

Paragon 261

Chapter 261 - 261: Meeting the Twins

Klaus took a moment to catch his breath before probing whatever was now in his mind.

"It's the memories," Klaus muttered, quickly realizing what had entered his mind. He focused on it for a while and then let out a sigh.

"I guess I can't run from it anymore," Klaus said softly.

What had entered his mind were memories or rather another part of them. He didn't dive into them immediately; he needed to clear his schedule first before going deeper into those memories.

He set those thoughts aside and decided to test his new upgrades, thanks to his connection with Miriam. From this bond, Klaus would benefit as much as she did.

It took Klaus four hours to fully review all the changes that had happened to him. First, his sword qi had become much more lethal. Although he hadn't advanced to the next stage yet—which the senior called the Adept stage—he could still feel the difference.

Klaus had seen how Miriam used her sword aura during her battle with the Zombie Emperor. She wielded it like he used his ice and fire elements. When he asked the senior about it, he learned that Miriam had already advanced past the Adept stage to the Enhanced Sword Aura/qi stage.

The reason she could use it so fluidly was because of her awakened light element. It shared many similarities with sword aura, allowing her to wield it more naturally.

Klaus knew that if he could reach that stage, his combat power would increase significantly. However, he first needed to master the small advancements he had made and hoped to reach the Adept stage soon.

The second thing he tested was his mental strength. Thanks to the ball projection system he had trained with in Arcadian City, now installed in his training room, he could see his improvements firsthand.

He increased his control from managing 130 needles to 150, and his control was fluid. It felt like his mind had opened up to a whole new world, giving him the mental clarity to pop all 2,700 balls within 30 seconds, at six times the speed.

Lulu had ordered a more advanced system for him. So, instead of 1,020 balls, he had 2,700, and he was able to pop all of them without hitting a single red or yellow ball.

This shocked him greatly. He then tried combining all the needles to form the Void Piercing Needle, and the result was astonishing.

It formed into a 45-inch long, thick, and pointy needle—about 3.7 feet, which was long enough to deal some heavy damage. Klaus grinned evilly as he envisioned what the Needle would be doing soon.

He also tested his soul-attacking skills and was pleased with the results. When everything was set, he left the training room to relax a little. He still had things to do, and one of those tasks came knocking just after sunset.

Klaus had left a marker for Luna to use to contact him when she and her sister were around. Right after 6, he received the signal.

He left the house, making sure he was perfectly disguised to avoid prying eyes. He even moved erratically to lose anyone who might be following him before heading to the meeting point.

It was somewhere in the slums, so the area wasn't well-lit. Klaus moved through the space and stopped behind an abandoned warehouse. It was one of the few places the homeless used to crash at, but even they avoided it now.

Because of the dangers in the slums, not even the homeless wanted to stay there.

"Trust me, you might get hurt if you try anything stupid," Klaus said, gazing at the lit Ross City in the distance.

It wasn't the first time he did that. Back when he was still in the slum, he would stand every evening and gaze at the beautiful city and then promise himself he would one day take his mom to live there.

He then gently turned his gaze toward a certain direction, specifically a shadow.

The shadow stayed still for a while before a figure in dark clothing appeared. She wore a mask and gripped a dark dagger.

"I told you he's different. Now, do you believe me?" Suddenly, another figure appeared from the shadows. She wasn't wearing a mask but was dressed in the same black attire as the first figure.

"I can see that," the masked figure said, removing her mask. The face that greeted Klaus was the same as Luna's.

"I am Nuna," she said, dropping her dagger into her shadow just like Luna had done when Klaus last met her in Arcadian City.

"I'm Klaus, but I have a feeling you know more about me than I do," Klaus said with a small smile. Despite being in the presence of two deadly assassins, he showed no sign of fear.

He wasn't afraid of either of them. Well, he knew he'd be in danger if they ganged up on him, but he was confident they wouldn't be able to kill him.

"Well, Klaus, my sister told me everything, but I want to hear it from you. Even though I want nothing more than to be free, I want to know your plans and how they will affect me and my sister," Nuna said. From her tone, Klaus could tell she was the elder sister, making her the one in charge of Luna.

"Basically, I want to use you two to get to your mother, who I was told is high-ranking in the Dark Order. I'm not asking you to work for me or even help capture her. All I want is for you to lead me to her, and I'll handle the rest.

In return, I'll break the seal your mother placed on you. Essentially, I want you to help me kill your mother. No hard feelings, I hope," Klaus said with a smile.

Nuna stood there for a few moments, scanning his expression, then tapped her foot on the floor. Klaus smiled. It was similar to how Luna had responded to his proposal back in Arcadian City.

"So, all we have to do is act as bait, and you won't want anything from us ever again?" Nuna asked.

"Yes," Klaus responded.

"When?" she asked.

"Well, I'm not strong enough to catch a Sovereign yet, so maybe in a few months. But don't worry, I'll break your seals, which will free you from your mom's influence," Klaus replied.

"What if she notices? And even if she doesn't, what makes you think we won't run away once the seal is broken?" Nuna asked again. Klaus could tell she was being meticulous or perhaps overprotective of her sister.

"You could run, but I doubt you will. You won't ever be at peace as long as your mother is alive. So, I'm sure you'll stick around. And as for whether your mother will notice if the seal is broken—she won't. You can continue to act like you used to.

I even have the perfect plan for that. Since she wants me dead, you can keep pretending to try to kill me. That should be enough to maintain appearances."

Nuna said nothing. She turned to look at her sister. After a few seconds of silent communication, she turned back to Klaus.

"We'll take the deal, Klaus Hanson. But know this: after the deal is over, you must promise that the others won't come after us."

Klaus smiled when he heard that. They were worried the Overlords would come after them, which was natural for people who had killed so many.

"You have nothing to worry about. As long as I'm alive, nobody will hurt you two." Nuna and Luna nodded.

"Then let's begin," Klaus muttered and started forming hand seals.

Chapter 262 - 262: Breaking the Seal

Klaus continued forming hand seals, twisting his fingers into complex patterns. Luna and Nuna watched closely, fascinated by what he was doing.

The seals were something taught to him by the senior, who offered him many options to choose from. He even offered to teach Klaus how to place a slave mark on the twins, but for some reason, Klaus hated that idea, which surprised him.

The thought of turning someone into his slave didn't sit well with him, no matter how practical the idea was. So he chose to use an old-fashioned seal called trust.

Choosing to trust the twins seemed like a foolish idea, especially since they were assassins sent to kill him, but Klaus wanted to trust someone. They seemed like the logical choice.

If they turned out to be like their mother, he would rather kill them than make them his slaves.

After forming hundreds of seals, a purple runic diagram appeared on the ground, radiating a powerful aura.

"You two should step inside," Klaus said, and the twins moved inside the diagram.

"What I'm about to say might be hard, but can you lower the defenses around your soul and mind? And don't resist once the process begins," Klaus said.

Luna and Nuna exchanged glances for a few seconds before nodding. Klaus smiled and quickly formed another seal. Shortly after, two identical runic symbols appeared in the air. With a gesture, the runes moved and entered their foreheads.

As soon as the runes entered their foreheads, they both fell unconscious. Klaus sighed and changed the hand seal. From the diagram on the ground, chains with sharp tips emerged and pierced the twins' bodies as they lay passed out.

After a while, the diagram faded, and Klaus dropped to his knees, gasping for air. "I should have done it one by one," he muttered.

Once he regained his breath, he moved to sit on a broken wall, waiting for the twins to wake up. In their current state, if he wanted to kill them, even his weakened self could do it easily.

Luna was the first to wake up after an hour. Nuna followed a couple of seconds later. As soon as they woke up, they got into a battle stance, drawing their daggers. However, when their gaze landed on Klaus, who was sitting with his left fist supporting his chin, they calmed down a bit.

"Is it done?" Nuna asked.

