

Innkeeper 913

Chapter 913 Wounded

?Lex's figure was frozen still, his gaze fixed on the headless armor. His mind was clear, devoid of any follow up instructions, meaning that the fight was over. Sensing the threat abate, his Overdrive state gradually disappeared, and an excited grin appeared on Lex's face.

He had been struggling with sword intent for so long, who could have guessed it would come so quickly and so easily? He even managed to overcome the first obstacle in growing the sword intent. It was still far from enough to absorb the intent hiding in his soul, but it was a good start. Moreover, Lex had overcome a far superior enemy using nothing but his own skills. It felt good.

"Do you feel pleased with yourself?" Cassandra asked, her expression long returned to her normal, neutral state.

Sensing the rhetoric nature of the question, Lex did not answer.

"In a sense, I guess you really should feel gratified with your progress. Based on your experiences so far, combat usually takes the form of a series of exchanges with the objective to destroy the opponent's spirit, soul or body. Considering your Soulforge physique, the elevated defenses of your soul and spirit allow you to focus on the seemingly easier option of physical combat.

"Based on this premise, learning sword intent is more useful than learning to manipulate energy externally. But when facing an opponent much stronger than yourself, where the odds have not forcefully been skewed in your favor, every single bit of advantage you have can bring you closer to survival if not victory. Let me show you what you can expect to face in an opponent of the same caliber, but without the handicap of only attacking physically. Take off your band, I want you to fight at full strength."

Cassandra's words distinctly lacked the element of admonishment, but even so it was clear that she was unhappy with the fact that he had focused on sword intent rather than divinity. Now, instead of just instructing him, she wanted him to see for himself why she was guiding him on a specific path.

Lex removed his armband and got into position, instantly entering the state of Flow. He expected that this fight would be much more difficult than the previous one.

The suit of armor, which had previously frozen upon decapitation, stood up straight. A bright light shone above its torso, and the helmet which had been cleaved in half reappeared and began to mend itself.

Lex's grip on his sword tightened. If one were to consider the suit of armor as a human, then he had effectively just brought himself back to life. Besides Lex, who had survived without a head due to the unique feature of his body, soul and spirit being combined into one, he had never seen anyone else accomplish the same feat.

Although the suit of armor did not move, he saw a strange fluctuation in laws around it with his left eye. Before he could analyze what the opponent was doing, he was hit with a strong sense of vertigo, and lost control of his body.

His mind, which should have been focusing on finding a solution to his state, became occupied with an unusual sense of guilt that was weighing him down. Every sin he had ever done, from lying to his parents, stealing his sisters dessert, stepping on a line of ants he had not seen, hurt someone's feeling without realizing, to things like killing his enemies, prioritizing his loved ones over others, abandoning Earth, ignoring the plight of humans in the many worlds he had visited, and many, many more suddenly came to life in his mind and assaulted his very being.

His every virtuous deed, from helping Little Blue, befriending his workers, taking care of his guests, spending time with someone who felt lonely, and many more all came to life and began to devour his sense of self, trying to turn him into a 'saint' whose only purpose for existing was doing good deeds.

Perhaps if he had been given enough time, he could reorient himself. But the matter of fact was, he hadn't been. In a fraction of a second, just as his body began to fall but even his knees had not yet touched the floor, the armor appeared before him, and impaled his chest with its sword.

The sharp pain of a sword cutting through muscle and bone rocked his mind, but that did not wake him from the deluge of bizarre spirit attacks he was suffering, but instead only made him more vulnerable.

There was another piercing pain, this time in his neck, and he felt that his head had almost been removed from his body. His consciousness began to fade, his mind still reeling. His state of Flow had been broken long ago, and Lex could do nothing to respond - or so it seemed.

Domination erupted from his body like a volcano, launching the suit of armor away from himself like it had been physically hit by its force. All the visions in his mind cleared, his emotions stabilized, his sins and virtues disappeared, replaced instead with the image of himself standing stalwart under the endless assault, even bloodied and battered as he was.

The enemy's sword was in his hand - he had grabbed it at the last second before it pierced his eye, his tremendous strength keeping it from inching forward or back.

His aura did not suffer any harm due to his bloodied state, instead it became stronger. A stronger, more fierce, and more noble aura enveloped him, pushing back against the halo of divinity that surrounded the suit of armor.

He was ready to continue the fight, his strength undiminished even in his injured state, but such a display was enough for Cassandra to get her point across.

"That is just one of the abilities common to all deities, once they reach a sufficient level. It is not without reason that deities are worshiped, and treated above all other beings. The powers they gain are a blend of the many inherent qualities of divine energy, as well as the domain of their belief. Their more potent abilities all have to do with their belief. You can combat it like you have done now, using a type of brute force to push them back. But there are better ways. Why fight a bitter fight, when you can win without drawing a drop of blood from yourself."

It was slightly difficult to calm down when your body was in so much pain and you were all geared up for a fight, but Lex managed. Unfortunately, he was no stranger to pain, but the benefit of that was that he found it easier to ignore.

He also understood what Cassandra was saying. Much in the way that he used pure technique and skill to overcome his stronger foe in the sword fight, having more skills and abilities at his disposal would allow him to use techniques to navigate out of trickier situations against more versatile enemies.

It was not as if he was going against Cassandra specifically. It was just that, in his Flow state, he had judged that victory would be more easily attained through improving his swordsmanship. That was because he misunderstood the necessary parameters for victory. He would only win when he mastered external divinity manipulation, not when he defeated his foe.

"I understand. I am ready to try again," he said, ignoring the gaping hole in his chest, right beside his heart, and the one in his neck.

"No, not like this. Wait. Since you've already felt some of the abilities divine energy affords, you might as well experience some more."

The suit of armor, which had only a short while ago attacked him with the intention to kill, raised his hand and projected out a bright, white light which fell onto Lex's body.

His wounds began to itch, but the discomfort lasted only a moment. A warmth filled his chest, and traveled through his body to the wounds which began to heal rapidly. In a matter of minutes, both his injuries vanished, his dried blood and torn clothes the only proof that he had ever been hurt at all. He felt slightly drained physically, but it was barely noticeable.

This... this was extremely useful!

"Now try once again. This time, focus on the divinity. You have three hours, after which we will move onto the next step - regardless of whether you've learnt or not. Trust me, you'll wish you had learnt external control at that point."

In truth, Cassandra had originally given him the whole day to learn, but once she saw his Flow state, she changed his training outline once again. She could tell why Mateo had been so frustrated. But instead of feeling frustrated, she felt gratified. A student who learned well would make the teacher want to teach even more.

She wanted to see how much he could grow before their time was up.