unlike what Rean expected to happen, Duran didn't seem to be affected by the red light at all. Instead, Duran looked at Rean with a puzzled expression and asked, "What are you doing?"

Rean was taken aback. Why is he not being affected? Rean's plan was to escape when this moment arrived. After that, he would destroy the red sphere to save Duran's life. That way, Duran would owe him another favor. This was a gamble through and through. Rean thought that since Duran didn't kill him because Duran owed him and Roan something, things would get even better if he owed his life to Rean as well.

Sadly, that didn't happen at all! Nevertheless, Rean quickly calmed down as he worked to drive the energy from the higher realm out of his mind while he answered Duran, "What are you talking about? Can't you feel it?"

Duran became even more confused after that. "Feel what?"

Rean felt like crying. "What do you mean by what? I'm talking about this annoying thing trying to enter my head! There's some kind of energy trying to damage my soul! I'm using Dark Element to destroy it! I told you to not enter this city, shit!" At the very least, Rean's excuse was very good...since most of it was true.

"Something trying to damage your soul?" Duran was also taken aback when suddenly, one thing came to his mind. Soon after, he pulled out a green pendant that he was wearing around his neck. That green pendant shone with a faint green light, which streamed into Duran's body. "This..."

Duran obtained the pendant from the inheritance of the expert from the Realm of Gods. He always wore it even though he didn't know if it had any use at all. After all, it was an item from the Realm of Gods. Surely it had some good effect, right? Turns out Duran was right. That green pendant was the reason why the energy from the higher realm couldn't seep into his soul. "So that's how it is..."

Immediately, an idea popped into Duran's mind. 'I refuse to believe this is a mere coincidence. Does this mean that the expert from the Realm of Gods came to our planet because of what's happening in this

Bestial Sacred Ground? However, he died in the end, and Fikin nor I knew how that happened.' The more Duran thought about it, the more it made sense. 'That must be it! After all, why would that expert come to our planet in the first place? There shouldn't be anything here to catch the attention of someone like that. This trip to the Bestial Sacred Land is becoming a lot more complicated every minute.'

'The good thing is that the Divine Demon Beasts might really not have anything to do with what's happening here. Of course, I won't put my hand on the fire for them,' Duran concluded his thoughts there.

Duran then asked Rean something else, "How long can you resist it? I'll see if I can destroy the source of that red light."

Rean kept using the Dark Element coming from his sword as he answered, "I'm fine for a few minutes. However, I'll be even fine if you simply leave the range of this power. Do you remember? It didn't affect us from afar, so it has a distance limit."

Duran shook his head as he told Rean, "It's fine, it's fine. If you see you're reaching your limit, let me know. Until then, let's go." Without waiting for Rean's answer, Duran rushed towards the tower.

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Chapter 923: Resume Everything

Well, Rean wasn't too worried. After all, Roan was able to destroy the crimson sphere without much issues, let alone someone at the peak of the Transition Realm like Duran. With a single attack, Duran smashed the crimson sphere into pieces, but not before he took a good look, muttering, "What a weird thing. As soon as I destroyed the sphere, the demon beasts outside the city began to roar non-stop."

After that, he looked at his green pendant, soon noticing that the green light coming from it disappeared before looking at Rean. "How is it? Is your soul still being attacked?"

Rean shook his head as he replied, "No. Whatever the power may be, it's not here anymore. Let's go take a look at the demon beasts outside the city. Something's happening to them."

Duran did the same thing as Roan and grabbed a shard of the sphere before leaving. However, he took one final look at the room with the sphere as he narrowed his eyes. 'Was it me, or was I being watched?' He had no proof. It was simply his instincts telling him that.

Little did he know, but his actions were also seen by the same being that watched Roan. 'That power! It's him! No, that can't be right! He died! I made sure of that!' Naturally, the guy was thinking of the pendant's power. 'Could that Zasfin be a descendant of that man? Or maybe the pieces of shit from the higher realm sent reinforcements here? But why now? It has already been so long since then! I shouldn't have let that man tell them of my existence...'

Outside the city, Duran and Rean saw the demon beasts disappear one after another. Sure enough, they were attached to the crimson sphere and lost the thing that kept their soul in this place. "So the demon beasts who died on the planet turned out like this, huh?" Even Duran has reached this conclusion by now.

"It seems to be the case." Rean nodded. Of course, he already knew of it since Roan told him through their connection. He was just pretending to be unaware of the situation. "Perhaps there are more of these spheres in this Dimensional Realm."

Duran understood the implication of Rean's words, saying soon after, "That means my companions might be in danger at the moment. However, how would I find them or the other spheres?"

Suddenly, Duran noticed some movement in the distance. In fact, there were a few shadows approaching his location. "That form... isn't that the silver dog?" Sure enough, the whole event gave Roan time to arrive in the area. Not only that, but he also met up with Kentucky, who could feel his presence along the way.

Frin then stopped in front of Duran and could see him holding Rean with his Spiritual Energy. However, he snorted right after, saying, "What is it? The strongest Zasfin of the Soul Rulers now has to hold a human hostage?"

Duran didn't care about Frin's words at all. "Hmph! As if this old man needs a hostage." Soon after, he threw Rean over to Frin as if throwing a piece of trash. "You can have him if you want."