"Yes. Go ahead, try thinking about something negative toward your mother," Klaus replied. The twins exchanged looks, and with heavy hearts and focused minds, ready to endure the pain, they both thought of the various ways they wanted to kill their mother.

They closed their eyes, bracing for the pain they usually felt whenever they thought of harming her. But after a minute, when no pain hit their brains, they opened their eyes.

They looked at each other for a few seconds before jumping into each other's arms, tears rolling down their cheeks. After decades of being suppressed by their own mother, they were finally free.

Klaus, sitting a few meters away, watched them with a smile. They had suffered for so long. But seeing their tears, his heart burned.

For a moment, he wished their vile mother was already in his hands. The pain and torture he planned to put her through... Klaus could only sigh and wait until the day he finally got hold of her.

After five minutes of shedding tears in each other's arms, they turned toward Klaus. "Thank you," Nuna said with a slight bow.

"No need, it was just business," Klaus replied, standing up and walking toward them.

"Just don't do anything stupid that will draw your mom's attention. For now, come up with an excuse that will keep you two away from her for the next four months or so. By then, I'll be ready to act.

You can take my offer and pretend to try to kill me whenever you think it's best. That will show her you're still on her side, under her control," Klaus added.

"Sorry Klaus, but I lied" Luna suddenly said, "I wasn't the only one sent to kill you. There are seven others," She added, her face down

Klaus just smiled, knowing he expected something like that. They didn't fully trust him, so despite his offer to remove their seals, they were still skeptical. It was only natural for them to hold back.

"I figured as much. But that's actually good. Since convincing your mother that two Great Sages like yourself failed to kill a mere Master Stage warrior won't work, why not create a situation where she'll believe you?" Klaus said.

"You want us to kill the seven others?" Nuna asked, raising an eyebrow.

"Atta girl. Think about it: if the seven others, who I assume are also Great Sages, start dying, you can tell her I'm being protected by someone powerful. That way, you'll need more time. If I were your mother, I'd believe that," Klaus explained, making the twins engage in yet another nonverbal stare-off.

After a few seconds, they nodded. "We will do it, but you should be careful too. The seven others are no weak assassins. One of them even has shape-shifting abilities," Luna warned.

"If you had to estimate, what are your chances of killing these assassins?" Klaus asked. It was always better to know thy enemy before striking.

"We have an 80 percent chance of killing three of them individually and a 70 percent chance of killing the last four. But if we join forces, it's a hundred percent guaranteed," Nuna replied confidently.

"Then there's nothing to worry about," Klaus said. With Miriam staying with him, no sane assassin would dare break into their home—shape-shifter or not. Miriam was meticulous with her senses and would detect any threat long before it arrived.

"But you should know, once these assassins start dying, they'll send more," Luna added.

"I know, but don't worry. It's only for a few months. After that, the Dark Order will come begging me to stop," Klaus said coldly.

For now, his target was the Dark Order. As for the people who hired them, he would deal with them later. They had picked the wrong target this time, and it would cost them dearly.

"Still, be careful out there," Luna said.

"I will. You two should also be careful. I wouldn't want to lose my guides who will lead me to a great massacre," Klaus said with a smile.

He handed his card to Nuna. "You can contact me through this number if you need anything. See you later." With that, Klaus disappeared into the night.

"He really did it," Nuna whispered, holding the golden card.

"Yes, and he didn't ask for anything huge in return. We're lucky this time, sister. We really are," Luna said, hugging her sister.

"Let's make sure none of those scum get to him. He's our benefactor now, and we have to protect him—even if he doesn't need it," Luna said, looking into her sister's eyes.

"Okay, sister," Nuna replied. With that settled, they melted into the shadows and disappeared. They were more than happy to be free from the curse placed on them by their mother.

For years, they had tried different ways to kill their mother, but after many failed attempts, they had given up and accepted their fate. Now they were free, all thanks to Klaus.

It was the best day of their lives, and for that, they had Klaus to thank. And what better way to thank him than by making sure no assassin so much as touched a hair on his head?

Klaus had just gained two deadly assassins as shadow guards, and for the next few months, he would be protected without having to worry much about a thing.

When he got home, Klaus took a bath and spent some quality time with his goddess before going to bed. The next day, he entered seclusion to access his past memories—something he couldn't put off for much longer.

Chapter 263 - 263: Surrounded Everywhere

Fruity, who was knee-deep into his cultivation suddenly sensed the surroundings changing, which quickly snapped him out of his cultivation. He walked out of the immortal cave and saw a dome forming around the monastery.

He hurried out of the cave and moved toward the grand temple. When he arrived, he saw all the monks in the monastery gathered, staring at the sky as the dome continued to form.

When they saw Fruity, now a Saint, they smiled briefly before turning back to the phenomenon in the sky. Fruity quickly made his way inside the temple, where the Grandmaster and five Ancient Monks were seated, waiting for him.

"You are here," one of the Ancient Monks said. "How is your progress?" he added.

"I still couldn't open the third face, but I managed to master most of the skills from the first two faces. I've also unlocked a few more that I'm starting to master," Fruity replied.

"Good," the monks nodded.

"Grandmaster, they're coming for me, aren't they?" Fruity asked quickly.

He wasn't an idiot. He knew the weather was only changing because the bad guys were here. The only reason for them to come was that he had awakened the forbidden ice element—three out of the seven known forbidden ice elements.

He had about two years to prepare, thanks to the Ice Princess managing the onset of his awakening. Even the elders from Lightning Valley were killed before they could reveal any information.

But Fruity was a unique existence, even if he didn't know it yet. As such, he was never truly safe from danger. Though the Ice Princess made sure he had time to grow stronger, the danger was bound to find him sooner or later.

Fruity expected this, but seeing the battle-ready monks and realizing they might all die today, he couldn't bear it. They were his family, and he didn't want them dying for him.

"No need to worry, child. This day was bound to come sooner rather than later. We knew what we were signing up for when we took you in," the Grandmaster monk said with a smile.

At that moment, a voice boomed across the monastery, "This is the Tenth Elder of Lightning Valley. Hand over the Forbidden Ice wielder, and this monastery might see the light of tomorrow's sunrise."

Inside the temple, Fruity shuddered at the threat. He quickly made up his mind about what to do next.

"Hand me over, Grandmaster. I can't let any of you die," he said. While not the strongest, he could sense their surroundings and knew they stood no chance.

"Foolish child. Do you think we are cowards who would hand over a child to these monsters?" the Grandmaster responded.

"You are a monk of this monastery, and we will protect you with our lives. Besides, no matter what we do today, they will not spare this monastery."

"Do you remember what I told you about the Lightning Valley?" the Grandmaster asked.

Fruity nodded. He remembered being told to never even consider joining them. According to the instructions he was given, if he had to choose between death and peaceful life at Lightning Valley, he should choose death.

"They are the worst kind of cultivators. But even if they hadn't come today, this monastery wouldn't survive. We knew that. So we will fight and ensure your destiny is fulfilled."

"But we're no match for them. Fighting is pointless," Fruity said.

"That's true, but even though we've made peace with what will happen today, you're not done with what you're meant to do, who you're meant to become," one of the ancient monks replied. "Our deaths will not be in vain."

"But still..." Fruity, as naive as ever, couldn't accept what they were planning.

However, while he is skeptical, the monks are at peace. It was like they had been waiting for a day like this for a very long time, which in fact they had. A thousand years ago, they received a prophecy about this very day, so they knew what must be done.

"This is the Nameless Token. It requires 10,000 peaceful souls to activate," the grandmaster said, bringing out a white token. "Take this. Once it lights up, inject your energy into it, and it will send you away somewhere."

Fruity received the token but still didn't know whether their sacrifice was really necessary. To him, handing him over was the easiest thing to do.

