

Once Human 661

Chapter 661

These invisible snakes belonged to Carpentine, they live in that sealed world and their only purpose is to track targets . Arthur was in possession of a thousand of them and as long as he dedicates all his power, even that thief can't escape from him . Sooner or later, that old man will show himself again inside the city and that's when the parasite will strike .

With all thousand invisible tiny snakes dispersed, each searching in an area, Arthur returned to Shen Shen's side and continued shopping . Although the king invited him to stay over, Arthur preferred the inn because it felt much safer than entering a tiger's den . Zaarae isn't with him yet and it's too early to trust the Fallen God Clan, then again, there's no need to purpose provoke them either .

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In Ramel City, precisely in the slums, there was an area called the 'Garbage Drain', it's actually a sizable piece of land surrounded by a black and dirty wall over 10 meters in height . Around midnight of the same day, a short figure with brown greasy hair, a filthy thin body and smelly clothes was rummaging through the trash, trying to salvage something to eat .

Unbeknownst to him, there was an invisible snake lurking next to him, it silently hissed at him and projected its sight to its owner, Arthur . The distance between the inn and the slums was no less than 10 kilometers but Arthur's space magic allowed him instantaneously cross that distance . He was like a ghost, appearing behind the boy and stretching his hand, which was covered in a mass of ominous darkness .

The boy's face paled as he raised his hand, seemingly wanting to defend himself . He didn't look threatening and appraisal indicated that the kid was a mortal but Arthur was sure of his instincts, which is why he showed no hesitation .

Just when his hand was about to strike the boy, the latter vanished, leaving a blurry afterimages as he dashed away . Unfortunately for him, Arthur already prepared himself for this, ten deafening thunderbolts descended from the night sky, hitting the area around Arthur in a circular manner .

He didn't know which way the boy will escape toward so he aimed at all directions and it worked, thankfully . The thunderbolt, which was as thick as an adult, descended upon the thin boy, who had an astonished expression as he retrieved a silver sword less than a meter in length, and swung it at the thunderbolt .

Quite surprisingly, the white godly thunderbolt was deflected but allowed Arthur to creep on the boy . For the first time since he acquired it, Arthur used [Thought and Effect], causing the boy's body to float in the air then violently smash into the ground . Loud sounds of breaking bones and rupturing muscles could be heard as the small figure coughed blood and glared at Arthur .

A monstrous force was pressing down on the boy, whose face was plastered on the ground, unable to move . The enhanced Telekinesis and the Quad-Spirit's gravity rendered the thief unable to lift a finger, much less escape, nevertheless, after a few seconds, he seemed to be relaxed .

"How did you know it was me?"

"..."

Arthur didn't reply as he used Telekinesis again, forcing the thief's storage ring out of his finger and equipping it . He glanced at the immobilized boy before coldly snorting and raising his hand and clenching it .

A suffocating and overwhelming force entered the thief's body, affecting his blood circulation and stagnating his Mana flow, rendering him unable to use his skills .

"I don't care who you are, just die . "

Arthur didn't want to talk with him or know how he tricked him . He's an enemy, someone who has to be killed, that's all that matters . Unfortunately, he wasn't able to finish it as the boy abruptly turned into black dust and no matter how much he looked around, he found no traces of him .

"Master, it's a Dimensional stone . "

"What? I thought it needs to be manually activated and what's with this black ash?"

"The one he just used belongs to the System . It's modified in a way that it auto-activates when the player is near-death . Actually, a lot of high-leveled players use it . "

"Is there any way to negate it?"

"If timed perfectly, Master's Dark or Red Rizaki should cancel its spatial transportation . A Void Heavenly Arrow can intercept it too . There's also Carpentine unique ability but master needs to try it first . "

Arthur looked at the large garbage dump before vanishing . It mattered not now that he escaped, the thief will come back reclaim his ring and that will be the time he dies . Arthur heavily injured him and even if he's in possession of miraculous healing potions, he'll still need time to recover . Moreover, Arthur didn't even go all-out, he just used Telekinesis, which became one of his strongest offensive powers thanks to Zaarae's 'blessing' .

Back in the inn, Fariya took one room for herself while Shen Shen stayed with Arthur . The little girl was sound asleep, she didn't even notice Arthur's brief disappearance .

As he appeared next to the blue-haired girl, Arthur chuckled and caressed her head for a while before checking the contents of the thief's storage .

'This...'

He sucked a deep breath, feeling genuine shocked . Even Zodiac, who has countless treasures in his storage, paled in comparison to what this thief had . There were all kinds of treasures, whether it's swords, sabers, armors, gloves, boots, hats, masks, potions, poisons, jewelry . Most seemed to belong to the system but some originated from the Cloud Sea Universe too .

There was also a staggering amount of Top Red Spirit Stones . Arthur thought for a moment before separating the useful things from the useless ones, then he put the ring in Shen Shen's finger .

Now, the thief's storage contained a few things and even, by some fluke, he manages to claim it back, he'll be very disappointed .

Evening of the next day .

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"Empress, do you know what this is?"

The Monkey King crossed his arms and looked at the strange sight in front of him . It was a hole that had a width of fifty to sixty meters but what was strange about it was the mud-like puddle moving on its own and the creepy faces on its surface, they were looking back at the mythical being and the Empress . They continuously shrieked as if they wanted to get out, it was truly a bone-chilling sight .

Zaarae frowned, her eyes emitted a purple light which pierced the mud but did nothing .

"I can't say I do . "

She got closer to the large puddle and the faces became louder and more restless . When she was within twenty meters of the hole, one of the faces shot up at her, opening its mouth wide . However, before it reached her, a golden beam struck it and turned it into falling dirt .

"Please be careful, Empress . Not all of them are powerful but two months ago, something more powerful attacked and almost dragged me inside . "

"Two months? When did you discover this?"

"I passed by it when I was heading to the capital . It was about seven months ago and, apparently, it's getting bigger . When I first saw it, it was smaller than my head . "

"This is not a simple mutation or a beast . " She looked at the land surrounding the hole but apart from barren earth, there was nothing to comment on . The puddle of mud absorbed the golden sand and was expanding size, moreover, those hideous faces were giving her the creeps .

Never had she seen something like this, something that made her, one of the Twelve, feel threatened .

"Does anyone else know about this?"

"No, no one . "

Zaarae looked at the puddle for the third time before taking out a small piece of blackened slimy skin and burned it using strange green flames . The resulting smoke rose into the air and spun in a circle, quickly transforming into a whirlpool . This was an emergency signal meant for another one of the Twelve, one who's more knowledgeable than Zaarae and is close to her . He was the Black Devil, Timos .

The Empress was just about to go back to the capital with Sun Wukong only for both of them to hear a frightening dragon cry that resounded across half of the Ramel Kingdom, it was so powerful that it caused the land to shake and the sand to rise into the air . It was soon followed by a force wave which enraged the winds and cracked the earth .

"Arthur?"

Zaarae wasn't as strong as before, nevertheless, as soon as she heard that dragonic shout, her form distorted and she appeared above the capital city of Ramel in a split second . The Monkey King wasn't able to replicate her teleportation so he had to run all the way back here, which may take some time .

The moment the Empress appeared, she saw a ginormous inky black dragon dominating the capital's sky . Its size was mind-numbing as it bit one of the kingdom's protectors, turning it into something akin to shattered glass . The city right under the dragon was turned into nothing but absolute devastation . The dragon showed no hesitation as it razed everything in its way, not even the protectors were able to do anything .

"Hey, Shen Shen, are you alright?"

The short girl with bulging chest worriedly asked her leader, the ruler of the Water Region . She was the only person allowed to call the Empress by her real name, which was childish but the woman decided to keep nonetheless .

"It's nothing . "

The tall blue-haired woman waved her hand and told the girl to leave her alone for a while . As she was left alone, the woman caressed a beautiful pendant hanging on her neck, her mind drifting to the clouds . There were many reasons about her recent actions, one of them was to find out about her origins . She was sure her childhood memories were fabricated... they didn't seem real and she was sure the answer was in the encrypted book she found in the past .

"Vyncent... Vyncent, I know that name, I'm sure of it!"

No matter how hard she tried to remember, she couldn't . Ever since she cooperated with that Silver Dragon called Yamak, the whole situation became more complicated and incomprehensible . That boy called Jakob and that small piece of land disappeared so abruptly and further investigation led to nothing but more confusion .

She thought about visiting the Death Region again but the probability of reaching the manor a second time, especially without a guide, is close to non-existent .

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Under the majestic crystalline blue castle inhabited by the Water Empress, there was a sacred area accessible only by the ruler of the region . Inside this place, which was exquisitely decorated and filled with shiny white crystals, there was a corpse that was twice as big as a normal human, it was frozen and suspended mid-air .

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The body was that of a female with fair facial features and a graceful body . She was the first ruler of the Water Region and a person the current Empress deeply respected .

The blue-haired woman knelt before the frozen body and silently prayed, hoping to get some answers soon . The 'founder' of this region had many titles but the most common one was 'The Queen of Ice', however, very few knew her real name, Sonia .

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At the dawn of his second day at Ramel City, two royal guards came to the inn and specifically called for Arthur . The parasite was talking with Shen Shen, who woke up quite early .

The guards were adamant on only bringing alone Arthur but when he gave them a chilling glare, they swallowed back their words and quietly led the way .

Fariya didn't leave her room neither did Arthur call for her as he's enough to protect Shen Shen in case something bad happens . This could go in two ways; one, they obediently call the master of the clan and the deal is properly done, and two, they try to forcefully take the Zen Treasure from him .

Zaarae still hasn't shown up but Arthur was confident in his ability to fend off against himself even if those sky-piercing protectors made a move . The guards walked at a moderate speed and in half an hour or so, they reached the entrance of the royal castle .

With just one look, Arthur noticed the abundance of guards and the motionless protectors proudly standing at the entrance . Unlike last time, they were oozing an aura of life as if they are awakened .

"Master, it doesn't seem to be a warm welcome . "-Commented the Quad-Spirit .

"Master, say the word and we'll fucking blow them!" Midolf barked from within Arthur's consciousness . In addition to his spirit, the two mythical beings were constantly with him, adding more to his power and assuring his safety . Even if Habs was here, he won't be able to take down Arthur .

Arthur glanced at the two guards walking in front of him then looked at the other guards standing at both sides, their weapon sheathed and their back straightened .

'If anything happens then I want everyone in the castle dead, am I clear, Radolf?'

"Your wish is my command, master . "

A tiny, unnoticeable double-headed bone lizard sneaked from under Arthur's sleeve and landed on the ground, soon turning invisible . No one knew that in just a few minutes, the lizard will infect the whole golden royal castle with a thick amount of Death Energy, enough to end the lives of anyone who intentionally or unintentionally absorbs it .