Now, that really took everyone by surprise. Wasn't Duran going to keep Rean as some sort of guarantee? How come he gave him up that easily?

Noticing the puzzled expression of Rean's group, Duran simply said, "Don't get me wrong. We need this boy to help us open the portal to the Realm of Gods. That being said, I didn't have any intention to harm him from the very start. As for whatever happened in the Soul Rulers headquarters, that was something from the time I was hiding, so I don't care too much."

Frin then reverted to his human form. Although the demon beasts and Zafins didn't get along well, this wasn't the right time to fight.

As for Duran, he was curious about something else. "By the way, how did you find where I was? This twin's brother was also with you, so don't tell me it's just mere coincidence."

Rean smiled in response as he explained, "My brother and I were born with a connection of sorts. Because of that, we can feel each other's presence."

"So there's no such thing as guiding yourselves through the stars, huh?" Duran said in response.

Rean scratched the back of his head, awkwardly chuckling. "Well...I had to give some excuse, didn't I? I thought you wouldn't let me go if I used some other reason."

Duran nodded and decided to not dwell on that topic. The situation at hand was more critical. "Forget about it. Tell me what you guys know about that crimson sphere. I believe you have more information than the white-haired brat told me."

Frin nodded, knowing that it wasn't time to keep information to himself. "So far, it goes like this..."

"I see..." Duran finally had a good picture of the situation. He then took his green pendant out and showed it to Rean's group. "I have a few theories, so you should hear me out as well. We might be able to do something about this situation if you listen."

Duran then told everyone about the inheritance he found in the past. Of course, he didn't mind telling Ren's group about it because the inheritance was empty now. Duran and Fikin took everything that existed in that place. Besides, he didn't tell them the location.

After they put the pieces of the puzzle together, the group made up of a Zasfin, demon beasts, and some humans finally had a better picture. "So, to sum up everything...crimson spheres that can control souls, a person from the Realm of Gods who probably came here to deal with it and died in the end, and the red claw that took the Stage Nine Demon Beast's soul that Duran killed. With that, we can deduce that something or someone is responsible for all of it."

Roan nodded as he spoke, "Yes, and we have to find the other spheres since it seems to have some effect on the being behind it." Roan told them that he felt someone's presence when he destroyed the spheres, which Duran also confirmed since he thought of it as well. It's just that Roan was certain since he saw the killing intent, while Duran simply felt it with his instincts.

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Chapter 924: How do you do that?

Duran and Frin were the only ones present that could really battle at a high level, so they decided to stick together for the moment. By now, even Duran found it extremely unlikely that the demon beasts prepared all of this just for the Zasfins. "So, what should we do next?"

Roan immediately answered, "We should destroy as many crimson spheres as possible so that we can drag whoever is behind it all out."

Duran and Frin weren't against that plan. After all, destroying the crimson spheres would also prevent the other Zasfins or demon beasts from becoming victims of them. "That's fine. However, how will we find them? The shards we have indeed have the ability to tell us when we're close, but the range is limited. As you have already noticed, the distance between each of these spheres is enormous."

Roan coldly smiled in response, saying, "Don't worry, I know how to find them." As soon as he said that, Roan took out a shard of the crimson sphere he had destroyed before.

Going back a day in the past, as he and Frin were making their way to where Rean was, Roan had been thinking why the energy in the sphere was so familiar. At some point, he finally understood why that was the case. 'I see! This is Underworld Energy!'

Roan took some time to identify the type of higher energy the Soul Gem System told them about because the Underworld Energy of this half of the universe was so different from his own. However, once he realized that, a lot of things started to make sense. 'It explains why these crimson spheres and the one controlling them have such high effect on the soul.'

As a Death Spirit in his previous life (Or Death itself?), Roan took the soul out of the dead bodies and sent them into the path of reincarnation. Naturally, the beings of the organization Roan worked for were very good at it to the point that even Zafins would feel embarrassed of their Soul Power. Death Spirits were simply unmatched when it came to controlling their and their targets' souls.

'If the one behind all of it came from the Underworld, it's only natural that he's that good. However, why does he only take the souls of demon beasts and not those from the humans or the Zafins?' That was the part Roan didn't understand since a Death Spirit would be good with any Soul from any race. However, he soon noticed a different point.

'Right! This is not my half of the universe. We have Spiritual Energy in this place, so the souls of demon beasts evolved differently from humans, Zafins, and so on. Death Spirits were good with any kind of soul in my previous life because none of those souls reached the level that souls in this half of the universe can.'

The more Roan thought about it, the more it made sense. 'In that case, I can think of only one solution. This half of the universe's Underworld needs different Death Spirits specialized in different types of souls. If my conjecture is right, that explains why humans and Zafins die straight away when invaded by the Underworld Energy used by the crimson spheres.'

Of course, the only one Roan told regarding this information was Rean, who knew who he was. Roan didn't see the need to tell Kentucky since the dumb bird wouldn't be of any help even if it knew.

However, Roan couldn't help but feel a little excited when he discovered that information, thinking, 'Since I know this is Underworld Energy, I guess I can make good use of it. Hehe!' Even if he had become a human, he still remembered very well how to control Underworld Energy. It's just that this one is different, so Roan had to get used to it first...and so he did. He spent the time Frin took to arrive in Rean's location to work on the shard's energy. Although the crimson sphere was destroyed and didn't have the power to take control of anyone's soul anymore, it still had remnant energy for Roan to work with.