But what he didn't know was that, even if he had been long gone from the monastery, the karma surrounding and following him would have ensured this day came. The monastery was doomed the moment they accepted him.

His presence wasn't needed for these people to eradicate the entire monastery, and everywhere he went, he would only bring death and destruction upon those around him.

"10,000 souls... that's about the life of every monk here," Fruity muttered, as tears started falling from his eyes.

"No need to cry, child. This day was bound to come. What we have to do now is fight and ensure we reduce the number of enemies you'll face in the future. This is also the will and wishes of our ancestors. You must at least respect that."

Fruity nodded, but he hated the idea to his core. However, a part of him knew this would happen, even if he ran now. He had thought of this moment every single day, but each day, he knew running wasn't the answer. Yet, accepting this wasn't something he could take lightly either.

"Good," the grandmaster said before standing up. The other five ancient monks also stood and prepared to leave.

Fruity wanted to follow them, but before he could move, a large golden cauldron fell on him, encasing him in place.

"You are not ready for this, child. Let your grandpas and uncles take care of it," the grandmaster monk said with a smile as a large chain of beads appeared around his neck. Then, he vanished from the room, leaving Fruity to his tears. Fruity began punching the cauldron, even though he knew his strength would do nothing.

He clenched the token tightly in his hands, knowing that today would be the last day he would ever see any of them. He hated it. He didn't want them dying for him; he wanted to fight for his life, yet he couldn't. He was trapped.

Fruity's pain and anguish were so overwhelming that when his eyes changed color to dark, he didn't even notice. Suddenly, an explosion rocked the monastery, and Fruity saw that the token had started to heat up.

He didn't know where he would be sent, but he knew one thing for sure—he wouldn't go down without a fight.

His body began to radiate destructive ice qi, his eyes dark as obsidian. He opened his palm, and dark gold ice began to exude from it.

He placed his palm against the cauldron, and the ice started to spread around it.

Outside the temple, the monks and intruders were locked in fierce combat. The battle quickly revealed its destructive nature. Hundreds began dying on both sides. Despite their peaceful nature, the monks fought fiercely, determined to take down as many enemies as they could.

Both in the sky and on the ground, the battle raged on violently.

"How naive, to think a little monastery could stop the Lightning Valley," a voice suddenly sneered. As the fierce battle continued, the space cracked, and from within, a massive hand—roughly 300 meters in length—descended on the monastery.

Some of the monks who weren't strong enough instantly coughed up blood and then dropped dead. The hand was headed toward the temple where Klaus was being held, forcing the monks to defend against it with everything they had.

If the hand landed on the temple, Fruity would be long dead. However, they underestimated its power. All forms of defense were mounted, but they were being destroyed.

The grandmaster and the ancient monks were also blocked by dozens of fighters, making it impossible for them to come to aid.

Nobody expected such an attack, especially one from such a powerful individual. The monks were being annihilated by the second as the hand kept descending.

However, just when it was only a few meters away from the temple, the grandmaster's voice filled the space. His voice suddenly entered every monk's head like a silent reminder.

"Life and death is but a passage; let your inner light guide you in your..." He wasn't finished when a cold, murderous voice cut him off, filling the space.

"Chaotic Ice: Dangerous Explosion"

Chapter 264 - 264: Fruity's Dominance

BOOM!

The temple exploded, blasting the hand into nothingness and shaking the entire monastery. The explosion was so powerful that the ground and some buildings around were all reduced to rubble. However, not even a single monk was hurt.

When the dust and icy mist settled, From the ruins of the temple, Fruity stood up, looking coldly at the chaos around him. His eyes are now dark, with a hint of icy mist exuding from them.

"Devouring Ice: Demon Staff!"

A powerful ice pillar rose from the ground and when it was up in the air, it exploded. From the explosion, a 3-meter-tall staff hovered before Fruity. He grabbed it, and with his cold gaze, he muttered another spell.

"Annihilation Devouring Chaos Ice: World in Ruin!" At once, the whole monastery froze, stopping all fights. The intruders were instantly restricted, stripping them of their strength to even move.

Fruity looked toward the grandmaster monk and the Ancient monks and muttered,

"Thank you for your sacrifice Grandpa's, but fate and the heavens cannot dictate my life. I live and die on my own accord. So are the people I care about.

Take care of my uncles for me; one day we will meet again."

"Ice World: Open!" He jammed the staff into the ground again, and the space exploded. From the explosion, a door formed, and through the door, one can see a magnificent world made of crystal ice. Without saying anything, every monk vanished into the door, which closed when the last one entered.

Fruity, with his now pale face, looked at the people around him. They all stared back at him with shock, fear, and anger, however, no matter what, they couldn't move. It felt like their strength was being devoured whenever they tried to break free.

He took out the Nameless Token and smiled. "Peaceful souls, huh... well, I hate peace; I want problems always." With that, he jammed the staff into the ground.

"Devour!" In an instant, the thousands of warriors around him were reduced to nothingness. The white token in his hand suddenly turned black instead of white, exuding a powerful aura.

Fruity looked in a certain direction and muttered, "I will be back." With that, a dark portal opened and swallowed him, leaving the ruined monastery behind.

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Far from the monastery, atop an ice-filled mountain, two beautiful ladies stood gazing back at it. On the face of the one with blue hair, tear marks that seemed to be frozen in place could be seen.

"Stop crying, Tasha. He is safe now," the silver-haired lady said, comforting Tasha, or as Fruity calls her, the Ice Princess.

"But sister, he has gone to that place. I am not sure he can survive there," Tasha said, worry etched on her face. She and her sister Aurelia had been present from the beginning of the battle, ready to swoop in when things didn't go as planned.

They knew that showing themselves would only bring doom to those around them; however, for some reason, they didn't want to see him dead. They had been secretly keeping an eye on him all those years he was in seclusion.

Even without the monks knowing, the two ladies had ensured the monastery stayed safe during the past two years while Fruity was in seclusion.

"I know, but he has made his choice. You know how he is; he never listens to anyone, especially arrangements made by anyone aside from her," Aurelia said.

"Plus, he said he would be back. We have to get ready for when he returns; after all, we don't have much time," she added.

"I know; it's just that this is too painful. First, his mother and family, and now his second family. He must be devastated right now," Tasha said.

"He was bound to remember someday, so it's best he knows now. As for what happens next, at least he sent them to the Ice World; we can always check on them and ensure they are in good hands," Aurelia said.

"Okay, sister, I will listen to you," Tasha replied before waving her hand. The two vanished, erasing their presence from that place for good.

A while later, space cracked at the ruined monastery, and seven people with powerful auras walked out. The moment they appeared, the space, although in ruins, shimmered, turning rubble into dust.

"How is this possible?" one of them said, looking at the destroyed place. They could sense the residue of the energies present on the battlefield. The people who died left their energies, so without anyone telling them what happened, they knew their entire fleet had been annihilated here.

"It's the Annihilation Ice," one of them said, picking up a small stone from the ground.

"So he is still alive. How disappointing," one of them remarked. "We should have sent the others. Now things have become complicated, and we don't even know where he has gone. I cannot sense his death qi at all," he added.

"Maybe he has gone to the Ice Palace," one of them suggested.

"I doubt that. That place wouldn't accept someone like him. He has awakened a forbidden Ice; nobody would accept him. Doing so would call calamity upon themselves."

"You both are wrong," suddenly, a figure with no presence at all walked toward them. He was a middle-aged man with handsome features.

"Who are you?" one of the seven individuals asked, their alertness rising. The fact that they couldn't sense this man's presence until he spoke was enough to tell them he was dangerous, and they had to be careful.

"No need for hostility, Elders. I am Newman, Second Prince of the Ice Empire. I sensed three forbidden Ice used here and came to investigate."

"What do you mean, three?" one of the elders asked, narrowing his eyes at Newman.

"The Annihilation Ice you sensed is one of them," Newman explained, his tone steady and calm.