At the throne room, King Craus was sitting on a grandiose golden throne embedded with countless gems, he was looking down at the two new guests, his eyes especially fixated on the middle-aged man .

"Welcome, Arthur MoonStar . "

In just one day, the king managed to investigate Arthur's identity but nothing could be found on the blue-haired girl . As for Fariya, she was quite notorious in the Demon Realm, after all, she was one of five chief guards .

"Where is your father?"

"Well..."

Craus let out a sigh as he signaled the mage standing next to him . In five or so seconds, at least thirty heavily armored guards appeared on both sides of the parasite but they didn't emit any hostility, in fact, they showed respect . Amongst them, there was Tuili, the one who led Arthur here yesterday .

The only one who was slightly stronger than the rest was the mage next to King Craus but Arthur was confident in killing him in ten seconds, at most . The moment his target is trapped in the snake-world(named by Arthur), then there is no escape .

Hearing no answer, Arthur knitted his brows and said, "Your Majesty, there's no need to over-complicate things . Bring your father or I'll just leave . "

"Arthur, my esteemed father is busy at the moment so..."

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Before he could finish, an unstoppable force enveloped King Craus and, in an instant, brought his body before Arthur . The young man was suspended mid-air, his face pale and full of shock . The guards unsheathed their weapons but the weapon raised his hand, signaling them not to act rashly .

"It's fine by me if you want to act mighty in front of your subjects but don't try that with me . I could not care less about your status or you . "

The Telekinesis effect wore off and King Craus fell in front of Arthur, his body shaking like a leaf . Suffering such humiliation in front of his guard did infuriate the king but he didn't lash out at Arthur .

"E-even if you need to immediately meet my father, you can't . "

"Oh really? Even when I have this?"

Arthur took out the Tactical Reverse Sandglass, dumbfounding the King and the robbed mage, but the guards were oblivious to the origin of this eye-catching treasure .

"It's our sandglass!"

King Craus was totally dumbstruck, his mouth wide-open as he stared at the Zen Treasure .

"Go bring your father . "

"Is that really our lost Zen Treasure? Where did you get it?"

The king had so many questions but all were lost unanswered by the expressionless Arthur, who stored back the treasure and retorted,

"This is the last time I'm saying this, go bring your father here . "

Craus quickly stood up, composed himself, and seriously said . "My father is currently out of the city so, as his direct descendant, I'm the one in charge of the clan-"

"Your Majesty, you should call the elder-"

The mage interrupted the king but ended up being yelled at .

"Silence!"

King Craus waved his hand dismissively at the mage before angling himself in front of Arthur .

"You came here to deliver the sandglass?"

Arthur grinned and replied . "It's a trade . I return it and you take me to Karima's tomb . "

"What? Preposterous!"

King Craus heavily shook his head, showcasing a strong rejection, not even willing to listen to another word from Arthur .

"It's a fair trade . "

"No one can trespass into our Goddess' tomb, not even I . I'm sure my esteemed father will refuse too . "

"That's not what your great-grandfather said though . "

Arthur sighed and took a step back, unwilling to waste more time with this ignorant young man, who's capable of taking important decisions, clearly . In fact, Arthur about secretly sneaking into Karima's tomb but Zaaarae told him that it's impossible . That place is protected by an unbreakable barrier, so powerful that only direct descendants of Philos can enter by using their blood essence .

Even one drop of blood essence is costly and is considered a permanent loss so the clansmen rarely sacrifice their power to enter the sacred grand of the legendary female fighter . Even if he possessed Craus, he cannot imitate his blood essence, which is conjured from the unique power granted by his ancestor .

As he saw Arthur turn around, King Craus panicked and hurriedly said

"Please wait . I'm sure we can offer you something that can satisfy you . "

Still walking toward the exit of the throne room, Arthur casually said, "Not interested . "

"Mr Arthur, wait!"

Craus called out for the parasite, who turned a deaf ear to him . In the end, a robbed figure materialized in front of Arthur, startling the silent Shen Shen, who read the situation and maintained her silence as she knew it wasn't her place to speak or butt in .

"So it's going to be like this?"-Arthur

"Mr . Arthur, please do not misunderstand . I just want you to wait until-"

The poor king couldn't even finish speaking before a crisp cracking sound could be heard . The youth's neck twisted in a strange way before his lifeless body fell on the ground, surprising the commander and the mage .

Tuili ran up to the king but felt no pulse or aura, causing his face to turn incredibly ugly . As for the mage, he clearly sensed his king's death but was unable to do anything .

A creeping darkness emanated from Arthur, enveloping him and Shen Shen, blocking her sight and freaking out the guards .

'I want her safe and sound . '

Two youngsters appeared on both sides of Shen Shen, one bursting with vibrant life energy while the other emitting a decaying grey energy .

The experienced mage, who was about to retaliate, found himself trapped in a strange world riddled with countless snakes . Only five seconds passed since Arthur's disappearance yet he appeared again, his hand holding the bent neck of the dead mage .

"Why are you doing this?"

Tuili's face paled as he shouted at Arthur, who was like a slaughter god, making everyone shiver with dread . From his point of view, Craus' death was unnecessary, so were Arthur's brutal actions .

"You see... I'm much sensitive to killing intent than you think . Blame your foolish king . "

Albeit faint, the now-dead king harbored malice toward Arthur when he saw him leaving . It was barely noticeable but it was sensed by Arthur, who didn't hesitate at all . If the fool just brought his father, maybe it wouldn't have turned like this .

Tuili felt desperate but didn't dare to run, he signaled the thirty royal guards before he unsheathed his weapon . Just as he was about to jump at the parasite, a mass of sand rose from the ground and cascaded on Arthur, who raised his hand and used [Thought and Effect] to completely disintegrate the sand .

An elderly figure with long white hair made its appearance . The old man wore a robe similar to Craus but he seemed stronger and much wiser .

The old man's emotions were in total disarray as he sensed no life from Craus, whose neck was bent 180 degrees . His heart hurt and his turbulent and angry feelings were only blaming Arthur .

Unbeknownst to the parasite, Craus' words and everything revolving around him was but a facade meant to trick Arthur . The moment he arrived inside of the castle, Kass' grandson, who's also the master of the Fallen God Clan, felt the existence of the sandglass . However, they didn't know what Arthur wanted in return but they could speculate a few things based on his race . The most plausible was, as expected, possessing Karima's body .

Arthur's notoriety and his unique parasitic abilities have even reached all the way to the Ramel Kingdom, which is why they didn't dare to attack him on the spot . Moreover, there's a whole undead army behind him... such a large force can turn the kingdom into nothing but a barren land of death .

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Arthur eyed the old man for a couple of breaths before showing a wide grin .

"Your grandfather highly praised... I guess he wasn't wrong, unfortunately . "

"You'll be damned, parasite! I'm not letting you escape!"

In response, Arthur burst out in laughter and retorted, "Who said I'm escaping?"

The man suddenly expanded in size and just two seconds, a mind-numbingly massive black dragon which shattered the golden royal castle made its appearance . Even Ram Su, Craus' father, was shocked stiff .

The Black Dragon's appearance alone was enough to make the royal guards and even Tuili, stagger and fall on the ground, absolutely dominated by terror .

The two motionless and tall sand statues made their moves, they lunged at the black dragon but when they got too close, they got flung away by an invisible force . Their massive bodies fell miles away, shattering building and injuring countless citizens .

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"The idea of being able to make free choices is imaginary in your case . No matter what you do or think you will do, it'll still be no different than the Arthur before you, the Arthur who already lived through the two cycles and joined with 'us' .

You can will what you want but you can't will what you will . "

The man chuckled as he saw Arthur's puzzled expression . He clasped his hands and intertwined his fingers, leaned closed, and said .

"Let me make it easier to understand . In the near future, you'll be bringing something to someone but it'll end up into a mass slaughter . At that moment, you might think everything proceeded in accordance with your judgment but, nay, the reason it happens is because it was meant to, quite literally . The things occurring within the cycles are forever unchangeable, and, of course, there might be slight changes but, ultimately, they won't affect the 'ending' . "

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"So you're saying I'm basically a puppet?"

◆◆No, you're the puppet master, the one who controls how this flows . It's your sense of judgment and choices that cause this and that and it's quite difficult to change the future because your character, at least now, is stubborn so your choices, or perhaps mistakes, tend to repeat themselves . "

The frightening adult Black Dragon roared, shaking the whole golden royal castle . The master of the Fallen God Clan, Ram Su, along with fix other long-bearded robbed elders appeared around Arthur . Dangerous golden sand rose in the air and started spinning around the dragon but it was quickly blasted off by an unstoppable wave of Telekinesis . In fact, Ram Su and the other five old men were sent flying away too, the royal castle and its all ancient and majestic glory was nowhere to be seen . As it was hit by a meteor, the place was stripped naked and turned into a mass of rubbles, but there was an area which remained unscathed .

Arthur opened his bottomless fang-riddled mouth and spat the famous [Dragon's Breath], filling the sky with a sea of transparent half-black half-red flames . The flames, like a tsunami, cascaded on Ram Su but the latter was more than prepared as he took out a pyramid-like yellow treasure and pulled its sharp tip, causing it to start emitting a faint golden shine .

The ground rumbled and all the ground united together, forming a dome-like wall which fully resisted the dragonic flames .

Seeing this, Arthur moved his massive body and violently slammed it against the dome, not forgetting to unleash lightning bolts and Dark Magic . The dome was quite resistant, however, Arthur's combination of several ultimate attacks caused the thick sandy defense layer to shatter, revealing the clan master and the pale-faced elders .

Arthur's eyes emitted a purple beam which bound the elders, causing half of their lower bodies to turn into stones . Unfortunately, this was only the beginning as the parasite followed with [Thought and Effect], using the monstrous invisible force to crush the elderly, literally turning them into a mist of blood .

Ram Su was luckier than the rest as the pyramid treasure formed a smaller sand dome which seemed stronger and unaffected by the Telekinesis . Before Arthur could attack again, two other protectors intercepted him, they wielded long spears and were particularly strong .

The faster one stabbed its weapon at Arthur's left wing, which was bigger than the moving statue . The big spear did strike the wing but it wasn't able to rip it apart as the latter unleashed ominous black flames, forcing the protector to jump back . The second protector angled itself for a direct attack but that only made it Arthur's main target .

A blue, unnoticeable light emitted from the dragon's eye, it enveloped the protector and severely slowed its movement, almost freezing in mid-air . Then, the black dragon opened its abyssal mouth and spat a black fireball, which hit the statue like a meteor and flattened it on the ground .