Back in the present, when Rean heard about Roan's conclusion, he couldn't help but ask through their Soul Connection, 'Does that mean we have a Death Spirit in this place?'

Roan shook his head as he told him, 'That I can't be sure of. Back in our half of the universe, a Death Spirit was enough to deal with any soul. That's why they existed. But here, there might not be any Death Spirits to start with. There might be other kinds of existences in the Underworld doing the job I did in my previous life. In fact, that's most likely the case since I don't think I would be able to work in this half of the universe as a simple Death Spirit.'

Rean couldn't help but joke after hearing that, 'Maybe we have a demon there, and now we have one here. Hahaha!' However, his smile disappeared almost instantly as he asked soon after, 'That's not possible, right? Do demons really exist to start with?'

Roan glanced at Rean as he thought about some rumors of his past life before saying, 'Back in the Universal Transition Organization (Death's workplace in his previous life), I've never seen a demon. However, my teacher told me that in time immemorial, they were the real controllers of the Underworld. It's just that no one knew what happened to them in the end.'

Rean couldn't help but let out a bit of sweat after that. 'Demons...could it be that they have something to do with demon beasts?'

'I don't think so,' Roan replied. 'After all, demons could be anything, both beasts, humans, or any kind of race. The problem is that I didn't care about it in the past, so I don't even know how demons were created. I just told you the things my teacher commented on with me since he was an enthusiast of these things. I wish I had a way to talk with him right now as I believe he knows more.'

Frin noticed Roan going silent, prompting him to ask not long after, "What are you waiting for? Didn't you say you know a way to find these crimson spheres?"

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Chapter 925: Let's Go

However, Duran was more interested in something else. "First, how can you find them? I can't feel anything from these shards you took out, and it seems like Frin can't feel anything either. What method will you use?"

Roan then explained, "Well, it isn't anything complicated. The power coming from these shards is extremely similar to my Dark Element. That's why I can use them to feel the other crimson spheres. It's that simple. If you had Dark Element Affinity, you would be able to do the same." Of course, that was a lie. What Roan was doing was using his knowledge of Underworld Energy instead.

After spending his time familiarizing himself with the Underworld Energy in the shards, he gradually became able to feel the connection between these shards and the other crimson spheres in the dimensional realm. If not because he had to meet Rean first, he would have led Frin to the spheres they passed by and destroyed them first.

Nevertheless, there was something else Roan was more worried about than that. "However, there's one thing you need to understand. Do you remember that we talked about someone who's possibly behind this situation?" Everyone nodded and waited for Roan to continue. "That's the issue. There's one place in this Dimensional Realm where this kind of energy is mostly concentrated. If we head there, perhaps..."

Everyone understood what Roan meant. They might find who's using the souls and the blood of the demon beasts so far. The problem was exactly that, though. With that, Duran could not help but say, "Considering the strength of the red claw I saw back then, I'm afraid we're no match for its owner. Even if Frin and I fight together, that won't change much."

Frin didn't see the so-called claw. However, for the strongest Zasfin to say that he wasn't a match to the other party, Frin could imagine that he wouldn't be much better either.

It was then that Roan raised his hand. "That's why we have to destroy these crimson spheres first. Don't forget that we felt the presence of someone watching us just when we broke the first ones. From the looks of it, these crimson spheres are extremely important to the enemy. Perhaps we can weaken it by destroying it all."

Duran agreed with Roan as he was one of those who felt the same presence. "It might really work. I'm not sure if I believe in this reason of yours, but this is our only chance at the moment.

Kentucky couldn't help but ask, "What about me? I don't think I have much use in this hunt of yours."

Celis also thought the same. "Indeed. We're just Late Stage Five Demon Beasts. We will only drag you guys down if we force you to carry us along."

First of all, Kentucky and Celis only came to this place because they thought they were necessary to open the portal to the Realm of Gods. One must remember that the Divine Demon Beasts were the reason for the changes in the Bestial Sacred Ground, referring to the number of Divine Demon Beasts available on the planet. In fact, that might still be the case.

Roan pondered over it for a bit before he had an idea, "Kentucky, you can use Rean's concealment skill, right?" Kentucky nodded and waited for Roan to continue. "In that case, I want you and Celis to go and check the area with the highest concentration of energy from the crimson spheres."

"What?!" Kentucky was taken aback. "But if I go there, won't I be controlled by it?"

Roan shook his head. "Don't worry. You can also use Dark Element, so you can destroy that energy once it starts entering your soul. Since Celis is also connected to you, he will be able to tell if anything different is happening to your body. Last but not least, you will be holding one of the sphere shards. It will shine with a red light once you get close to a crimson sphere."

Celis liked the idea. "It's definitely a lot better than just waiting here. Alright, Kentucky and I will investigate the place. You guys can catch up to us later."

Neither Duran nor Frin was against it. "Sounds fine to us."

Kentucky didn't like the idea very much, but he knew that there was no point in arguing. After all, Rean and Roan had their work cut out for them. Frin and Ruan would be responsible for their safety as well. "Fine! But if I see any signs of danger, I'm definitely flying away."