"The other two are the Chaotic Frost/Ice and the Devouring Ice. Each of these forms of ice is forbidden for a reason; they bring about chaos and destruction."

The three elders exchanged looks as if trying to validate what the man had said. He stood there, smiling at them.

"Well, whatever, he is long gone now, so I guess all of us were late," one of the seven elders said, shaking his head.

"I beg to differ," Newman replied.

"What do you mean?"

"Well, two portals were opened here—one leading to the Ice World. From what I know, in the entire world, only two people could do that, and neither of them was present here. So it's safe to say the forbidden Ice wielder was able to open it, but he didn't enter."

"Then where is he?" the elder asked.

"Like I said, two portals. The second was a portal to the last place anyone would want to go: the Tormented World," Newman explained, and the elders frowned.

"The Tormented World?" the elder asked.

"Yes, a world of darkness, pain, and suffering. From what I know, only demons go there. So either he entered there mistakenly or he chose to go there. Either way, if you want to catch or kill him, you can go there," Newman said before vanishing.

The elders were left standing there with puzzled looks. They knew it was unlikely they would be able to get the Ice Princess or the Wood Queen to open the gate to the Ice World for them, so their best bet was to go to the demons.

But the question was, were they brave enough to go to such a place? After all, the Tormented World was said to house some of the most vile beings in the universe. After contemplating things for a while, they opened a space rift and left, leaving the ruined monastery behind for good.

Chapter 265 - 265: The Tormented World

Somewhere, in a world that seemed to have lost some of its colors, a space rift opened in the air, and from within it, a figure emerged, falling to the ground. He landed atop a small mountain covered in a smoky haze, instantly slipping into an unconscious state.

The sound of his fall was enough to draw some attention. All around him, monsters of different sizes and shapes began making their way toward the mountain.

Suddenly, just as the first monster started to climb the mountain, a cold energy burst forth from the body of the unconscious figure, instantly freezing it in place.

The other monsters, upon seeing the first monster frozen, retreated, not daring to come closer to the mountain. The sight was too shocking, even for them.

A day went by, and no monsters approached the mountain. However, they stood a few kilometers away, watching the figure remain unconscious on the mountain.

For days, the figure remained atop the mountain, still unconscious. The monsters never left; they stayed there, watching as he slept until, half a year later, his eyes snapped open, accompanied by a terrifying wave of ice qi.

The 100-kilometer radius was instantly turned to ice, and everything within that radius was devoured. Fruity slowly stood and sat up, his face pale.

He immediately looked at his finger, and the space ring given to him by one of his uncle's monks was still there. He took out a bamboo jug and opened it, pouring every last drop of water down his throat.

"I need food," Fruity muttered quietly. His face was as pale as paper; however, his gaze was as cold as that of a demon in a frenzied state.

"Ice Empire, Lightning Valley, Druikard Empire, wait for me. One day, I will be sure to devour every last one of you," Fruity said coldly as he gazed into the sky housing two moons.

Back at the monastery, just as he was trying to break free from the cauldron the monks used to trap him for his own safety, something broke within him, and memories of his childhood and a small part of his past self poured into his mind.

He remembered everything, his childhood, his parents and Haniva, his babysitter and friend. He also remembered their death. But aside from that, he remembered a part of his past self memories.

It was true that he had managed to break free and used a forbidden technique to amplify himself, giving him the limited strength needed to save the monks and kill every last one of the intruders.

He remembered how his mother and Haniva sacrificed themselves so he could live. He also recalled a part of his past self, remembering that he had been many things, and one of them was a mage with mastery over both ice and lightning.

The techniques and spells used during the invasion of the monastery came from that memory. Now, sitting down, he felt angry, sad, and drained.

"Mom, Sister Hanvia, I will avenge you," he muttered quietly.

"Uncles, I hope we meet again. But first, I must apologize. The peaceful ways you taught me will not hold much longer. To do what is necessary, I will have to become something else. So I apologize in advance, but you all shouldn't worry.

As long as I am alive, the name of Mountain Forest Monastery will never die, in the Grand Xhanti Kingdom and the rest of the world."

He raised his body to a kneeling posture and bowed three times before sitting back up. His body was weak—very weak, in fact—so weak that if a monster were to appear now, he would struggle to fight it.

He had to recover first, but more importantly, Fruity, ever the glutton, felt his stomach calling; he had to find food.

"Why does it have to be the devouring ice? Now all the monsters are dead and devoured, and I only receive a fraction of the energy obtained."

With no energy to move forward, he began to cultivate, drawing energy from the air to recover. It was a very slow approach compared to simply absorbing monster cores and other treasures, but with the technique taught to him by the monks, he was able to start cultivating a little faster.

A week later, color returned to his face, indicating that he had somehow recovered. "30 percent recovered; that will do for now. I need to hunt for food," Fruity said as he stood up. From the ground, a staff appeared.

He examined it for a while before shaking it slightly. The staff exuded a cold ice qi. Fruity nodded and then started moving away from the mountain.

After crossing the ice dune he had subconsciously created, he came to a river. He quickly rushed toward it, and with a wave of the staff, the water moved, and chunks of ice began shooting out.

Inside these chunks were fishes. Fruity quickly set a fire, and before long, he was chewing on bones and meat. His stomach was something he had always prioritized.

After eating dozens of fish, Fruity belched, filled his bamboo jug with water, and finally sat down, feeling satisfied.

He remained seated, making sure his senses were on high alert. A moment later, he muttered, "Alright, past me, you said I should come to this godforsaken world instead of going to paradise. So, what do you have for me?" He smiled, shifting into a meditative posture.

The Nameless Token was supposed to send him to a world where things would have been easier. Instead, he found himself in the Tormented World, a place of only danger and suffering—something even the most insane person wouldn't willingly choose.

A while later, he opened his eyes and smirked. "I guess I must've been a maniac in my past life to have suggested something this crazy. But it's smart—I needed something like this," he muttered, then stood up.

"I need to awaken all seven forbidden ice elements. Thankfully, I've already awakened three, which means I only have to hunt down four of the seven demon monsters my past self wanted me to kill. Seriously, what kind of person was I to know all this and even have a map of this place?" Fruity shook his head.

"After awakening the remaining four ice elements, I'll have to take the Tormented Trial to unlock my bloodline. Then, I'll need to kill more demon monsters to strengthen my bloodline before becoming a Great Sage.

"Sounds easy enough... for a maniac, that is." Fruity didn't know whether to laugh or cry.

He might have received a technique that would help him utilize the three ice elements he had already awakened, but he was still too weak to use them for extended periods or unleash their true strength.

He needed to become a Great Sage before he could fully wield them. However, to achieve that, according to his past self, he had to embark on a slaughter, crossing many dangerous zones in the Tormented World.

Thankfully, his past self had left a map of this place, which would make things a little easier for him. But still, he had to kill four monsters that were several times stronger than him—and he had to do all of that before reaching the Great Sage stage.

"First task: I have to go to Illusion Mountain to retrieve an item but to get there, I need to pass through the Calamity Valley—a place filled with the most dangerous kinds of monsters. This is pure madness," Fruity muttered, looking in a certain direction.

"Whatever is in that place, it better be worth it," Fruity said. "Otherwise, as strange as it sounds, I'll hate my past self for the rest of my life," he added with a smirk.

With renewed focus, he started moving. He needed to be at his strongest, so his first goal was to hunt some monsters and absorb their cores now that he had eaten and was strong enough.

A week later, he was ready to begin his journey westward, where danger awaited.

Chapter 266 - 266: Besieged by Hellhounds (1)

The Calamity Valley, according to what Fruity knew from his past self, is a region—or more like an entire continent—in the Tormented World, where various kinds of monsters live. In this world, the monsters are referred to as Demons.

Although he doesn't have all the knowledge, the little he does have is enough to inform him that the monsters in this world are more sentient than those in his own world.