The dark magic flames weaken the targets and have a burning effect too so when the protector was struggling to get rid of the flames, two other fireballs, equally as large but this time dark red, crashed into it . The poor statue turned into cinders within five seconds .

Everything was supposed to be proceeding smoothly for Arthur, however, all of a sudden, he felt his body plummet to the ground . He retaliated with Telekinesis and Dark Magic but it was futile as vast quantities of Sand covered his body, wrapping around every inch of his body and infiltrating it .

Not wanting to further ruin the black dragon's body, Arthur transformed into a black leopard, he was covered in green lightning . The animal roared and zigzagged with insane speed, dodging the moving and floating sand while making its way toward Ram Su, who was controlling the sands with the use of the pyramid .

A tree-sized hand made of golden sand sprung from the ground and tried to attack the leopard but the latter just passed through it as it became an untouchable wraith . A deafening screech caused Ram Su to stagger and block his ears, the small pyramid was letting an unpleasant regular alarm the closer Arthur got .

When the wraith was just a couple of meters away, the pyramid unleashed a blast which forced Arthur out of his non-real current host . He became an unseen blinding blob of light, which was his soul, he felt an agonizing pain but managed to bear through it and change his appearance before he's attacked again in this vulnerable form .

A three-meter tall praying mantis with all limbs in the form of a curved black scythe made its appearance . Its six eyes were focusing on Ram Su, who poured his Astral Force into the Pyramid, which was actually another Zen Treasure that belongs to the Fallen God Clan .

At first, the praying mantis was able to cut down the incoming sand but, soon, the razor-sharp scythes surprisingly broke down and a small amount of sand invaded Arthur's body, slightly slowing his movement and allowing a lengthy sand spear to penetrate his chest, nailing him to a nearby golden pillar .

A distance away, a graceful figure was watching the destructive parasite without making a move . She was Zaarae, who also held back Fariya and told her to just watch .

"Master can't compete with what seems to be a fully charged Zen Treasure . "

The succubus was panicking a bit, especially when more protectors joined the fray . Moreover, another member of the clan made his appearance . He was wrapped in bandages, no different than a disgusting mummy, his back was bent and his eyes were fully white, lacking any pupils .

Additionally, sixty royal guards readied themselves and charged at the bloodied large insect, but, sadly, their fate ended sooner than they expected . They started bleeding from all their orifices then fell on the ground, deader than dead . They didn't even get to cry or know how their lives ended, it was a painless but relatively swift death .

It wasn't only the royal guards who died, more than four hundred seasoned soldiers also experienced the same fate . Radolf spared no one, for they are undoubtedly his master's enemies .

"Why aren't you helping him?"-Fariya

"Because he still hasn't gone all-out . "

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Noticing the mummy-like bald old man, the four incoming protectors, and Ram Su, Arthur clicked his tongue and spread his differently-colored and shaped wings . He returned to his human appearance, [Eternium] was activated, further boosting his stats .

He raised his arms, palms facing the left and right . Slowly, his hand balled into a fist, resulting in an invisible power to hit the four protectors . Two were crushed into nothingness on the spot while the remaining ones lost their feet or arms, basically rendered useless, or so thought Arthur .

Unfortunately, sand covered their missing parts and restored them almost instantaneously . Furthermore, the mummy vanished from his mid-air, appearing before Arthur, bandages dancing in the air, attempting to immobilize the parasite .

Long and sharp black spikes made of Dark Magic sprung from Arthur's body, ripping the bandages and pushing back the mummy . It was followed by a rain of white thunderbolts which trapped the bald elderly .

Arthur crept on the mummy and stretched his hand, which turned into a bestial purple claw .

Feeling the unstoppable devouring power of the claws, the mummy hastily retreated but Arthur opened his mouth and spoke a domineering dragonic word .

"Stop moving . "

For one full second, the mummy wasn't able to go against Arthur, though when the claws were about to reach their target, an extremely thin sand wall appeared out of nowhere . Arthur dodged to the side but he lost a couple of hair strands which were cut by the side of the wall, which was inexplicably and unexpectedly very sharp .

Thanks to Ram Su's intervention, the mummy was able to retreat but only a short distance before Arthur's Telekinesis pulled him back in . Before he realized what happened, the Void Claws penetrated his bandaged body and devoured his organs .

Arthur grinned, opened his mouth, and spat deadly acid which melted the mummy's face, causing the old man to cry in agony . Arthur pulled the claws and unleashed a mass of darkness which covered the mummy, weakening him even more . The parasite grasped this opportunity and possessed the victim... a black whirlpool invaded the mummy and soon, the old man's last bit of consciousness vanished and Arthur assumed full control of the new host .

The mummy turned to the shocked Ram Su and threw dozens of bandages, which wrapped around his feet and pulled, causing him to fall . The pyramid was thrown out of the clan master's hand and before it reached the ground, it was snatched by a fast figure .

Zaarae smiled as she applied force and quietened down the Zen Treasure before looking at Arthur, who already fully immobilized Ram Su .

It took only one moment of faltering for Arthur to defeat the most troublesome opponent . The moment the small yellow pyramid was deactivated, the protectors returned to their initial position and the moving sand fell on the ground .

Midolf and Radolf appeared too, both standing next to Shen Shen, who was surprised to see the destroyed castle and the lifeless bodies scattered here and there . Her pupils shook as she saw a mummy-like figure walking toward the Empress but she soon realized that it was Arthur .

The parasite used the bandages to drag the struggling Ram Su, his appearance slowly changed into a fair-faced middle-aged man .

"There are still a couple of elders hiding . "

Zaarae casually commented while sweetly smiling at Arthur, who looked at the strange pyramid in her hand .

"I'll go take care of them!"

Midolf excused himself and was taken by a gust of wind .

"Evil creature!"

Ram Su cursed at Arthur, his bloody eyes emitting such intense hatred and sorrow over the loss of his son and father, who was actually that hideous mummy .

"Shut up . "

Arthur pulled the bandages, which tightened around the old man's throat, they also covered his mouth .

They can't enter Karima's tomb without the blood essence of Philos' descendant so if Ram Su died, the hope of possessing the legendary fighter will vanish .

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Zaarae stretched her right hand, about to hand the Zen Treasure to Arthur, however, the moment she did that, a fast shadow appeared in between the two and snatched the small yellow pyramid, startling both Arthur and the Empress .

Zaarae was the first to act as she stomped her foot on the ground, causing the speeding shadow to roll on the ground, then she grabbed the air and pulled it, making the thief fly closer to her . Unfortunately, it wasn't enough as the unseen enemy dispersed into hundreds of black particles which flew a distance before forming into a humanoid silhouette .

Arthur used his Telekinesis and the Quad-Spirit Gravity to slow down the thief but neither seemed to work as he disappeared into the horizon within seconds . What was fascinating was how even the Empress was unable to stop him .

"A thieving shapeshifter . "-Commented the Empress while frowning, clearly not pleased with losing the Zen Treasure .

"He'll come back . "

Arthur pointed at his exquisitely carved storage ring, which belongs to the thief . Even though the value of a Zen Treasure is priceless, Arthur was sure that the thief will return to reclaim his belongings .

"He stole the Zen Treasure on purpose . He'll want a trade of some sort . " Said Fariya while looking at the dark yet faint footstep traces left by the shapeshifter .

The parasite shrugged and casually said,

"I don't need the Zen Treasure so there will be no trade . "

...

Around fifteen minutes later, Arthur, Zaarae, Shen Shen, Fariya, and Radolf, appeared in front of the Karima's tomb, which was protected by a unique barrier . Ram Su was still wrapped in bandages, able only to whimper and glare at the perpetrators behind his clan's fall .

"If you accepted the sandglass and obediently let me inside, none of this would have happened . I guess Kass was very short-sighted to think there's hope for you guys . "

Arthur sighed and shook his head, disappointed but not regretful over the death of the Fallen God Clan . It wasn't a strong clan but it had an ancient and respected heritage, after all, its founder is none other than Philos, the God of Sand .

After he possesses Karima's body, not only will his stats increase, his cultivation should reach the peak of the Overgod Realm and his Celestial Body should reach completion but since he's a clone, it won't be

perfected, at least not until he fuses back with the original . Additionally, he'll be able to control the sand and demonstrate its destructive and flexible powers .

At first, Ram Su didn't want to unlock the barrier but Arthur's Dark Extraction, which allowed him to see the victim's memories and inflict a hellish pain, made the clan master as obedient as a dog . Of course, Zaaarae made sure Shen Shen saw nothing of this brutal sight as she's still a little kid .

The barrier took two minutes to fully deactivate, showing a grandiose golden room where its walls, ground, and roof, were engraved with archaic symbols belonging to the Gods . At the center of this room, there laid a coffin that was over three meters long and two meters wide, seemingly belonging to a giant rather than a human . The tomb was rich with pure earthen energy, making the Quad-Spirit exhilarated as it madly absorbed all of it .

"Master, when you possess Karima, I should also be able to control Sand too . "

"Her body should be inside the coffin, go ahead . "

Zaaarae smiled at Arthur and motioned for the rest to not move as it's not that safe in here . This still remains the resting place of Karima, Philos' wife, and were it not for the use of the blood essence, not even the Empress could have entered .

Arthur walked to the closed coffin, slowly opened it with a push of his hand, revealing the still intact corpse of the legendary Karima . Even after the passing of time, her skin looked healthy, it was a shiny bronze, utterly void of any speck of dust . She had a fair long black hair and two round and relatively long golden earrings which reached her shoulders . She seemed to have something similar to cosmetics in her eyes and eye-lashes, even her lips were red, adding more to her beauty .

Karima wore a simple brown robe with three vertical lines around the chest, there was also a pendant-like golden object wrapped around her slim neck . Even Arthur, who's used to seeing beauties on a daily basis, was captivated by her mature charm and fair and memorable features .

"Don't fall for her . " Berated Zaaarae as she snorted and turned her head away .

"Master, fighting!"

The succubus the opposite, she raised her fist and encouraged her master while giggling . Without further ado, Arthur transformed into a small black whirlpool that invaded the corpse and possessed it .

The next second, an incredibly long flood of notifications covered Arthur's view . He could also feel his Nether Energy and Mental Power pool became bigger, his muscles tightening and relaxing in a cyclic manner as they were strengthened .

Although what he just did is considered improper, Arthur only wanted Karima's stats and skills . He wasn't going to sully her body or ruin the place . After making sure the possession proceeded successfully, Arthur reappeared next to the coffin and closed it as if nothing happened .