"That's why I'm sending you to do the recognition," Roan said in response. "You can keep flying high in the skies, avoiding most of the attention, especially with Rean's concealment skill active."

Roan then passed a crimson sphere shard to Kentucky and Celis before using a jade slip to mark down the position with the greatest concentration of energy. Roan didn't know this place very well, so he had been making a map ever since he started to move. Of course, he hadn't seen the place he talked about

yet, so he could only point how far it was from this location, more or less. "If you need to retreat, head back to this city. We will meet you two after we destroy the crimson spheres. If you see that you can keep watching that spot without problems, then just stay there."

"Alright." Kentucky nodded before Celis jumped on his back again. Soon after, he took flight, eventually disappearing in the distance.

Roan then looked at Frin, Duran, and Rean, telling them, "Let's stay together. Duran and Frin will obviously be our fighting force. Rean will deal with any injuries that might appear while I'll guide us to the spheres. As I mentioned before, the demon beasts seem to be pursuing us. Rean will use his Light Concealment skill to keep us hidden while we pass by them, so only fight if necessary. Does anyone have any questions?"

Rean, Frin, and Duran shook their heads.

"Good. Let's go."

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Chapter 926: So Many Losses

Duran, Rean, and Roan then mounted on Frin, who was the fastest among them on land. After activating his Light bending skill, Frin departed from the city, flashing into the distance. Things were even easier this time. Frin didn't need to avoid the demon beasts too much. Even if some of them were strong enough to bother Frin, Duran was there as well, and that was considering they noticed Frin's presence when he stepped on the ground.

In just an hour, Roan had already guided them to the fourth crimson sphere. Of course, the first three spheres were the ones that Roan, Frin, and Duran destroyed. "Duran, you have this green pendant of yours. You go ahead and break the sphere."

Duran didn't mind as he jumped off Frin's back and rushed to the target. His pendant once again activated, blocking any possible damage to his soul.

Bang!

Crack...

Shatter!

Sure enough, the spheres were just too fragile. As long as they couldn't take control of one's soul, they were pretty much useless. Duran then returned to Frin's back before saying, "One less. Let's head onto the next."

Frin didn't waste time as he turned into a flash of silver light once again, running in the direction Roan selected. And just like that, they began to destroy one sphere after another.

Two, three, four, seven, ten, fifteen, twenty...even the Stage Nine Demon Beasts being controlled by the sphere were no match for Duran and Frin. When they received any damage during the battle, Rean would be there to heal them soon after. Well, that was very rare since those controlled demon beasts didn't have any sentience. Their bodies weren't real either. Simply put, they were just too weak to pose any threat to Rean's group.

Another good thing was that the demon beasts in the surroundings would disappear as soon as the spheres were destroyed. That would prevent more trouble while leaving a zone within the sphere's range. However, they also noticed something else.

"All the Stage Nine Demon Beasts we've found had their souls taken away by the red claw, no exception. What does the enemy need those souls for?" Rean asked, slightly worried.

Duran shrugged his shoulders. "How should we know? We'll find out sooner or later, though. Well, that's considering there really is an enemy to start with. Until now, it's just nothing more than speculation. It's not because those red claws keep appearing that it must be someone else's doing."

Roan, on the other hand, didn't believe that. However, he only told Rean about it through their Soul Connection. 'If this is a being of the Underworld, that means the souls are being used for sure. The only doubt I have is how they're being used. As a Death Spirit in the past, I could use others' souls to heal my own. It's just that there was a limit to how effective it was, so rarely did the Death Spirits touch others' souls for their own benefit. Well, it was extremely rare for Death Spirits to get injured anyway.'

Rean thought about another possibility. 'That was something from the other side of the universe, right? Here in the cultivation universe, I wouldn't be surprised if others' souls could be used to strengthen the Death Spirits of the Underworld. Perhaps there are even more uses for it. Don't forget that the Zafins could use human souls to create the Bloodline Soul Marks.'

Roan agreed with Rean on that point.

Back where the being with red eyes was staying, he was almost exploding in rage. 'Fuck! Fuck! Fuck! Do they have any idea how long I need to make each of those Soul Submission Orbs? They already destroyed thousands of years of effort in just three days!'

Unfortunately for the guy, he couldn't leave his location. 'I'm so close! I can't let it continue like this! And here I thought those living Divine Demon Beasts would make things even faster. I wish I hadn't prepared that trap at the entrance.'

The guy then calmed down as he spread his sense over the realm. 'I didn't want to use them, but it seems like I have no choice.' Soon, he found what he was looking for. There were three demon beasts gathered around a crimson sphere. Their eyes were vacant, and if others didn't pay close attention, one would think those demon beasts were dead.

Suddenly, the same dark energy from before entered the World Beast Formation, rushing to the crimson sphere. Soon after, it left the sphere and entered the demon beasts' heads. In fact, those demon beasts were very familiar. If Rean's group was there, they would immediately recognize them. They were Phex, Xaon, and Darian! It turns out that they got close to the crimson spheres and had no way to fight against the beast controlling properties of the sphere. In the end, they had become under the control of the enemy.