When they grow to a certain stage, they can take human form and communicate as humans do. However, although they can take human form, they retain some of their monster features, making them distinguishable from humans.

This also means they are intelligent creatures, and because Fruity knew the knowledge he had was probably outdated, he started his journey with his full strength restored. He had become a Saint, which meant he had formed his Star Core, but he still hadn't saturated it enough to advance to the Sage Stage.

He still needed a lot more resources to do that, so he knew he had to tread carefully. After two weeks of travel, he finally arrived at the borders of Calamity Valley.

"This is going to be dangerous." Standing atop a mountain and overlooking the vast expanse of calamity lying in wait for him to traverse, Fruity could only smile before stepping into the air.

He had become a Saint, so to a certain extent, he could walk in the air. Fruity had no experience in this field whatsoever, but if you have memories of your past self, you can do much more than just walk.

After moving through the air for a few hours, he finally entered Calamity Valley, making him descend to the ground and continue on foot.

It took him another week just to move through a grassy field. He encountered a few monsters, but they weren't that strong, so he simply devoured them and continued his journey.

His Devouring Ice allows him to consume anything and extract its essence energy, with a part absorbed into his Star Core and another part absorbed by the Devouring Ice.

So far, his Devouring Ice is the strongest of the three because he has been using it ever since he woke up.

However, that doesn't mean the others aren't powerful. He just doesn't have to use them unless it's necessary. He also knew that once he obtained Ice-type monsters, he could absorb their cores to strengthen the other types of ice.

For a while, as he moved through the valley using the layout from the map he received from his past self, he never stopped killing.

"I should be nearing the territory of the Single Horn Flame Lions." After a month of entering the valley, he began to approach a territory he recognized from the map.

"They should be peaceful enough, according to what my past self indicated." Fruity smiled and then started walking toward the region.

He planned to pass through there to reach the Cracked Path, where, according to the map, he would have to cross within a day, or more precisely, before sunset; otherwise, he was done for. He had to move fast, so without hesitation, he entered the territory of the Single Horn Flame Lions.

A day later, he appeared outside a camp manned by a few figures walking around the perimeter. Fruity activated his Eye of Despair and decided to investigate.

However, just as he activated it, he sensed some figures approaching. Looking with his enhanced vision, he immediately recognized them as Hellhounds.

He immediately took to his heels and dashed away. However, he was already discovered. The reason he ran was that the Hellhounds, true to their name, were a dangerous kind of dog-like monster that hunted for blood.

They were flame-type monsters specialized in hunting. They tracked their prey through scent and blood, making escape very difficult.

Fruity spared no expense as he pushed his speed to the limit, but he had only been moving for a couple of minutes when he sensed more Hellhounds approaching from all directions.

"How come I didn't notice them? I was being careful," Fruity muttered, extending his senses to look for an opening.

"If I go east, I might be able to break through faster before their reinforcements arrive. Maybe I can escape by then," he muttered, running toward the east.

He ran toward the east, knowing he had to go south if he wanted to continue his journey as planned. But he couldn't do that. With thousands of Tier 5 and Tier 6 Hellhounds approaching, each exuding a powerful aura, he knew he had to escape first and then find a way to continue.

"Almost there," he muttered, realizing that the only way out would be to fight and create an opening in the eastern section quickly to escape.

When he was about a kilometer from the approaching Hellhounds, he raised his staff, and dark ice began exuding from it.

"Annihilation Ice: Ground Frost Arrows!" He stopped and jammed the staff into the ground, instantly freezing the space around him.

From the frozen ground, ice arrows began shooting up. The Hellhounds that came within range were instantly annihilated. However, it didn't stop there; when the ice landed on the monsters, it began to spread, creating a form of ground domain that would annihilate any Hellhound that stepped on it.

It was very powerful, but it required significant stamina and Qi. This meant Fruity could only use it for a limited amount of time.

"Chaotic Ice: Icy Wind," Fruity activated another technique, and this time, as the monsters started to freeze, a powerful icy wind began to blow.

There were no visible changes to the environment due to the ice; however, when the wind reached the approaching Hellhounds, it was as though their minds were taken over by something.

The Tier 5 Hellhounds began to kill each other as if they had instantly lost their minds. The primary property of Chaotic Ice was chaos and disorder. Unlike the Annihilation Ice, which obliterates anything it touches, or the Devouring Ice, which consumes everything, Chaos Ice was more of a mental attack.

It created chaos on the battlefield. Fruity knew that with such a large number of enemies, he could control the disorder and let some of the monsters kill each other. This, of course, only worked on the Tier 5 Hellhounds.

His soul strength wasn't strong enough to affect the higher-tiered monsters, so he could only target those in the same realm as him.

"Unless, of course, something were to happen to weaken their souls, causing them to lose control for a moment," Fruity muttered with a smile, despite the chaos raging around him.

With a sudden thought, the Pentaface Bead appeared behind him. Then he muttered something, and the first face turned forward. From that face, a bell appeared—the Bell of Harrows.

Ding!

After enlarging to a certain size, it rang, sending a shockwave of soul and sonic attacks across the entire battlefield. At the same time, Fruity repeated the Chaotic Ice technique. This time, when the skill was unleashed, both the Tier 5 and Tier 6 Hellhounds went into a frenzy, attacking each other.

"All I needed was to think and strategize. Now I can kill them all and move through this section unimpeded," Fruity muttered as he prepared to unleash another attack.

The soul attack from the Bell of Harrows had cracked the monsters' soul defenses, allowing the Chaos Ice to infiltrate their minds and souls. The result was clear.

"10% of my spiritual qi has been used up already. I need to end this quickly," he said, moving toward a certain direction. A while later, he stopped, gripping the staff with both hands.

"Annihilation Ice: Total Annihilation!" A wave of ice burst forth, creating a tsunami of ice that swept across the battlefield, destroying everything in its path. The attack was so powerful that even Fruity, who had activated it, was forced to use his staff to brace himself to avoid being blown away.

The entire space suddenly fell silent. Fruity smiled, knowing that, for now, he had killed the thousands of Hellhounds pursuing him. By the time more arrived, he would be long gone.

But before his smile could fully form, a powerful attack tore through the sky, aimed directly at him.

"Human, die!" A cold voice reverberated across the space, shattering the ice that had spread everywhere. Fruity spun his staff, raising an ice wall, but it was instantly shattered as the attack landed, the shockwave sending him flying.

Suddenly, a figure about 4 meters tall, muscular with jagged features, wielding a large rod, appeared in the sky. Before Fruity could register this new arrival, another fire attack came flying toward him.

Chapter 267 - 267: Besieged by Hellhounds (2)

According to the map, Fruity should be crossing the domain of the Single Horn Flame Lions by now. Instead, he found himself blocked by an attack from a Tier 7 Devil.

The Single Horn Flame Lions are demon monsters that don't have sight, so they can only sense their surroundings using the horn mounted on their heads.

Like the Hellhounds, they can also track their prey using blood and sound. But if none of these signals are present, they wouldn't be able to do much, which means Fruity could have crossed their domain by moving quietly or even through the air.

However, here he was, being attacked by Devil monsters.

"I really didn't want to waste spiritual essence, but I guess there's no choice now." Despite the attack aimed at him, he wasn't scared.

"Devour." He raised his staff, forming an ice wall made from Dark Gold Ice. The moment the attack hit it, the ice wall absorbed the blow but shattered. Fruity quickly raised another ice wall, which prevented the shockwave from reaching him.

"Human, why did you kill my soldiers?" the monster asked, perhaps noticing how easily its second attack had been absorbed.

"Die." In response, a large Dark Ice spear appeared in the air and shot toward the monster. Without waiting to see the outcome, Fruity immediately turned and started running. However, he hadn't even covered a kilometer when four more powerful presences appeared, surrounding him.