"Good?" asked the Empress

"Yes, but I feel a bit strange . "

"It's because this artificial body of yours isn't able to break through without the presence of the soul . "

Arthur nodded his head and was about to say something only for a mass of Dark Magic to burst from his body, covering him and attempting to latch to his nearby companions . Fortunately, Zaaarae was able to resist it by raising a translucent violet shield but the shock didn't disappear .

The parasite suddenly fell on the ground and clutched his chest, he was tightly gritting his teeth, holding himself from yelling but his expression clearly indicated that he was in so much pain .

The Empress wasn't the only one surprised, Fariya and Shen Shen were also confused and startled . The little girl wanted to go help him but was stopped by the Empress .

"What's happening to Master?"

The only one who might have an idea was the quiet Radolf, who was knitting his brows and appearing quite restless .

"There's nothing we can do . Technically, there's nothing wrong with the current 'him' but the main body is the problem, I think the real him is dying and the clones cannot continue to exist without the living soul . "

"Can't you do something? Please!"

Shen Shen clung to the red-haired youth, tears welling up in her eyes . Arthur was laying on the ground, the Dark Magic was going out of control and he was turning illusory every few seconds .

The mythical being sighed and apologetically said, "I'm not eligible to interfere nor can I do anything in this situation . "

Even the usually composed Zaaarae was restless . Yes, she was powerful but she had no clue how to stop Arthur's suffering .

Time crept by and the tomb was soon enveloped by total darkness, eerie and ominous . Zaaarae and the rest were forced to retreat out of the tomb, Arthur was the only source of light in that inky blackness, his body was giving off faint lights . The Quad-Spirit was doing its best to stop the dissipation of the clone, it went all-out and was able to hold for some time .

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A strange multi-colored object, which was the Quad-Spirit, spun above Arthur's chest . It gave off a grey, red, and yellow radiances, which slowly expanded and subdued the Dark Magic .

This, however, was only the beginning of the series of shocking events as a blinding white light made its abrupt appearance . The first one to react and gasp was the Empress, whose eyes were glued onto a white frog with more than a hundred eyes . Just one glance made her instinctively shiver and recognize this rarely seen mythical being .

Right next to the Frog of Destiny, a mortal man wearing prisoner clothes was dumbly standing, momentarily confused before clarity filled his eyes .

"Geez... prophecies are really scary . "

He nonchalantly retrieved a normal, plastic orange scissors from behind his back and walked toward Arthur . He gazed at the parasite for less than five seconds before he crouched down and seemingly cut the air . This simple action of his caused the world of darkness to instantaneously vanish along with the Frog of Destiny .

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Edward's timely intervention caused everything to calm down but Arthur was still laying there, half-conscious as if his soul was sucked out of him .

"This should do it . "

The serial-killer pocketed the scissors and looked at Arthur before he felt his whole body enveloped by a monstrous pressure which rendered him immobilized .

"Who are you?"

The Empress appeared before him, her eyes glaring at him with suffocating killing intent . She didn't know what he did but it didn't really look that helpful .

In response, Edward innocently raised his hand and jokingly said

"Whoa there! I just followed the frog's instruction . It told me to cut the connection . "

"What connection?!"

"I don't know . "

"Empress . "

Fariya walked to Zaarae and explained, "He's Edward Ortberg, one of the prisoners . He's just a mortal so I don't know how he got here . "

"Edward Ortberg?" Zaarae never heard of that name but the appearance of the Frog of Destiny was an undeniable fact and something that shocked her to the core .

The man in question wasn't able to do anything but look around curiously . Despite being threatened, he looked totally calm and care-free, as if he had nothing to do with all of this .

Unable to control her anger, Zaarae's hand snaked toward the man's throat, holding it tight and raising him above the air .

"What did you to Arthur?!"

Edward, still unfazed, squeezed a few words, his face totally red .

"I don't know..."

Fortunately, the succubus managed to calm down the Empress and made her let go of the human mortal, who fixed his dirty prisoner clothes and took a step back .

"You should be grateful, I think I saved him . He looks much better now . "

Edward pointed at Arthur, who sat up while heavily breathing . The parasite was checking his body and frowning, appearing a bit confused .

After a dozen seconds, he raised his head and stared at Edward, who had average facial features, long brown hair, bushy eyebrows, and a pointy nose .

"My connection with the original body was severed . "

"Severed? What do you mean?"-Fariya

"It means he's an independent clone now, for better or worse . " Zaarae sighed as she stated .

She looked at Arthur and added, "Something must have happened to the original body . What are you going to do?"

"I'm not sure . I think I'll try to reach the Garden of Words before returning to him . I know myself, I won't go down that easily . "

Zaarae knelt down and emitted a faint violet light from her right palm, to which Arthur didn't resist at all . The light entered his body and spread a cool and refreshing feeling across his whole body, making him feel energetic .

"In any case, I'll accompany you . "

"Me too! Master!"

Fariya seductively winked while stepping closer to Arthur . Their interaction was cut short as a small figure crashed into Arthur, her tiny arms tightly hugged the surprised Arthur .

"Are you alright?"

Shen Shen appeared quite worried, she even used her Origin Water, which glistened inside this tomb as it spun around Arthur before latching itself on his back .

Arthur gently patted her back and comforted her . The little girl was strong-willed but she was particularly close with Arthur and when she saw him get hurt, she was the most anxious of them all .

"So, what's this about a Garden? I've never heard of it . " Casually said Edward as he walked around the massive coffin . He took out a small piece of paper and read its content then pocketed it again, unaware of the weird gazes he was getting from everyone in the room .

"Why are you here? How did you get here?"

Hearing Arthur's questions, the man spread his hands and replied .

"Didn't you see? That frog brought me here against my will, though I must say, it feels good to leave that gloomy place . I was about to go back to the prison, that forest brought me the creeps, I tell you!"

As he listened to the serial-killer complaining, Arthur was confused, he glanced at Zaarae, who was creasing her brows, appearing even more puzzled than him .

"Master, the Frog of Destiny, which is a mythical being, like us, just appeared here . I think his special soul is the cause . "

"The Heaven's Mandate soul?"

Radolf nodded his head and clarified,

"His first meeting with the Frog must've awakened his soul hence the current outcome . I just don't understand why he was brought here specifically . "

Arthur shifted back his focus on Edward and asked,

"What's with the scissors?"

"Ah, those?" Edward held the plastic orange scissors, which looked no different than the cheap ones found on earth . "I found them near the frog . Since they might be useful, I kept them . So... what are we going to do? Is it time to catch the thief?"

"Thief? How do you know about the thief?"

"Hmm" The man rubbed his chin, trying to appear wise, "The birds told m-"

Before he could finish, Arthur appeared before him like a ghost and snatched the piece of paper containing the prophecy . Unfortunately, it was totally blank, which made Arthur instinctively raise his head and stare back at Edward .

"I was about to tell you but you're so irritable . "

"This is empty?"

"Empty?" Edward glanced at the paper and still saw the small English words .

"No it's not . "

The Empress walked next to Arthur and spoke, "Tell us what it says . "

"Ehm, alright . The past Kingdom now within reach, for the golden sand will rise, its glow full of praise .

The tomb raider now here, and the thief's identity is clear .

Since time immemorial the leaf is unshaken, it's time for it to be taken . "

After a brief silence, Edward muttered, "Isn't it a bit corny?"

Arthur didn't reply as he memorized the said words and tried to decipher them but it wasn't that easy . The general meaning could be grasped but why was the thief mentioned and what's this about the leaf?

The tomb raider is none other than him and the said kingdom is the Ramel Kingdom but it said that the sand will rise while, in reality, the whole Fallen God Clan was massacred .

"Where did you find this paper?"

"Literally on the ground . "

"Where exactly?"

"Damn woman, at least let me breathe and eat . "

Edward inwardly cursed and closed his eyes, unwilling to talk to Zaarae anymore . The Empress was further incensed but she didn't do anything and maintained an eerie silence .

One hour later, in one of the local inns in Ramel City, Arthur, Zaarae, Edward, and the rest were sitting around the table but only one was nonchalantly filling his stomach, which has been empty and craving for food for a long, long time .

The clan's treasury was emptied but the tomb was left unscathed as to not anger Karima's spirit . Zaarae did say that although the woman is dead, her spirit can still appear and fight off any danger that may threaten the peace of this land . She did specifically say 'peace of the land' rather than 'the safety of the clan', which means that, for her, at least, this golden desert is what's precious .

Obviously, what happened in the royal castle, which was no more, made the whole city turn chaotic . Many fled outside while the greedy ones attempted to enter the destroyed castle, hoping for some gains . Sadly for them, there were two remaining protectors which attacked anyone who got close, though they didn't trouble Arthur, not after he possessed Karima and obtained her powers .

In addition to the shock of being severe from the real body, Arthur was flabbergasted when he saw his stats increase by billions of points . Apparently, Karima did break the limiter too, and her physical body was undoubtedly monstrously strong .

Just as the Empress said, with his current stats, he doesn't have to fear the likes of Habs . Actually, if he were to fight the Warden, he was 60% sure of his victory, if he went all-out, of course .

"Ahh! This is delicious! Too delicious!"

The man gobbled up everything in the table, stopping only when his stomach started bulging forward . He licked his finger, burped then looked at Arthur, who was coldly watching him .

"So, there's a thief?"

Edward pondered for a moment before adding, "It says his identity is clear but if we were to follow the words chronologically from top to bottom then the rise of the sand will happen first... then again, from what I heard, you did a bloody job and exterminated the royal family . "

He looked at Shen Shen and brightly smiled at the little girl, who was quietly drinking some juice .

"Maybe the meaning is literal? I don't know much about this fiction-like world but sand can rise in the air, right? It can be golden too, yes? I'm thinking there must be a trigger . "

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His eyes narrowed his smile widened . "Perhaps your actions were that trigger . Mayhap the gods are angered? Some sort of automatic retaliation? Ah! I really don't know, I'm new to all of this . "

"What if you are the trigger?" retorted Arthur .

"Me? Highly unlikely . You previously said my soul is special but, on earth, the existence of the soul is in relation to beliefs . It isn't something that can be seen so there's little to know about it . Anyway, it

seems our destinies are linked, Arthur, so how about you teach me how to fly and spit fire? I think that's kinda cool and useful . "

"I'm not going to teach anything to a psychopath and a murderer . "

"Come now, being a psychopath isn't a sin . I'm unable to feel sympathy or remorse but that doesn't make me bad . As for being a murderer, I can't argue against that but you did kill lots of people too, innocents included . "

"I did it out of necessity while you did it for pleasure . "

"Is that supposed to make a difference? Cuz it's not . Look, there's a little girl here so how about we switch the topic, eh?"-Edward

"I'm not a little girl . "

Hearing this, Edward seemed genuinely surprised . He knitted his brows and asked Shen Shen

"Oh? Are you one of those old people who always look young? Wow... that's the first time I'm seeing one . "

"I'm not old!" protested Shen Shen as she emptied her glass of juice and snorted .