'Living souls are much better than dead ones, let alone the souls of Divine Demon Beasts. If I had a few more weeks, these souls would be ready for use. It's totally different from the other Stage Nine Demon Beasts who need to keep killing for thousands of years until their souls stabilize enough for my use.'

However, the red-eyed being gritted its teeth as resolve appeared in his eyes. 'Forget it. I've already waited this long. I can wait a few more thousands of years to finish. As long as I don't lose all of my Soul Submission Orbs, everything will end eventually.'

The red-eyed being then passed a stream of orders to Phex, Zaon, and Darian. 'Head to this location and kill these intruders. I don't care if your souls get torn apart. You must stop them!'

"Yes...Master..." Phex's group seemed to wake up from their trance with the creature's words. Without asking anything, they dashed into the distance.

As for the creature, it still felt the pain from the waste. 'Now that the process has been interrupted, their souls are done for. Sigh...so many losses just because of my haste.'

Death... and me

Chapter 927: First Meeting

Crack...

Shatter!

Another crimson sphere soon fell on the ground, which weakened the red-eyed being even further. However, it didn't care anymore since it knew its subordinates would be arriving where Rean's group was pretty soon. 'Hmph! Let's see how you deal with your own friends. Well, that's whether you notice anything different at all. Hahaha! Also, they won't be the only ones participating in the party.'

Duran retreated once again, arriving beside Rean and the others. He then passed a shard of the destroyed sphere to Roan before asking, "How is it, Roan? How many more crimson spheres can you feel?"

Roan concentrated on the shard's energy before responding, "There are at least another 70 or so. I might be able to find more once we gather more different sphere shards."

Frin and Rean were satisfied with that. "That's fine, then. We only took three days to destroy 31 of them, so it won't be long before we get rid of all of those spheres."

Suddenly, Duran and Frin noticed a few shadows approaching them from a distance. Because they were in open land, it wasn't hard to spot possible enemies. Not to mention that with the destruction of the last crimson sphere, all the demon beasts under its control had disappeared already.

However, Duran and Frin's expressions changed completely differently when they saw the new group ahead. "Phex, Darian, Xaon!"

Duran immediately distanced himself from Frin. Although he was confident in combat, it would be hard to deal with four Divine Demon Beasts at once. Not to mention that each one of them would already be complicated to defeat one on one.

Frin, on the other hand, just laughed out loud as he understood what Duran was thinking. However, he quickly ignored Duran and began to approach Phex's group. "Hey, what took you so long?"

Phex laughed as well before answering, "Hahaha! That's my question. I've been looking for you guys everywhere. However, this damn land is just too big, so it took me some time to find Darian and Xaon. You're the only one left if we don't consider the common Stage Nine Demon Beasts that came with us."

Frin nodded and was just about to join Phex's group when all of a sudden, Frin accelerated at the very last fraction of a second. At the same time, Rean and Roan jumped off of Frin's back, not intending to get in his way at all. Yes, Frin attacked Phex without thinking twice!

'Silver Streak!'

Puchi!

Frin's attack pierced right through Phex's body, taking a huge chunk of Phex's right side in a single strike. As for Phex, he looked at Frin with an expression of disbelief. He wasn't the only one. Darian and Xaon had the same expression. Let alone the red-eyed being observing everything with its senses. Because it took control of the souls of Phex's group, it could use them to see what they saw. "Wh-why...?" Phex could only ask as his body fell on the ground.

There was one more person shocked by that development, which was Duran. He was ready to fight the four Divine Demon Beasts or maybe flee if necessary. Frin's actions had definitely come out of left field for him. 'Could it be...?'

Frin then snorted in Darian and Xaon's direction as he said, "You truly are out of luck. I would have totally fallen for your pretense if it was any other circumstance, let's say...when I was alone. Unfortunately for you, we have Roan here."

Roan, who used the time Darian and Xaon were distracted by Frin to run far away with Rean, confirmed using a voice infused with Spiritual Energy, "I don't know if you guys are the real Darian, Phex, and Xaon. However, one thing is absolutely certain. Your souls are fully corrupted by the energy from the crimson spheres. Your bodies and expressions seem fine, but your minds were already gone a long time ago."

Duran immediately rushed to Frin's side after hearing Roan's words. "So it was actually like that. To think that I thought they looked like the real deal to me."

Rean agreed with Duran, saying, "They most likely are since the life force in their bodies are the same as I felt before. Unfortunately, their sentience is already gone."

Frin couldn't help but show an angry expression as he looked at Darian and Xaon, saying, "Who are you? I know you're controlling their bodies. Are you that afraid to come out?"

Darian and Xaon's shocked expression then changed instantly. Their eyes suddenly became crimson red as their faces showed no emotion whatsoever. "So, it was because of that black-haired boy again, huh? Whatever! It's a pity that the Phoenix is already dead, but these two here should be enough to hold you in place. You'll pay for everything you did to me."

Duran and Frin narrowed their eyes after hearing that. If it was only Darian and Xaon, they were very confident in their fighting chances. After all, Darian was already very old even though he was a Divine Demon Beast, an aquatic type at that. This terrain was terrible for his abilities. Xaon was the only real threat at the moment. Nevertheless, all the Stage Nine Demon Beasts they fought so far were way weaker than when they were alive.