"Do you think you can run after killing our people?" A tall, dark figure said, appearing in the air.

"It was self-defense. They attacked me, so I had to defend myself," Fruity replied, seeing no way out now.

"Then defend yourself."

Five attacks suddenly appeared in the air, all aimed at him. Fruity quickly muttered something, and the bell appeared, instantly covering him.

Dang!

The five attacks struck the bell, making it ring loudly. Powerful sonic and soul attacks burst out from the bell, instantly hitting the five figures.

The figure who had already tanked one of Fruity's attacks couldn't defend against both the sonic and soul attacks, so its soul was immediately extinguished, causing it to drop from the sky. As for the other four, their weapons, along with their bodies, fell from the sky, hitting the ground with a thud.

On the ground, they clutched their heads, blood oozing from their orifices. The sonic attack from the bell was just too much. Thanks to his two years in seclusion, Fruity had studied it extensively, allowing him to control the bell to increase the sonic output while reducing the soul attack.

He knew his soul wasn't strong enough to kill these monsters with soul attacks alone. However, the Sonic attack was a whole different story. If he played his cards right, he could kill even stronger monsters with just the two attack combinations.

However, the price was steep. From the look on Fruity's face, one could tell he had used a large portion of his spiritual qi for that attack.

"I need to leave this place fast before something stronger shows up," he muttered, dismissing the bell, although the bead remained.

"Devour," he commanded, waving his staff. Ice burst from the ground, wrapping around the monsters. He intended to devour them, but when his ice enveloped them, he felt his control being cut off.

Sensing something ominous, Fruity immediately bolted without hesitation. This time, he managed to escape, leaving the four devil monsters on the ground, still enduring the torment in their brains.

Whatever had severed his control over the ice was something he didn't want to face right away. He was too drained. So, he ran, and for ten straight minutes, he didn't stop.

After thirty minutes and thousands of kilometers, he paused to catch his breath. He had run further east, deviating far from where he originally intended to go.

He was supposed to cross the territory of the Single Horn Flame Lions, which now seemed to be occupied by the Hellhounds. Then, he needed to traverse the Cracked Path, located south of his current location.

After that, he would journey through the Weiling Trees Forest. From there, he only had to cross the Born Bridge over the Black River. He would then be greeted by Illusion Mountain, his intended destination.

Roughly, he estimated it would take a year and a half to reach there, but now, with this new complication, he had to change his route. The new path would take him near the borders of the Medusa Bone Python Domain, a place that, according to the map in his mind, he should avoid at all costs.

The Medusa Bone Python was an ancient serpent that could easily kill both people and monsters with a single gaze. Approaching that region was suicide. Even through his senses, the moment he met the snake's gaze, he would turn to stone.

And relying solely on his hearing to navigate such a dangerous region wasn't an option. Now, he either had to return west, where he came from, and then circle through the north, where he'd have to cross the Silent Mountain.

He knew nothing about that place, as the map in his mind contained no information on it.

"Ah, what a headache," Fruity muttered, frustration evident in his voice as he gazed back at the Hellhound domain he had barely escaped from.

"It'll take me another month to get to Silent Mountain, and since I know nothing about the place, I'll have to be extra careful. Judging by how things are going, it will take more than two months to cross it."

And that's if everything went smoothly. "I can't come back here ever again, at least not while I'm this weak." Fruity glanced back at the domain of the Hellhounds.

"Well, at least I managed to bridge the gap a little. After more killing, I'll probably be able to break through to Sage within 6 months," he smiled, turning back toward the western road.

He found a cave, and for the next week, he decided to rest and recover. The journey to the north would require all the strength he could muster.

A week later, Fruity was ready to start his journey to the north and eventually head east. During the past week, he had hunted monsters and stockpiled rations for the long trek ahead.

He set off, and for weeks, he journeyed through dangerous terrains, battling and slaying monsters as he pressed forward.

Four days into the third week, the Silent Mountain came into view. Gazing at it from afar, Fruity wasn't sure if he had made the right choice coming this way.

On his way north, he had considered many plans. He could have stayed in the west, hunting more monsters. Once he became a Sage, he could have tried his luck passing through the Hellhound domain. But he quickly dismissed that idea.

If he took that path, he would need at least half a year to fully saturate his Star Core before forming a Sage Core. Even then, he wasn't sure if he could defeat whatever had driven him away from the Hellhound domain.

But even if he succeeded in killing it, he would still have to cross several other treacherous domains before reaching Illusion Mountain. Time wasn't on his side, so the best option was to keep moving forward and take his chances.

"I can't turn back now. I might as well embrace this path and add new information to the map. Who knows when I might need it again?" Fruity muttered to himself. Steeling his resolve, he started toward the eerie Silent Mountain.

A few hours later, he finally set foot on the mountain. Sensing no immediate danger, he ventured deeper into its depths.

A week passed without incident, and Fruity began to feel comfortable in the region. However, just as he was starting to relax, a voice, both familiar yet distant and menacing, echoed in his mind, freezing him in place.

"I have been waiting for your arrival, My Lord."

Chapter 268 - 268: Yuying

Fruity immediately froze when the voice spoke. For some unexplainable reason, the voice seemed to have a hold on him, like something he should remember, yet somehow, he didn't. This made him freeze up.

It wasn't out of fear or terror. It was more like he should have been able to recognize that voice, but he couldn't, and this brought a sense of pain to him. The kind one would feel from watching the face of the one they love but couldn't feel anything.

The voice spoke from behind him—no killing intent or any form of energy could be sensed, meaning the voice meant him no harm.

However, he just couldn't muster the effort to turn and face the feminine voice that had spoken to him.

"Master, you haven't forgotten about me, have you?" the voice spoke again, this time softer than before. She had even changed his title from "My lord" to "Master," which further made Fruity believe he was in for a ride through his past self's memories.

He turned slightly toward the source of the sound. For a moment, he expected to see a human-like figure looking back at him, but when he turned, his gaze met that of a 2-meter-tall Black and white fox with a cute tail and a bone-like crown sitting on its head.

Fruity's brows furrowed. The voice was so natural and human that he had expected to see a person, but a fox? That was just too bizarre.

"Oh, I see now." While Fruity was still staring at the fox, it transformed into a human form.

Once the transformation was complete, it became a woman in her mid-20s. She had an athletic frame, gray eyes that seemed to hold a hint of darkness, and beautifully sculpted features. Her black and white hair was perfectly tied behind her.

She was now clad in dark leather armor that clung to her skin like a second skin. Fruity watched her transformation with fascination, though his mind raced with thoughts of how to escape the situation. Even without scanning the lady, he knew she was several times stronger than him.

He couldn't possibly kill her. However, a part of him also wanted to see where this went. So far, the beautiful lady had referred to him twice with a title that suggested she meant no harm.

"It seems you haven't awakened your memories yet, Master." While Fruity was examining her, she spoke again, this time with a slightly sad expression.

"Who am I kidding? You still haven't awakened your bloodline, your physiques, or even the true form of your element. No, you haven't even awakened all the Forbidden Ice, and why... why are you only a Saint?

Master, why are you this weak?" the fox lady said, starting to pace.

"You are a Paragon, so why are you this weak? Even the Demon Slaying Staff hasn't awakened yet, and oh, you're still using Spiritual Qi. This is bad, this is really bad," she kept muttering, which only made Fruity's brows furrow as he listened.

'What is this lunatic talking about?' he thought inwardly.

"Master, are you calling me a lunatic?" Suddenly, the fox lady stopped pacing and looked back at him.

'She can read my thoughts,' Fruity thought, his grip tightening on the staff.

"I'm sorry, Master, I shouldn't have done that. It's just... I was waiting for... well, a powerful version of you, but the current you is just too weak. What happened? Haven't you awakened your past memories yet?"