"Hahahaha now I really can't contribute our meeting to just luck!"

A man with long brown hair and a young-looking face laughed loudly as he stood before a blond youth . Timos casual black leather clothes with a grey cape hanging on his back, he looked at the astonished Vyncent, his pupils glowing with a golden radiance for a split second before returning to normal .

"Why are you here?" Asked Vyncent as he contained his shock .

"Why, for the same reason as you, of course . "

The Black Devil pointed at a strange and moving pit filled with hideous and twisting faces .

"I don't know if the Heavens favor you or Hell hates you . "

"..." Vyncent frowned but didn't say anything, the grey coin in his hand was intensely beating, like a living heart . It became incredibly restless as he got closer to the ominous sandpit and it seemed to be telling him to jump inside, something he would rather not do .

"This is the first time I'm seeing such a dangerous thing but I have a hunch about what it is . "

Timos clapped his hands, turned around, angling himself toward the pit, before saying,

"I'm jumping in, you coming or not?"

Vyncent thought for a moment before slowly nodding his head and standing next to The Black Devil .

BONUS LORE : After what is commonly known as the Hour of Creation, the eighteen regions are created .

The ruler of the Water Region is titled 'The Governor of the Ocean' but not many know that her real name is Shen Shen .

The Moon and Star Regions are ruled by the same person, the Star Empress .

The Eighteen Regions are:

The Water Region

The Fire Region

The Demon Region

The Death Region

The Earth Region

The Wind Region

The Lightning Region

The Light Region

The Space Region

The Clockwork Region

The Singularity Region

The Fairy Region

The Saint Forest Region

The Golden Sand Region

The Mortal Region

The Star Region

The Moon Region

The Beast Alliance Region

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The next day after the massacre that occurred in the Royal castle and, especially, the death of the Emperor and the fall of the Fallen God Clan, which only had a few remaining members outside of the kingdom, Ramel city became more restless and the number of crimes significantly increased, even with the interference of the soldiers, who no longer had a ruler to serve or a command to follow .

Only after making sure that Edward Ortberg properly ate and had a good night's sleep did Arthur instruct the mortal to sit down for a serious chat . The man had a very nonchalant attitude and he wasn't even scared of the Empress, who definitely had an unfavorable impression of him .

Arthur remembered that the man briefly spoke about a prophecy, which means that, at some point in time, he must've met Claud Venice, the man living inside the ARK, also known as the Prophecy Holder .

The Prophecies foreseen by the dead scientist tend to always be true and precise to every said letter . Moreover, the serial-killer was even helped by the Frog of Destiny, a mystical being that is seen once every tens of thousands of years, if not more .

"It's really funny, you see..." Edward stretched his sore over-rested arms while speaking .

"You didn't strike me as a talkative man when we met at the prison . I also never thought you're some sort of fantasy shapeshifter . "

Arthur didn't correct the man and, instead, asked with a deadpan face .

"You said that you found the piece of paper somewhere in the forest close to the prison . How did you escape in the first place?"

"I didn't intentionally escape, per se . " Edward widely grinned at the parasite and continued,

"A woman came in and broke me out . Yes yes, you'll want to see how she looks like... let me try to remember . "

He tapped his index on his forehead while crossing his legs, appearing quite relaxed, to say the least .

"She had long silver hair but that was all . The rest of her body was covered in some mecha-like black armor with all many numbers . "

"Silver hair? Are you sure?"

"Yes, I've never seen a hair like that so the sight of it was very memorable . "

Arthur maintained an inordinate amount of time pondering about what was said in silence .

'Could it be Lucy? No, she's with the original body . Then... is it Angelina? The ARK was automatically transferred to her in the war . '

Arthur could remember some of Zodiak's memories but only vaguely as they were not his own . In fact, in the past, Zodiak did travel to a Claud's planet and there was a woman who had an identical appearance to Lucy .

'She was named Angel . Then is she her reincarnation? But she's not the type of person go out of her way to jailbreak a serial-killer .

While Arthur was in deep-thought, Edward cut him off by saying .

"I'm important, right? I do realize I'm not as strong as you and your 'associates', however, there must be a reason for my arrival to this magical kingdom . Maybe you'll be in need of my

intellect? I can do many things, you know . "

"We'll see about that . You'll be coming with me for the time being . "

"Sure, it's not like I can venture on my own . "

Edward spread his hands as if he was stating the obvious .

...

As he was done with possessing Karima's body and the situation in the capital was going out of control, Arthur and the rest left on board of the Silver Spirit Boat, heading North .

Zaarae didn't ask anything about Edward and just chatted with the lively Shen Shen . Fariya was absent-minded as she stood at the edge of the speeding boat .

"Sup' . "

Edward greeted the quiet Esco, who reciprocated with a bow as he thought the mortal was one of Arthur's real companions and not someone that had to be brought along due to the confusing circumstances .

"You one of them too?"

.

Edward saw how Esco acted around Arthur, he seemed to be an outcast and rarely got close or even talked so he got a bit curious, as is his wont .

"Wait! Don't answer... let me guess . "

The mortal looked at the muscular red-haired Esco up and down a few times before spouting

"You're a prisoner too!"

In response, Esco frowned but neither confirmed nor denied the statement .

"You have to be . From what I've seen or gathered, Arthur purposely infiltrated the prison . "

Edward pointed at the sexy succubus .

"She was one of the chief guards but ended up 'leaving . "

Then he switched to Shen Shen and Zaarae .

"That woman called the Empress, although she does not have a good attitude, her status is the highest out of all of us . I also think she was one of the prisoners held in the 13floor . Those twin youngsters are recent prisoners who are devoted followers of Arthur so he must've come to break them out . As for that little girl called Shen Shen, I honestly have no idea . What do you think? Did I get it right?"

The man had astonishing observational skills and amazingly on-point theories . It's surprising to see him reveal the truth with just a couple of interactions .

"Anyway, what's up with your outfit?"

The mortal knitted his brow as he gazed at Esco's clothes . The ex-prisoner wore a blue leather shirt, black and tight pants and jacket-like cloth which was slightly oversized .

"They are my original clothes . "

Hearing this, Edward nodded his head while repeatedly muttering 'I see' . Not long after that, Esco excused himself to his room, saying that he needs to recuperate for some time .

Of course, neither Arthur nor any of the rest bothered with him as he was only an informant, no more, no less .

...

"What are you going to do?"

Late at night, Zaaarae sat next to Arthur and wanted to lean her head on his shoulder but he swiftly distanced himself and threw a cold glance at her . After a bit of time, she asked him while gazing at the starless sky .

"No idea . I need to reach the Garden of Words but the prophecy cannot be neglected . Trying to ignore it will only lead to much worse problems .

"Not all prophecies come true, Arthur . "

The man shook his head in denial while retorting .

"No, you don't understand . 'His' prophecies are always true, to the very last letter . Edward was sent here but I don't know what his role is in this .

"That may be true but that doesn't mean the prophecy will happen tonight or tomorrow . "

"Then what about the timing? Why did Edward appear now of all times? From what I've experienced in the past, the first part will occur in the near future, at the very least . "

As she listened to him, The Empress thought back to that dangerous pit filled with creepy faces and the moving mud-mixed sand . "

The next day at sunrise, the Silver Spirit Boat came to an abrupt halt as the desert below them started acting strangely . The golden and shiny sand quite literally rose in the air in a very slow manner .

"It's happening . "

Arthur emotionlessly spoke as he gazed at the golden grains of sand surrounding the Spirit Boat, blocking their view of the surroundings .

This, however, was but the beginning as the sand became violent and big, solid cubic blocks bumped into the silver floating boat, clearly acting hostile .

Zaaarae stood next to Shen Shen and held her hand, a translucent purple layer protected both the Empress and the blue-haired girl .

The succubus was next to Arthur, enjoying his protection without doing anything . A Dark Barrier was more than enough to resist the sand cubic blocks but the more time passed, the faster and bigger they became .

"This is seems to be out of an old fiction book, wow!"

Edward loudly laughed as he stood behind Midolf and Radolf, his eyes shining as he witnessed this 'spectacle . '

Ten minutes crept by and the unceasingly violent sand dispersed the clouds and covered the blinding canopy with its golden radiance .

The sun's eternal illumination was replaced by a magnificent sea of sand, which some may see it as a sign from the God while others will consider it a bad omen .

Arthur cast his eyes below only to see something that made him gasp . He wasn't the only one shocked as the rest of the crew stared at a ginormous hand .

One of the fingers was hundreds of meters thick and kilometers long, though the skin looked decayed to the point that even the bones could be seen protruding out of the yellow-ish dead layer .

"I-is that a hand?"

Shen Shen was terribly shocked as chills run down her spine . She clutched the Empress' hand while taking a step back . Even someone with a purified soul like hers couldn't handle the aura emanating from below, more specifically, that hand .

"Is that God's hand?" questioned Edward as he peeked through the edge while putting a hand on Radolf's shoulder as to not fall .

"Depends on which damned God you're talking about . " retorted Midolf, appearing as distressed his twin companion .

"I understand why they always said Karima protects only the land of Golden Sand and not the clan . " Radolf sighed as he glanced at the thick layer of sand domination the sky above them .

"Philos is buried here . "

"No he's fucking not! Can't you see?! He IS the desert! Question is, what the fuck is happening?"

...

Zaarae looked at the massive hand then thought for a moment before casting her sight .

"It's not about what's happening... but why?"

Even a knowledgeable person like she, wasn't unable to comprehend the reason behind this extraordinary yet dangerous occurrence .

"Prepare for impact!"

Arthur shouted out loud as he raised his hands, which emitted a mass of total darkness that transformed into a jet black cube that enveloped that whole silver Spirit Boat .

His reaction was, fortunately, just in time as the golden sound came crashing from above, aiming only at Arthur's boat, for some reason .

The passengers, a bit prepared, held into something as the ship intensely shook and the black cube, which was meant to entrap enemies, managed to hold on for a few breaths before shattering like broken glass .

"Huh? It's aiming for us?"

Edward, visibly confused but not at all afraid, looked at the moving and clustered sand, which changed into a hand no smaller than the one down below . Hundreds of thoughts rampaged inside the mortal's mind . He didn't know much about this magical world but nothing happens like that and even if it was because Arthur possessed Karima's body, the retaliation is not only late but exaggerated .