However, Darian and Xaon didn't waste time talking anymore. They quickly reverted to their Black Tortoise and Basilisk forms as they attacked Frin and Duran.

'Undersea Domain!'

'Toxic Domain!'

Their domains spread out, quickly reaching Frin and Duran's position.

'Silver Moon Domain!'

'Soul Severing Domain!'

Of course, Duran and Frin didn't wait for them to prepare and spread their own domains as well.

In that instant, a huge battle started between the controlled Black Tortoise and Basilisk against the Zasfin and Silver Fenrir.

Surprisingly, Roan ignored the fight. He felt that things weren't that simple. 'Rean, activate the Light bending skill. We need to hide and get as far away as possible.' Rean nodded and did as Roan said. Soon after, Roan shouted at Frin and Darian, "You two, be ready to flee. I don't think we're alone. We will meet again in the agreed location." With that, Rean and Roan disappeared from everyone's vision completely.

As for Frin and Duran, they understood what Roan was talking about straight away. "Shit!"

Death... and me

Chapter 928: Circle

Duran and Frin quickly noticed several shadows in the distance heading in their direction. Not only that, each one of them moved extremely fast, showing their high level of cultivation. "We need to leave!"

Duran and Frin immediately used their best attacks, forcing Xaon and Darian to retreat. Following that, they turned around and dashed away. Frin knew that Duran's help would be necessary for the future, so he allowed him to jump on his back once again. "I'll focus on running away. You use your skills to open a passage through their encirclement."

Duran nodded straight away, responding, "Alright. They haven't converged yet, so don't stop. Xaon and Darian are not as fast as you on the ground, so they shouldn't be able to catch us. However, if you stop even for a moment, the situation will turn out incredibly different. Just trust me."

Frin didn't like the idea very much. After all, Zafins and demon beasts didn't really trust each other. However, if both of them wanted to escape, that was the only choice. As for Rean and Roan... 'Those two are really slippery. No wonder they didn't stop running even after they jumped off of Frin's back. They knew they needed extra time to escape on their own.'

That wasn't all. Since Spiritual Senses were blocked in this realm, the demon beasts couldn't see where Rean and Roan were walking. Roan also made sure their footsteps wouldn't catch the attention of the demon beasts passing by them.

In any case, Duran placed those thoughts behind as he immediately focused on the demon beasts ahead. Frin wasn't an idiot, so he moved in the direction where there were fewer of them. He also took quick peeks behind, making sure that Darian and Xaon really couldn't catch up to him. After all, one wouldn't be so sure if someone was holding some secret skill capable of disrupting them.

Naturally, Darian and Xaon were running right behind them. Those two wouldn't have fallen into the trick Frin and Duran used so easily in normal circumstances. However, because their sentience was already gone, they couldn't react as fast to the changes in the battlefield as they did before. That's why they fell behind. Well, Darian was even more behind than Xaon since he was a Black Tortoise. He was forced to turn back into his human form to run faster.

On Frin's back, Duran accumulated Spiritual Energy and Soul Power in his hands. Wind and Lightning Element gathered around those energies, creating a terrifying vortex. Duran didn't hold back at all, condensing everything as much as possible. At the very next moment, just when Frin was about to collide with the demon beasts head-on, Duran released his skill.

'Thunder Gale!'

Vhuowwwwwwww!!!

Something that looked like a tornado but in a horizontal line swept everything in front of Frin. Even the few Stage Nine Demon Beasts, some of which Duran or Frin recognized from the past, were thrown out of the way with sheer raw strength!

There were, of course, some who did resist Duran's attack. However, Duran didn't mind. His objective was to create space for Frin to pass, and that's what he had achieved. It was already impressive that Duran took so many of them out of the way in one attack. Seeing the empty spaces between those who resisted Duran's attack, Frin's eyes lit up. 'As expected of the strongest Zasfin, I guess? He doesn't lose to the old Fikin at all.'

Frin finally saw the chance to use his movement skill, which helped him avoid most of the attacks coming from the sides. After all, Duran didn't focus on killing or injuring, only escaping. The demon beasts who landed far away obviously used their ranged skills to try and stop Frin and Duran.

Duran then intercepted any skills that could affect Frin's speed or life, creating an almost perfect combination of speed and defense.

All of that took some time to explain, but no more than a few moments passed in the real world. That's what one would at least expect from Stage Nine Demon Beasts and Transition Realm Zasfins.

Bang!

With great momentum, Frin and Duran escaped from the encirclement created by the red-eyed being. From that point onwards, Frin simply couldn't be stopped anymore. A Divine Demon Beast focused on speed was simply too fast.

Back in the place where the red-eyed being was dwelling, one could see a nasty expression on his face as he inwardly cursed, 'How can that be possible! It's all because of that black-haired kid! I don't know how, but he can definitely feel the energy inside my puppets!'

However, it was then that the red-eyed being noticed a problem. 'Wait! Only beings from the Underworld or the idiots from the Realm of Gods could identify this kind of energy of mine. How can a puny human be able to do that?' He then continued with his train of thought, inwardly muttering, 'Now that I think about it, aren't the Soul Submission Orbs also susceptible to that? The only thing connecting them is my energy.'