"I feel like we're missing some critical exposition here, so why don't we de-escalate and take this another way? We can start with your name and a little about you," Fruity said, forgetting all the escape plans he had in mind. The lady could read his thoughts, which meant all ten escape plans he'd come up with were now obsolete.

He had to respond to the situation as it was and focus on learning more about this fox lady and what she kept rambling on about.

"Okay, Master," the fox lady said. "My name is Yuying. I am the 4th member of the Paragon Guards, created by you with only one purpose: to serve you for all of eternity." The fox lady, now identified as Yuying, finished her introduction, and that was about all Fruity could grasp.

"I believe we've entered uncharted territory here. Yuying, nice meeting you. I'm Fruity," Fruity said.

"Nice to meet you again, Master," Yuying replied.

"I think calling me Fruity will suffice."

"No, it is required of me to refer to my Master as Master or My Lord," Yuying said, and from her expression, Fruity knew she wouldn't be changing her mind anytime soon.

"Okay, Yuying, why don't we start with why you think I am your master? I'm just a renegade monk led to this godforsaken world by a maniac. I don't remember ever being a Master or a Lord," Fruity said.

But inwardly, he knew this had something to do with his past.

"No, Master is the 4th Paragon," Yuying said.

"Let's say I am. Care to tell me what a Paragon is?" Fruity asked.

"Yes, a Paragon is the strongest being in the entire universe and beyond," Yuying said with a smile. Fruity had expected that answer, so he wasn't shocked. But, like anyone, he wanted more details.

"I can tell you I'm no stronger than an average human. But let's say I am this Paragon. Care to tell me why you're calling me your Master? Sorry, but I don't recall taking in any guards," Fruity said.

"You don't remember yet, which is why you're saying that. But I, along with eight others, were created by the First Paragon as guards and light-bearers tasked with locating the Paragon whenever you reincarnate," Yuying explained. Fruity raised his eyebrows upon hearing that.

"So you're saying I'm the reincarnation of the master you once served?" Fruity asked.

"Yes, Master, you are the 4th incarnation, and so far, the weakest," Yuying said with a sigh.

"Jeez, thanks for the encouragement. But I have to tell you, I don't feel like a Paragon. I don't even feel as strong as you're making it out to be," Fruity said with a smile.

"No, you are my Master. I have divined this moment and waited. There is no mistaking that," Yuying said confidently.

"Alright, say I am this Master of yours. What proves I'm really this 4th Paragon?" Fruity asked.

"That's because you've already awakened three of the Forbidden Ice elements you created. Although they're still weak and you haven't yet fused with the Seven Star Forbidden Ice Diagram, there's no mistaking it. Plus, you're using the Demon Slaying Staff. I created that, by the way," Yuying said, and Fruity's expression changed.

"You're saying I created the Forbidden Ice elements?" he asked.

"Yes, Master," Yuying confirmed.

"Why would I do something like that?" Fruity asked again.

"That is because, as a Paragon, the heavens will never allow you to grow using their resources, so you're forced to walk your own path. You created many things, always finding new ways to grow stronger," Yuying explained. "But fear not, Master. Even though you haven't awakened your memories yet, I will help you become stronger quickly."

Fruity calmed down a bit. He still didn't know what it truly meant to be a Paragon, and even now, he didn't see himself as one. However, the more Yuying spoke, the more his thinking began to shift. He could start piecing things together.

First, he'd awakened strange memories that allowed him to unleash powerful attacks and save his uncles from total annihilation. Then, he followed a map that led him to a world full of danger.

And now, he was standing face-to-face with the most powerful and beautiful person he'd ever met. But instead of running, he was here, with this powerful being, who was bitterly bowing at his feet. If that wasn't something to reflect on, what else could it be?

"Do you have a place where we can talk?" Fruity suddenly asked. He needed to understand more about who he was—or, more importantly, who he had been.

Yuying nodded with a smile and waved her hand. Before Fruity could react, a strange energy enveloped him, and in an instant, he disappeared—only to reappear in an elegant garden.

Chapter 269 - 269: Getting the Rich Kid Treatment (1)

"So, let me recap this. You, along with eight others, were created by my past self as guardians of the Paragon Stars and light-bearers, tasked with locating me whenever I reincarnate and helping me start my next path toward the next reincarnation.

"However, you don't know why I am reincarnating, and because of karma, you cannot tell me about my past selves, the last three in particular. Also, you're the only one who has awakened this time to guide and protect me. Does that about sum everything up?"

Fruity said, biting into an apple that Yuying had served him when they appeared in the garden. He wasn't one to reject food, after all.

"Yes, that's about it," Yuying replied, sitting opposite him.

"Okay, I believe you now," Fruity suddenly said with a smile.

"You do?" This time, Yuying was taken aback. For the last three hours, Fruity had been asking her a bunch of questions, clearly having a hard time believing her. So hearing his statement just now was a shock to her.

"I do. I happen to know when someone is lying, and for the past few hours, I couldn't sense a single lie from you. So, I guess you're telling the truth." Fruity said.

"Of course I was," Yuying sighed.

She had been worried that Fruity wouldn't believe her, and because of that, she was prepared to lock him up and convince him if necessary. After all, a thousand years in isolation would be enough time to reflect and digest some things.

"So where are the others? If there are nine of you, where are the other eight?" Fruity asked. He was shocked when Yuying said his past self, or more accurately, his original self had created them. She didn't say how he did it, but creating living beings was just insane to him.

"They are still asleep, and when I say asleep, I mean they're somewhere in the universe but haven't recovered their memories yet," Yuying answered.

"But you remembered, so how does it work?" Fruity asked. If the others don't remember him, how could she?

"With every reincarnation cycle, one of us awakens with our memories intact to search for you. As for the others, they will eventually remember, but the process will speed up the faster you grow. You'll even start sensing them as you get much stronger. The current you is very weak, but we'll fix that."

"By the way, Master, where are you headed? I've been tracking you ever since you entered this world and saw you were headed somewhere but had to take a detour. So, where were you going?"

"Illusion Mountain. That was my first destination in mind. But after I would have hunted down some monsters to awaken my other ice elements," Fruity replied.

"That will take you two and a half years at your current strength," Yuying said bluntly, much to Fruity's surprise. He had expected some directions or advice, but she spoke as if she had calculated it in her head without sugarcoating anything.

"Well, I'll get there eventually," Fruity could only smile, realizing his own calculations had been wrong.

"Don't worry, Master, I've made provisions to ensure your needs are met for the next five years," Yuying said, causing Fruity to raise an eyebrow.

"What do you mean?" he asked. He knew exactly what she meant, but he feigned ignorance to see what kind of arrangements she had made.

"You'll need a vast amount of resources, Master. To become a Sage, and eventually a Great Sage, you'll require an immense supply. I've already prepared a lot and am still working on gathering more. For the next five years, you will undergo intense training and tempering as you work toward becoming a Sage."

"And when you say you've prepared resources, how much are we talking about here?" Fruity asked, raising an eyebrow.

"Enough to make you a Sage. A powerful Sage," Yuying said, this time with a small smile.

"Yuying, exactly how strong are you?" Fruity decided to ask. So far, Yuying had shown no signs of wanting to deceive him.

But even if she had some nefarious thoughts, Fruity knew it was already too late for him. In simple terms, he was beyond saving. So, he figured he might as well stick with the Fox Lady and see where it took him.

"I awakened 370 years ago, and thanks to my cultivation base being in hibernation rather than fully dormant, I was able to progress quickly through the stages. Currently, I'm in the Ascension stage for Body, Qi, Spirit and Mind cultivation."

"It was a long road for anyone to walk, but thanks to you, I was able to walk it easily. But don't worry, Master, the current me is strong enough to handle someone two or even three realms above me."

Fruity looked at her with wide eyes. He knew what the Ascension realm was—he had read about it. He even learned from his uncle Monks that the five Ancient Monks had reached that stage.