This time, Arthur and Zaarae acted at the same time . The Empress, still standing next to Shen Shen, pointed her finger at the incoming large hand and shot a violet light .

The light became a rapidly-moving greatsword which hit the hand's palm, stopping it and disintegrating it into nothingness . As for the parasite, he transformed into a medium-sized bluebird that was half-covered with crystalline scales .

The bird wildly screeched and waved its lengthy wings, which caused a formidable wave of water to drop from the sky, falling onto the sound all around them, solidifying and weakening it at the same time .

This was but the beginning as Arthur then took the form of the Vermillion Bird and conjured a sky-piercing flame tornado which forced all the sand out of the area, clearing it for a brief amount of time .

...

"Strange... very strange . " commented Edward as he looked at the closed door leading to the interior of the ship .

He cautiously walked toward Zaarae, lightly tapped her shoulder, causing her to turn her head and furrowed her brows .

"I think I know why it's attacking us . "

"You think it's time to hear why it's crazily encircling us?" The Empress spouted back at the serial-killer then shot two purple swords made of lights, crushing other sand hands coming from far away .

Edward looked at the vanishing hands, which were pulverized by the swords, nodded his head and added,

"Yup, it's definitely the time . "

He pointed at the closed boat cabin and explained,

"'The thief's identity is clear' . That's enough to know that the prophecy was talking about a close person, who is, in fact, the thief you've encountered . That quiet man with the red hair, Esco, was it? Why is he inside when hell is breaking loose? Ever thought of that?"

Oh, you'll say that he's weak and hiding inside but it's much safer outside, with you freaks . I still don't know why he hasn't been discovered by you guys yet but, in my opinion, his involvement in this mess is more than you think . "

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Zaarae wasn't that convinced but she still focused her sense inside the boat, precisely where Esco was supposed to be but he, to her surprise, the place was empty .

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Arthur also heard what the mortal said but he had no time to deal Esco, who disappeared without anyone noticing him .

The form of the Vermillion Bird vanished, being replaced by a black tortoise with countless pointy and sharp scales covering its massive back which stretched for hundreds of meters .

The Divine Beast let out a deep threatening growl and positioned itself above the Spirit Boat . The sand continued its relentless attacks, becoming more variant and ruthless .

The ginormous solid sand hands were but the beginning as a mud giant sprung from below and attempted to grab the ship and pull it down . The black tortoise, along with the Quad-Spirit attacked at the same time . Dark Magic emanated from the Divine Beast, crashing into the giant like a meteor whilst the spirit used its Gravity Magic to slow down the monster and followed up with death storm . Furthermore, another giant, no smaller than the enemy's, made its appearance . This one enveloped by orange flames from head to toe and wielded the famous Spear of Terros, which had a dragon coiling around it .

The flame giant was sentient and had its own awareness, after all, it originated from the Fire Spirit absorbed by Arthur when he was in Green-Leaf . With the spear in its hands, the giant swept it horizontally, unleashing a wave of flames and attempted cutting the target in two but the spear just passed through the sand as if it was air .

Arthur was forced to focus on other enemies as the spirit boat was soon surrounded by a couple of sand giants and dozens of those slow but big hands which mainly floated high-up in the air .

Fortunately, Zaarae was also providing needy assistance as Arthur wasn't able to handle everything on his own . Additionally, Radolf joined the fray but his twin companion stayed on the deck to protect Edward in case something happens .

The origin of the problem was most likely Esco, who should have escaped the boat but what's confusing is that the golden sand didn't stop its attacks and didn't chase after the culprit .

"That thief must've stolen something precious, it's the only explanation . "

The only thing that Edward was missing was a bucket of popcorn . He was no different than a person watching a 3D movie, his eyes would shift from one explosion to another, totally fascinated by these 'fireworks', which all humans dream about but can never witness .

"Arthur! Find the rat and I'll deal with the rest . "

Zaarae telepathically spoke to the parasite as she jumped in the air right after gently pushing Shen Shen next to Midolf .

The white-haired mythical being inwardly cursed and raised his hand and emitted a burst of white blinding light which enveloped the little girl .

This light was filled with a pure and dense amount of Life Energy as well as a self-acting wind . Just like Shen Shen, who's now in possession of the Origin Water, Midolf too, as a creature born from the Wind and Life Energies, he's able to manipulate the Origin Wind, also known as the Zero Gale .

The Empress' gorgeous black dress was replaced by a light red armor which protected her chest, shoulders, thighs, knees, and neck . Her aura rose to the skies, splitting it and blasting all the nearby sands with an unstoppable shock wave .

She was one of the twelve, albeit weakened, so when she goes all out, there's little that can stop her . Her form distorted as she appeared simultaneously as several places, one punch from her would turn the sand giants into nothing but air .

...

Inside the ship, a half-transparent wraith with no lower body and a face made of brown decaying skin and two black eyeballs was roaming the quiet yet shaking place .

Arthur used [The Griffin's Bloody Switch] and temporarily converted his Wisdom and Intelligence into Dexterity and Agility, raising his senses to an alarming degree .

Since the sand continued to attack then Esco, who's actually the thief he encountered on several occasions, was hiding here, most likely in total Stealth .

There were several inconsistencies about Esco being a thief . How, like, before they even arrived in the Ramel Kingdom, the thief was already known by Sun Wukong and the royal family as they tried to catch him .

He roamed the kingdom and stole many valuable treasures . As for Esco, he had been imprisoned and always in close proximity to Arthur so it made no sense how he was in many places at the same time .

Furthermore, how was he able to fool both him and Zaarae and act like a weak bystander . Not even his special eyes, which are able to uncover all illusions and appearance-changing artifacts were able to break the thief's masquerade .

A minute after the other passed yet there were no signs of anyone hiding in the boat's cabin . Arthur's mastery with Space Magic is high enough to detect the presence of any isolated dimension, plus, with his current perception, which was backed by an unbelievable Dexterity, allows him to feel the moving and minuscule bacteria and lifeforms found inside every material and even the air .

Seeing no purpose in continuing to search for him secretly and using this method, Arthur's form changed as he latched himself into the metallic ground, cracking some of it .

A few breaths later, a small jet black sprout sprung from below and quickly grew into a spiky poisonous tree . A green fog emanated from its branches while Dark Magic spread like crazy all over the Spirit Boat, turning it into a world of absolute darkness where you can't see a thing .

The Darkness was ominous as, one by one, one meter long spikes came out of all sides, stabbing the empty air . Even with no successful result, Arthur didn't stop as the space cracked and the air was filled with a dangerous amount of paralyzing poison .

Time crept by and, at some point, with any warning, a swift shadow dashed toward the tree and attacked . Unfortunately, the attack was futile as the weapon he used melted the moment it made contact with the unseen black tree, which melted with its surroundings and was covered in the White Tiger's acid .

Long and thin vines appeared from the ground and tried to capture the assailant but he hastily backed away and easily cut away anything that got within a meter of him .

Arthur, who was able to see clearly in this darkness, which was his own handiwork, used Carpentine's unique ability . In a split second, both the tree and the attacker found themselves in massive world filled with all types of snakes, their hisses resounding across the whole place .

Arthur saw the red-haired individual, clothed strangely and holding some sort of a green and short scycle . He was about to use Telekinesis to corner the target and finish him off with one Heavenly Arrow but the latter just stood motionless before letting go of the scycle and slowly falling on the ground .

Esco's skin suffered change as it turned wooden and his facial features vanished .

"A puppet?"

Arthur recognized this humanoid object and instantly understood the situation . It turns out that thief was actually a puppet master, and a high-leveled one, at that .

Thinking logically, Esco was just an imprisoned puppet and its master was the shape-shifting thief .

"He should be a shapeshifter puppeteer . "

Arthur changed back to his real form and left the snake-world but upon his reappearance inside the boat's cabin, he was hit by a silver spear in his chest, and cut by a dagger from the back .

The assailants also seemed to be puppets as they didn't seem as strong as the thief from back then . Furthermore, their attacks weren't even able to pierce through Arthur's defense, which was empowered by the Black-Star Strengthening technique .

The spear broke the black layer protecting his skin but wasn't able to inflict any kind of injury . As for the dagger, it literally snapped in half and fell on the ground .

Using [Thought and Effect] coupled with the Natural Lightning and the invisible threads, Arthur was able to defeat the puppets in one move . The one behind him wanted to retract his hand but the threads wrapped around it and the lightning zapped him and burst his head . As for the spear-wielding one, it was subjected to the monstrous of the Telekinesis .

The puppet was flattened on the ground and stabbed by multiple black spikes .

Arthur swept his sense but found no other enemies, moreover, the one controlling them isn't inside the cabin .

'Where could he be?'

In a flash, the parasite reappeared on the deck, where Midolf and co were .

"You didn't find him, right? Figured . "

Edward looked at stone-faced Arthur and guessed the outcome almost immediately . He glanced at the rampaging Zaarae before stepping closer to Midolf and Shen Shen .

His actions seemed natural, as if he wanted to feel more secure, however, he abruptly retrieved his seemingly normal plastic scissors and stabbed at the blue-haired girl, freaking out Midolf .

The Zero Gale protecting the girl retaliated, sending the mortal flying until he the study walls of the boat's cabin . Edward had broken many bones and wasn't even able to get up but his scissors were blasted with him and were actually able to pass through the Origin Wind and reach its target .

Shen Shen, who was equally startled, took a step back but the scissors, which seemed to have a conscious of its own, swiftly followed her and reached her shoulder .

What was expected didn't happen and, instead, the girl's form distorted and was replaced by countless other appearances... a female orc, an angel, a male bearded-dwarf, and so on .

"Hahaha" Edward laughed while coughing blood, feeling proud of his discovery .

Midolf was scared out of his wits as he jumped back, not knowing whether to continue protecting the little girl or attack . It was clearly not Shen Shen, however, Arthur's pendant and Zaarae's bracelet, which were on the little girl's body, were definitely real .

Arthur frowned and appeared before the distorting Shen Shen . He didn't hesitate as he used Telekinesis to crush the target's whole legs, making it kneel . A dangerous violent whirlpool appeared in his hands and although it was minuscule, it was madly devouring the air and the grains of sand lingering all around them .

"Where's she?"

The whirlpool closed on the shapeshifter, who knelt there, defeated and surprised by this sudden shift of events . He never thought he'll be discovered as long as he took Shen Shen's appearance but Edward, out of everyone, was the one did the unexpected and revealed the shocking truth .

"Where did you hide her?"

Only when he felt his insides being sucked into the Void and his whole life-force being sucked away did the shapeshifter start giving up .