'Could it be that he's also from the Underworld? No, that doesn't make sense. He's definitely a human. For that to happen, he would need to reincarnate, which is obviously impossible. No being born in the Underworld can ever use the path of reincarnation. Their Soul Would be destroyed in a second,' the red-eyed being thought.

Little did he know, but Roan wasn't the same type of being from the Underworld as himself or any of the others in this half of the universe. Besides, Roan had the protection of the Soul Gem System while passing through it.

'Thinking about it won't get me far. For now, I better put a lot of protection around the Soul Submission Orbs. I don't like to keep the demon beasts too close to it exactly because they're fragile, but it seems I have no choice now.'

Half a day later, somewhere near one of the empty cities Rean's group found, Rean, Roan, Duran, and Frin had grouped up once more.

Death... and me

Chapter 929: That's for Sure

Frin had a nasty expression on his face, knowing that his Demon Beast Alliance had lost three of its Divine Demon Beasts already. "How could this guy be right under our noses all this time without us even knowing? My Demon Beast Alliance is fucked now. Did you see it? In the middle of those demon beasts that tried to stop us, two of them were part of our group. That meant they also fell for the power of the crimson sphere."

Duran nodded, his expression not any better than Frin as he said in response, "I saw it. However, you at least know that they're part of your alliance. As for the Zafins, I haven't found a single member from my group. After all, those spheres will kill anyone who isn't a demon beast straight away. With that, who knows how many of them have already succumbed to death?"

Roan didn't care about any of that, telling them, "Stop complaining and let's go find the other spheres."

"What?!" Rean and the others were taken aback by that. "Didn't you see what just happened? We were almost trapped by a horde of them. We might not be able to escape next time," Rean complained as he healed Frin and Duran's injuries.

Roan shook his head as he explained in response, "And that's exactly why we can't stop. For that guy to put up such a strong defense for those spheres, those things obviously mean a lot for him. Most likely, the more spheres we destroy, the weaker he'll become. At the very least, his control over the demon beasts should decrease."

Roan continued, "There's one good thing, though. It seems like he can only find our positions when we're close to one of the spheres or a demon beast being controlled by them. We had passed by many low-level demon beasts, which should have been the method how he tracked our movements since we didn't bother hiding when there wasn't anything dangerous."

With that, Rean soon understood what Roan meant. "I see...but wouldn't it be too risky?"

Duran was the one to answer that. "Now that I think about it, there should be a lot of danger. We just need to make sure we hide well with your concealment skill while moving. Without Spiritual Sense or Soul Power Scanning, it should be possible. We can even try to use a hit and run tactic."

Roan agreed with Duran. "It's good that you understand. Since our positions won't be found, we can expect less defense. Of course, I'm sure that guy won't keep the crimson spheres alone anymore, so all of them will always have some protection."

"It isn't much of a problem," Duran could not help but say in response to Roan's words. "If he's telling all of the Stage Nine Demon Beasts to protect the spheres, that means his forces would be scattered all around. It'll be a lot easier to flee as soon as we destroy a crimson sphere."

"Exactly." Roan agreed with Duran. "I will also select the spheres at random. So far, we've always headed to the closest one to us. This made it even easier for that guy to track us. This time, I'll select different crimson spheres from random points. Let's keep this up until only around 10 to 20 spheres remain in the end."

"Why 10 to 20?" Frin could not help but ask.

Rean understood what Roan was trying to do and answered, "That's because that guy will be able to gather his forces around those spheres. With a smaller number of spheres, it won't be hard to predict where we'll head next even if he can't find where we are."

"I see..." With that, Frin understood the issue. "But will we simply leave those spheres be? Don't we need to destroy them as well?"

Roan faintly smiled when he heard that. "Not at all. This operation has two objectives. The first one is to obviously weaken or disrupt that guy as much as possible, destroying the spheres. The second is to detract attention away from him."

Roan's words reminded Frin of Kentucky and Celis. "Ah! That's why you sent the Minokawa to observe where most of the higher-tier energy is located. You want to be sure that it'll be partially or maybe completely unprotected."

Roan nodded, satisfied. "That's the plan. I hate to break it to you, but I refuse to believe that we can leave this place without dealing with that guy first. After all, it was obviously his doing that everyone was teleported here. Do you think we can find an exit without doing that?"

Duran, Frin, and Rean immediately shook their heads. They weren't idiots. From the very start, getting rid of the enemy was their only choice of leaving this place alive, let alone activating the portal to the Realm of Gods.

"Then again, there's one thing I don't understand," Rean mentioned out of nowhere, quickly attracting everyone's attention as they waited for him to continue. "At first, I thought that guy was the owner of this dimensional realm. However, if that was the case, he shouldn't have a need to use the demon beasts' vision to find our location. He should have been able to bypass the restrictions of his own realm on Spiritual Sense or whatever he uses. Don't you think it's strange for him to have the same problem as us?"

"This..." The others were caught by surprise by Rean's words.

Even Roan had to admit that Rean's thoughts made sense. "Indeed, that doesn't make any sense at all. Rean could already make formations capable of blocking the Spiritual Senses of others but not his own or the people he didn't want it to work on. If that guy was capable of creating this realm, I refuse to believe that he couldn't make a safe area for himself."

Duran also noticed another strange point after that. "That's not all. We know he's probably stronger than Frin and I, or so those red claws that capture the souls from Stage Nine Demon Beasts make it seem. If so, why didn't he come out and deal with us by himself? If this is his realm, he should be able to travel around as he liked."

Frin added one more thing, "In fact, if this was his dimensional realm, he should be able to use the realm to deal with us as well, no? But the realm itself hasn't done anything."

In the end, they all reached the same conclusion. "This is not his realm, that's for sure!"

Death... and me

Chapter 930: It's Not Only That

Roan then looked at Duran before asking, "How old do you think that green pendant of yours is? Or better yet, how old was that inheritance when you found it?"

Duran understood where Roan was coming from. "You want to know whether the portal to the Realm of Gods was closed at the same time as the senior from the Realm of Gods arrived here, right?" Roan nodded and waited for Duran to continue. "To be honest, I don't know. However, I can guarantee that it is definitely much older than me. Even older than the ancestors of the Soul Rulers organization during the time I was still a kid. Saying that it's several thousands of years old would be a huge understatement."

Roan pondered a bit in silence before saying, "Then, I can conclude that not being the owner of this dimensional realm isn't the whole story. At first, we thought that this might not be the Bestial Sacred Ground. However, I'm more inclined to say that the Bestial Sacred Ground that Frin and the other Divine Demon Beasts knew was the fake one. The real Bestial Sacred Ground is the one we're inside at the moment."

Everyone agreed with Roan on that point. Of course, there was no guarantee about that. It's just that this was the most possible conclusion.

Frin obviously became even more irritated after understanding that point. "Not only did we lose so many Divine Demon Beasts, but that piece of shit is also using our demon beasts' Sacred Ground to do that."

Rean then noticed another thing. "Oh, if what we've deduced so far is correct, then not everything is bad news." Roan, Frin, and Duran's attention were piqued as they waited for Rean to continue talking. "Can't you see? No one knows why the portal to the Realm of Gods was closed. At first, we thought too many Divine Demon Beasts had left, so the portal lost its support. However, considering everything we've deduced and found so far, it's obvious that the enemy was the one to close it."

Rean continued, "That senior from the Realm of Gods probably came here when he found a problem with the portal back in the Realm of Gods. Whatever may be the reason, he lost and died later in the dwelling place Duran found. Maybe he was poisoned, or maybe he succumbed to something else. But here comes the good news. The owner of the crimson sphere was forced to close the portal to the Realm of Gods at any cost, or he would definitely be caught by the next seniors coming from there...or so I believe. If we can defeat him, that means..."

Frin and Duran's eyes lit up straight away. "That means we can probably open the portal again. At the very least, this is a more viable option than the one we had before. It makes a lot more sense!" Sure enough, for these two Peak Stage Transition Realm beings, entering the Realm of Gods was more important than anything else.

Rean nodded in response. "Exactly! So when the time comes, I hope you two will do your best to defeat the opponent. Roan and I are just Nascent Soul Realm cultivators, so we obviously don't have much interest in that portal at all. We only came here to get a better understanding of the formations that controlled it."

There wasn't a need to ask that. Duran and Frin already had a strong grudge for what happened until now. Let alone the fact that it could lead to the opening of the portal to the Realm of Gods. "Don't worry. We'll definitely do everything we can. Unless we see that it's impossible to win, we won't retreat easily." Surprisingly, Frin and Duran seemed to have reached a mutual understanding. It was a rare alliance where both of them discarded the issue of each other's race.

Roan was obviously satisfied to see that since that also meant a higher chance for him and Rean to escape this trouble. "In that case, I might as well throw in another piece of information. Just understand that I don't have any proof of it at all." Rean, Frin, and Duran nodded as Roan continued. "Since that guy can't come out, there's a good chance he suffered some kind of backlash and needed the souls we saw its red claws taking away to recover. Or perhaps he's actually sealed in this place, and that's actually the real use of those souls."

"Indeed, there's no proof of that," Duran agreed. "However, I'm inclined to believe you're right. After all, he hasn't come out to deal with us yet. Whichever of the two cases it may be, it's to our advantage."

However, Roan also gave them another piece of his mind, telling them of the worst-case scenario he had imagined. "Of course, he might also be using the souls to strengthen himself instead of healing or liberating himself from the seals. But I find this the most unlikely option because of the same reason as before. He didn't come out to deal with us. Still, keep that in mind just in case."

Frin and Duran nodded in response after that. They were already satisfied that Roan didn't try to hide that possibility.

Rean then laughed. "Hahaha! We have been talking for a while already. Is there anything else we've forgotten to consider before we return to destroying the crimson spheres?"

Duran and Frin shook their heads in response. However, Roan still had one more thing in his mind. He then looked at Duran before asking, "The power to use souls for their own benefit..." Roan narrowed his eyes as he continued, "Duran, doesn't that ring a bell in your mind?"

Duran bitterly smiled as he immediately understood what Roan meant. "Everything...literally, everything is connected..." Duran felt like he was an idiot at this moment. "How could I have not noticed it before? It was so obvious!"

Rean couldn't help but ask, "Are you talking about the Bloodline Soul Marks?"

Duran laughed in self-deprecation after hearing that. "Hahaha! If it was just that, then that's fine. Unfortunately, it goes much deeper than that. Much, much deeper!"