With a shaky voice and ever-changing face, he muttered,

"S-she's not h,here . "

Arthur was extremely angry as he held the shapeshifter by his throat and applied more force than necessary, a bit more and he could end the thief's life . He didn't even notice that Shen Shen was just a fake, he even wondered when she was taken and 'replaced' .

She accompanied him since the moment they left the prison and they've been separated only when he chased after the thief back when he was tricked by that 'old man' and robbed of his storage .

The spirit boat was falling from the sky and the golden moving sand was becoming stronger, though Zaarae was able to defeat anything that got close .

"Speak! Where did you take her? Where is she?"

The Shapeshifter's body was invaded by Dark Magic and Natural Lightning and despite being a high-leveled player, his high defense could not negate the weakening of the Dark Magic or the lethal vibration of the green lightning .

A sorry-looking bloody figure, with a lot of difficulties, managed to drag his body next to Arthur . Edward spat more blood, still grinning, he said

"The girl can wait . We must know what he did to incur the God's wrath!"

Just as Edward spoke, a deafening noise echoed, followed by a golden light which flew from afar and instantly landed meters away from the parasite .

She had a graceful body, bronze skin and wore a shiny armor . Her long black hair fell on her shoulder, she was a real beauty with an exceptional appearance . The parasite recognized this woman, who's known to be a legendary fighter and the wife of Philos, the God of Sand .

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The woman's eyes were solely fixated on the shapeshifter in Arthur's hands . Clear hostility was emanating from her half-golden eyes, which made anyone who looked at them fall into a bottomless abyss .

Karima disregarded everyone and, step by step, she made her way toward the powerless distorting thief . When she got close enough, her lips opened and a chilling voice could be heard .

"Give back the scepter . "

The woman didn't seem to realize that the thief was in no position to answer as his throat was being held by Arthur and his body was broken beyond repair .

"Scepter? What scepter?" questioned Arthur but the answer he got was just silence and a quick glance from Karima .

When she appeared, the sand giants and the enormous floating hands seized all kinds of assault, seemingly being ordered to stop .

"It's pretty obvious what happened . He stole something precious and this is the God's retaliation... or the God's wife . " Edward fell on his buttocks and took deep breaths as he held his hurting chest . Fortunately, Midolf appeared next to him and used his Life Energy, healing the mortal within seconds . Although it was his Zero Gale that inflicted those close-to-fatal injuries, it was just a self-defensive magic cast on the fake Shen Shen, who he had thought it was the real one .

"I don't care about the scepter! Where is Shen Shen?"

Arthur asked again, this time his killing intent rising to the skies as a scarlet aura spun around his body, causing even Edward to cower back in fear .

The thief opened and closed his mouth a few times but didn't reply, not because he didn't know where she is but due to the absolute dread dominating every fiber of his being .

The parasite was about to use Dark Extraction but, all of a sudden, a domineering force enveloped his body and attempted to push him away from the shapeshifter, however, he managed to stand his ground and not be affected .

A slight frown appeared on Karima's body, she used her powers again while exerting more force but it didn't end well as her body was attacked from the left side .

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Zaarae, still wearing her armor, kicked Karima, sending her flying out of the boat, though the latter managed to stabilize herself and dash back again only to be blocked by the Empress .

"Karima . "

The legendary fighter glared at Zaarae but didn't attack, her eyes focusing on the woman before her as she deeply thought about something .

"This isn't a matter related to you, Empress . "

"Oh . " Zaarae chuckled, crossed her arms and said, "So you know about me? That'll make it easier . Back off while I'm being nice... that scepter or whatever can wait, there are more important matters at hand . "

"Without the scepter, this land will perish . The longer it takes to return it, the worse it'll become here . All the people living here will be killed by the aftermath . My husband didn't create this land just for it to kill millions of innocents . "

"I don't care about their lives . We need to know where he hid Shen Shen first . "

"Shen Shen?" Karima knitted her brows and closed her eyes for a few breaths before resuming .

"Is it that blue-haired young girl? She was thrown into that corrupted pit . Not long ago, your 'associate', the Black Devil, jumped inside too . "

"The pit? What pit?"

Arthur let go of the shapeshifter after tightly binding him with thick dark chains, threads and increased gravity . His expression was inhumanely twisted as he had hoped Shen Shen would be alright .

"It's a small mud pit not far from the capital . I don't know its origin but it's dangerous . "

The Empress stared at Karima for some time before reluctantly nodding her head and turning toward Arthur .

"We don't need him anymore, let us go . "

Arthur didn't stubbornly hold onto the shapeshifter . He teleported next to him, swiftly possessed him before throwing his limp body in front of Karima, who landed back on the boat's deck .

Two minutes later, the silver Spirit Boat flew at where the mud pit was situated . As for the shapeshifter, Karima held his ankle and dragged him toward an unknown location .

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It took the speeding boat approximately two hours to reach the mud-spit, which was a bit suppressed by the chaotic sand .

"What's this? Does it lead to Hell or something?"

Edward, who was feeling better and more energetic, looked at the mud and hideous faces with a tinge of curiosity . Though, unlike him, Arthur and the two mythical beings were keeping their distances from this ominous pit .

"It's a stretching portal mixed with contained resentment . It's the first time I'm seeing something like this . "

The Empress explained what she knew to Arthur, her finger emitting a faint purple light which tried to penetrate the mud but failed .

"I've called Timos to investigate . I don't think we should enter it, at least not until he comes back . "

Zaarae held Arthur's shoulder, stopping his advance while speaking with a serious and worried tone .

"We don't know where it leads and how dangerous it is . It seems to be similar to Void Magic and is affecting my life force, which is illogical considering my existence as one of the Twelve . How about this... let me go first and you wait here for 24 hours . "

For an inordinate amount of time, Arthur maintained silence and, at the end, he sighed and agreed as he, too, felt the ominousness of the pit to the point that even his Dark Magic was pulling him away from this area .

Hours passed since Zaarae's departure, Arthur, Fariya, and the rest camped a distance away from the pit . It was slowly but surely expanding, even more after the golden sand went back to the ground . Karima must have gotten that scepter back, as for the shapeshifter, his fate is probably worse than death .

Arthur was barely holding himself from jumping back . Furthermore, Edward was very talkative and couldn't be silenced by anyone . He was just too nonchalant and uncaring about the situation .

"I mean, how could you live like this everyday? Isn't it way too thrilling and pain-inducing? Even when I was on the run, it wasn't like this . "

"Can't you just shut up?"

Arthur coldly berated the mortal, who turned a deaf ear to him .

"The first part of the prophecy is mostly done but how come this pit was never mentioned? Should I try to cut it?"

He took out his orange plastic scissors and walked toward the pit but was eventually stopped by Midolf .

"Fuck off to the back, will you?"

After passing through the strange portal, Zaarae found herself in a place that shocked her to the core . It was a battlefield but, most importantly, most of the corpses belonged to none other than her creations, the parasites .

The sky was painted with a gradual gloom and the land was barren and corrupted to its very core .

"This is my realm?"

She creased her brows and stretched her senses but apart from some weak corpse-eaters, there was no one of importance around . A few seconds later, her form vanished as she dashed toward a specific direction .

The Empress was surprised by the fact that her realm was connected to the Land of Golden Sand through that pit .

As it was her realm, Zaarae was able to move freely around without being restricted to the Spatial or Time laws . In just seconds, she appeared in gloriously city floating in the darkened sky .

The first one who appeared to welcome his liege was none other than the Archmage Emir . A wide smile was plastered on his face as he knelt before the woman, his face showing nothing but absolute veneration .

"My liege, you've finally come back!"

Zaarae waved her hand and looked around before asking .

"Did Timos come here?"

"The Black Devil? No . "

Hearing this, the woman got even more confused . Before Emir could react, she vanished again and stretched her aura over all the realm but found no sighting of Timos or Shen Shen .

"Master, I think we should depart immediately . "

Radolf walked to Arthur and respectfully signaled his twin companion to come convince the parasite too .

"What's wrong?"-Arthur

"Master, the thing is..." Midolf dropped his head, not daring to meet Arthur's eyes .

"If you still want to reach the Garden of Words, I think that now is the perfect time . "

Arthur pondered for a dozen seconds before shaking his head and retorting,

"I need to jump into the pit . The Garden can wait . "

"No, master, it cannot . The lands at the North are being subjected to abnormal change so the laws of Life and Death are weakening . If you enter the boundary between the two then it's now or never . "

Radolf briefly explained situation before briefly pausing and hesitantly adding,

"I'm sure that the Empress will find and protect Shen Shen . Please do not divert from your original goal . The Garden is mandatory for your evolution, it will answer anything you ask it . If you ever want to find where Shen Shen is, then you can still ask it . "

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Although he was unwilling, Arthur had to relent and accept Radolf's proposal . After all, he had no idea where the pit leads and if his current strength is enough to protect him inside, even with the mythical beings and the succubus by his side .

"We're leaving now . "

Arthur and the rest jumped back on the Spirit Boat, which darted toward the North with insane speed . Arthur was still worried about Shen Shen but there is a strong chance his unwanted interference may lead to more problems for the girls so he decided to wait for Zaarae to come back and inquire from her about the situation .

"Explain it again for me . "

The parasite called the twin mythical beings, wanting a detailed explanation about what was said earlier .

For a better demonstration, Radolf stretched both hands, so did Midolf, and in a dozens of seconds, the atmosphere around the ship drastically changed . The sky split in two, one turned white snow, the clouds and all the environment became one color, on the opposite side, it was a gloomy mix of grey and black, like that of death .

"Master, we, as beings close to Life and Death, have a stronger connection to the natural laws and the boundary between the two isn't accessible by real, material beings, per se . It's a place meant for souls to briefly passed through when the body dies . Basically, it's another plane of existence completely separate from our own . One way to reach it is when the balance between the two existing forces is weakened by a specific degree . In other words, when the quantity of Life and Death energies are no longer systematically co-existing . Now, there is such an occurrence in the Northern Lands, which is the perfect opportunity for Master to try and reach the Garden of Words . Furthermore, as you're, essentially, a Soul Parasite, your chances of entering that boundary are dramatically increased . "

In the area between Ramel Kingdom and the Northern Lands, there was a very small mountain, its peak just over 500 meters . It was inhabited by a few wild beasts and, surprisingly, a declining clan composed of barely a hundred people . They were living at the foot of this mountain and were rarely visited by

people as most tend to ignore them and casually pass through, which is partially why they managed to exist despite being weak .

Arthur was able to sense that the strongest was an elderly at the 2nd grade of the Immortal Realm . It was obvious that they immigrated from the Cloud Sea Universe and despite not having a strong heritage, they seemed pretty happy . The children were playing together in a quiet area of the forest surrounding the mountain, and some were cultivating or sparring against each other .

The parasite looked at Radolf and asked,

"Is this the place?"

"Yes, it's inside the mountain . "

"Alright, I'll go in with you . " Arthur turned to Edward and Fariya and said,

"You two stay here until I come back . " He briefly paused as he saw the mortal curiously look at the settlement below them .

"And don't cause any trouble . "

While Edward didn't reply, the succubus bowed her head and wished her master a good and safe trip .

...

Arthur teleported inside the mountain along with the two mythical beings, who transformed to their realm forms but with smaller sizes . Midolf looked majestic with his snow-white feathers and golden beak, however, Radolf was the total opposite, he was a twin-headed bone lizard with black flames burning in his tail and decayed skin here and there .

The trio found themselves inside a pretty-normal cave with nothing eye-catching . There was an obvious lack of illumination but, besides that, Arthur found no particularities .

"Master, you need to first transform into your soul-form . "

Arthur nodded his head and became a blinding blob of light floating in mid-air . The lizard and the roc raised their heads and looked at the parasite, who was bouncing around as he moved around the cave .

"Please do not resist, master . "

Both said the same words simultaneously and, by the next second, the lizard opened its mouth and spat a mass of grey liquid which splattered on the soul, while the roc spun around like a tornado and then burst with a light more radiant than the sun itself .

The sticky liquid and the light each took one side of the soul, making it look like a round ball with a strange appearance . Arthur started feeling dizzy then his vision turned black as he lost consciousness shortly after .

An indeterminate amount of time later, Arthur woke up and found himself in his human appearance . Although there was no mirror, he was sure he looked exactly when he back on Earth, before his first reincarnation .

The man was butt-naked and felt a bit chilly but he paid that no heed and started marching forward in this unfamiliar place . All that surrounded him was a mix of grey and black fog, the ground was pure white and rough to walk on, seemingly unsteady, like a steep slope .

Step by step, meter by meter, Arthur continued his walk, feeling neither hungry nor tired . Inexplicably, his mind was clear as if he knew where the destination laid, and the more he walked, the clearer the fog became .

His connection with the Quad-Spirit and the mythical beings were temporarily severed, meaning that he was all alone in this separate plane of existence .

Fortunately, after what seemed to be a very long time, Arthur arrived in front of a door, unimaginably big and dyed with dried blood . It was constantly shaking and made him feel mildly uncomfortable to say the least .

The moment he saw this, Arthur knew what it was .

As per Radolf's words, when a soul dies, it can go to one of two places, Heaven or Hell, and in some special cases, to the Void if it's subjected to an intervention . This door was one of the first gates leading to literal Hell, the place where the evil souls are tortured for eternity . Of course, there are several levels to even a place like Hell, and the higher the level, the more evil the soul hence the need to contain it in a harsher environment .

Arthur looked at the door for some time before turning around and leaving . He kept walking forward until he was met with a second door, this was shiny gold and decorated with lengthy silver wings on both its edges .

It is called Heaven's door and it opens by itself when a reaches certain qualifications . Arthur's goal was the Garden so he didn't dwindle there for too long, but it's not like the concept of time existed here .

As Arthur was venturing into that foreign world, Fariya unknowingly caused a disaster just by teaching Edward a small, common thing that most of the people in this Universe know .

As A Star Force practitioner, she knew how one needs to locate their unique star and start absorbing it in order to get stronger . Under Edward's persistent questions, she ended up telling him how to do it, unaware of the consequences .

Edward Ortberg was the holder of the Heaven Mandate soul so when he quietly sat down and did as instructed, it caused the whole world to drastically change . The clear blue sky was painted with a white glow that cascaded on the forest and transforming into millions upon millions of tiny white particles floating around .

This alarmed the small clan living here and forced them to hide in the patriarch's house . The old man, whose long hair had long since turned white, was staring at the blinding white radiance with awe and fear, inwardly hoping that no disaster befalls on his people as they had gone through enough already .

"H-hey! You . . Stop . " The succubus held the sitting man by his shoulders and fiercely shook him but he didn't react at all, seemingly entranced .

Fariya was even pushed back by the white particles, which enveloped every part of the mortal, shredding his clothes and covering him whole, like some sort of a God .

Fortunately, after ten minutes, everything calmed down and Edward woke up and shouted like a mad man .

"Aw aw! My bones hurt!"

He jumped around like a lunatic and rubbed his shiny skin, clearly not liking the sensation he was experiencing . The succubus watched him from the side, pressing her finger on her temples and shaking her head .

"Wear some clothes, will you!"

The man calmed down after he heard her and looked at his exposed parts . He showed no embarrassment and, instead, breathed a sigh of relief as the pain slightly subdued .

"So this is what pain feels like!"

He burst out in unpleasant laughter as he looked at the frowning succubus .

"It's exhilarating! Fascinating!"

In the end, he was left one on the deck as she retreated back to her room after throwing a robe at his direction . Edward could feel that he became much stronger but he only touched the tip of the iceberg and even a cultivator at the Spirit Realm can crush him easily, nevertheless, the feeling of power made the serial-killer overly-delighted .

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"What do you seek here, traveler?"

At last, Arthur arrived in a place completely clear of fog but still strange to the eyes . There was a short fence made of scrolls surrounding a breath-taking garden made of nothing but books and papers . At the gates leading inside, there stood two animals, both made of white paper, though one was missing its eyes and the other without ears and mouth .

The one who just talked to the parasite was one of the two, a cat without eyes raised its small head and stood up .

"I came seeking answers . "

Just as he replied, the cat spoke again .

"The world holds answers for all the unknown . "

"What I need can only be provided by the Garden of Words . "

The cat didn't talk again, it sat back up and dropped its head, no longer minding the naked man standing before it . The animal next to it, a dog with scroll-like limbs and no tail, blinked its eyes as it sized-up the parasite for an inordinate amount of time . Then, a disembodied voice reverberated inside Arthur's head .

"The Garden welcomes the Seeker and not the Needer, the Garden welcomes the Honest and not the liar, the Garden Welcomes neither the living nor the dead . "

The dog briefly paused then continued with a lower voice . "Arthur Bilgart, you do meet two of the qualification but your situation and special Race render your unwelcome . Go back . "

Hearing this, the man frowned and retorted,

"I cannot just go back . I need immediate answers . "

"And how are you going to get them? You must be aware that your extraordinary strength isn't applicable here . It's a matter of judgment and not power . "

"Then, how am I supposed to enter?"

"Die . " Replied the cat as it yawned and laid its head on its front paws .

"Only after death will the soul be liberated and qualified to get entry . "

"I cannot die yet . "

"Then you will not enter . "

Right after it finished saying its piece, the dog imitated the cat and proceeded to ignore Arthur, who rambled a bit more before quietening down . Although he felt irritated, he didn't dare do anything rush nor force his way, he just stood there like a statue . He remained motionless like the two animals, thinking of a way .

"I have the Wish Star, can't it help me get in?"

When he said that, both the cat and the dog raised their heads .

"We know about the Wish Star but unless you wish for your death, it's practically useless in your hands . Using it isn't as simple as making a wish, don't be fooled by the name . "

Just as the dog finished talking, another voice, a bit further away, was heard by Arthur . It was familiar and very soothing, in fact, it immediately reminded him of a woman he met once in the past .

It was back when he was transported to the past with Leiu and Wolfram, right at the end of their journey .

"Quhea?"

Quhea, the Creator of Knowledge and one of the Twelve, she was one of the most mysterious one amongst them and she wasn't as powerful but her knowledge is forever expanding and she's second only to the Garden of Words . There's almost nothing she can't answer and though her end remains a mystery, many speculate that she perished during the war against Medtris and the rest .

Arthur was surprised to hear Quhea, who revealed herself right after speaking . Unlike last time, she now looked like a normal human mixed with other races . She had ears slightly shorter than elves, ruby-like pupils, and a white tinge that had a tad of green in it . The woman wore a simple long white robe and her golden hair was tied into a bun .

"Is that really you?"

Flabbergasted, Arthur squinted his eyes, and only when she got a bit closer could he confirm her identity .

"It is nice to meet you again, Arthur MoonStar . "

"Yeah, likewise... but why are you here?"

Quhea chuckled and replied, "The purpose of my existence is to amass knowledge so what places are better than here?"

"Her excellency is a special guest . "- Explained respectfully bowing its head to Quhea .

"He is someone I know, can't you let him enter for a short time?"

Although they treated her with respect, that didn't mean she can do whatever she wanted in here, which is why even a person like herself was pleading to two animals literally made of paper .

Right when Arthur met Quhea, a day has passed in the outside world and when Fariya thought that everything calmed down, the situation got even more shocking .

The old patriarch of the clan living in the forest flew to the silver Spirit Boat and politely called its owner, wanting to know what happened yesterday, however, right after he appeared, the sky split again and a small white star fell from above, directly landing in front of Edward, who was equally startled .

To Fariya's surprise, it was the Frog of Destiny again . It stared at the man with its hundred eyes before letting out an inaudible croak . The mortal attempted to retreat but in a split second, both he and the frog vanished into nothingness . It all happened in a couple of breaths, rendering the succubus unable to do anything but gawk .

...

When Edward came back to his senses, he was at the top of a sky-piercing tower . His attention was attracted by a domineering roar of a gigantic bone dragon which was glaring back at him . He stiffly moved his neck below, focusing on a young woman wearing a long blue robe .

"Who are you?!"

Three ice cycles were above Sonia, all pointing at the puzzled Edward, who couldn't comprehend anything . Feeling her hostility, the man raised his hands in surrender and hurriedly said,

"Wait wait! Don't be so quick to attack! Let me explain!"

He glanced around but the Frog was nowhere to be seen . In addition to Sonia, there was a hideous monster next to her, it was taller than her by two heads and was holding a jet black sword . Gutcha looked at the mortal man with confusion but didn't attack and waited for Sonia .

Although Edward didn't recognize the two, he saw Arthur's Dark Magic more than once .

"Do you perhaps know... Arthur?"

On the mention of the parasite, the two twitched and furrowed their brows, though in Gutcha's case, it looked like an ugly grimace .

"He sent me here, actually . "

Seeing that they seemed more relaxed, Edward dropped his hands and smirked .

"I don't know why I was sent here but he did say that my help is needed . By the way, where are we?"

He looked around and saw the bustling and glorious city along with the desolate plains stretching into the horizon .

"Green-Leaf . " Perfunctorily replied Sonia, still feeling a bit cautious of the man .

"Green-Leaf? Hmm Leaf? That does ring a bell . Hahahahaha"