Even if he hadn't known, the hand that emerged from the rift during the battle at the Monastery belonged to an Ascension stage expert.

Seeing one right in front of him, both cute and surprisingly strong, Fruity simply couldn't understand why such a being would refer to him as "Master." It was both shocking and oddly comforting.

"What do you mean by hibernation?" Fruity asked. From her answer, it seemed her past self was even stronger, possibly beyond the Ascension stage. Did that mean his past self had reached even higher realms?

"Master, although you may not remember yet, you were the type who didn't tolerate weak people around you. You used to say, 'Weak people should just die so the strong can live their lives.'"

"I would never say something like that, but go on," Fruity replied with a smile, thinking, 'What a maniac I was.'

"Well, you did. Because of that, you ensured that every one of us pursued complete cultivation. And when I say 'complete,' I mean that, regardless of the talent or class we awakened, we cultivated the body, mind, soul, and Qi.

"This, of course, made us several times stronger than anyone else. As for hibernation, since we exist outside of fate and its rules. So when we enter Samsara to reincarnate, our cultivation base declines to the Master stage."

"But once we awaken, we just need to gather resources to restore our strength. It's easier if we awaken with our memories intact. But even without them, we still rise above others easily.

"However, it's not that simple. Despite having 370 years, I was only able to reach the peak of the Ascension stage.

"But it was enough for me to go anywhere and prepare for your arrival. So fear not, Master, I've gathered all kinds of treasures for body, soul, mind, and Qi cultivation. You will become the strongest in just a few years, and then you can continue with your plans for this incarnation. Of course, I'll be with you, as it was meant to be," Yuying finished with a smile.

Fruity could only sigh. He knew there was a lot to digest, and from the looks of it, this was indeed the best path forward for him. The coming years would be dedicated to cultivation, thanks to his past self ensuring that fate wouldn't get the best of him.

Learning that he wasn't connected to fate in the way he'd once believed, he knew using this advantage would make things easier. The heavens wanted him dead, so his past self had made sure that each reincarnation would help him grow stronger.

He still didn't fully understand what a Paragon was, but after hearing Yuying explain so much, he began to suspect that the Monks might have known—and that this could be part of the reason they were willing to sacrifice themselves for him.

Not everyone wanted a Paragon dead. Some actually revered them, and Fruity had just crossed paths with people who might fit that description. This realization only fueled his desire to become stronger and find a way back into the Ice World.

After all, he had used his one chance to enter by sending his uncles there instead. Now, he needed more tokens, and fortunately, he already had an idea of where to start once he escaped this strange world.

"Show me what you've got," Fruity said. Yuying waved her hand, and they were instantly transported to another place—a valley of some kind.

Chapter 270 - 270: Getting the Rich Kid Treatment (2)

As soon as they arrived in the valley, they were greeted by a lush yet formidable landscape. Powerful energies filled the air around them.

"What is this place?" Fruity asked.

"This used to belong to the Blue Feather Hawk Demons, but I wiped them out and repurposed them for your training. It contains powerful treasures, thanks to those demons' obsession with collecting anything rare and powerful," Yuying replied.

"I'm guessing you learned that from my previous self too." Hearing how she casually referred to mass genocide as if it were nothing, Fruity just smiled. He knew he would soon be committing similar atrocities—he had already started—but the teachings of the monks seemed to keep a part of his sanity in check.

Yuying smiled and waved her hand, bringing them to a stop in front of a pond-like structure filled with a powerful kind of water.

"This is Bone and Meridian Cleansing Essence. By tempering your body inside it, your bones will be cleansed, making them much stronger, and your meridians will also be cleansed, making it easier to channel your energies," Yuying explained, and Fruity nodded.

They moved again and stopped in front of a cave-like abode. "This is the Hunting Cave. The deeper you go, the more pressure and pain you will feel in your mind. If you manage to endure, your mind will become stronger than ever."

"How deep does it go?" Fruity asked.

"It's about 12 kilometers deep, but you don't have to go all the way. I only managed to reach 4 kilometers, so you can take it slowly at first," Yuying said, and Fruity nodded.

They moved again, stopping at the base of a small mountain with stairs winding up its side to the peak.

"I call it Gravity Mountain. As the name suggests, as you climb those stairs, your body will be under constant pressure, which, theoretically, should improve your body's tempering.

"Of course, the current you wouldn't be able to climb even two steps because you're still just a Qi cultivator, but after going through all the body tempering processes I've prepared, you'll become much stronger before taking on this challenge."

Fruity nodded, and they moved to examine all the other resources Yuying had gathered over the years. In the end, Fruity was left with only one question on his mind: Just how many races of demon monsters has she decimated for these resources? But he sighed and moved on to the last location, about 20 miles away from where they currently stood.

"Master, I know you don't remember yet, but you're someone who loves to fight—a lot. So even though you're just a Mage now, I've prepared hundreds of techniques and skills for you. This will help you learn combat techniques.

I have served you for three generations now, so I'm confident that once you remember your past, you won't be angry at me for not doing more. But even if you are, I'll willingly accept my punishment without complaint," Yuying said, trying to hide the amusement on her face.

"Don't worry, Yuying, you've already outdone yourself. I'm sure only an idiot would be displeased with you," Fruity said, looking at the space containing various types of weapons, techniques, and training equipment.

"Thank you, Master," Yuying smiled.

"Since you've awakened this time as a Mage, you'll be training to become a Combat Mage. This means that aside from using just the staff to activate skills and techniques, you'll also be engaging in close combat with it.

Of course, if you're anything like your past reincarnations, you'll probably choose more than one weapon. But for now, you can pick the techniques you want and the weapons you'll be using."

Fruity didn't want to protest how Yuying kept comparing him to his past selves, but hearing it was starting to eat away at his self-confidence. From her tone, it was clear that Yuying missed his past self. He knew it wasn't his fault though—he had been living with monks who preferred peace above all else.

They weren't exactly the type to go to great lengths to secure all kinds of resources for him. The little they had, they gave to him, but it clearly wasn't enough.

He could only sigh and then move ahead to review the techniques she had prepared for him. From shelf to shelf, different kinds of techniques could be seen.

Of course, he might not rival his past selves, but he had a sharp mind. So, he did what he had done back in the Soul Temple—he scanned the techniques, not by reading, but by simply watching for a few seconds, allowing them to imprint themselves in his mind.

After an hour, he was done learning all the techniques and went ahead to pick one meant for spears and staff. Since he would be using the staff for skill activation, fighting with it seemed like a good idea.

He could already visualize how to train it—his brain was like a computer in that regard. All he had to do now was practice, and he would be able to flawlessly wield the staff in combat. The techniques all contained battle styles one could rely on to master their preferred weapon.

"I'll go with the Ten Thousand Demon Beating Staff technique for now, while I think about the next weapon to choose," Fruity said as he walked away from the techniques section.

"Master, aren't you going to take the technique?" Yuying asked, puzzled.

"No, I've already learned it," Fruity replied with a smile, watching her expression. He knew that he had finally shown something that neither of his past incarnations possessed. That realization was comforting, as he had expected.

"Does that mean you..." Yuying began to ask.

"Yes, I've learned all the techniques. Now, all that's left is to pick up the weapon and practice," Fruity answered, still smiling.

"Interesting. Once you become a Great Sage, we can head to the Chaotic Region and learn all the techniques there. I'm sure, with just an hour, you'll be able to learn everything," Yuying said before waving her hand, and as Fruity expected, they were transported to a new place.

"This will be your resting place for the time you spend here." Fruity and Yuying appeared at a location with a building built into a mountain. All around, the place looked like paradise.

There were various kinds of fruits and other food items that Fruity immediately fell in love with. He had become the type of person who wouldn't complain the moment he saw food. The last thing he wanted was to grumble about something he loved with his entire soul.

"You can rest for the next few days before your training begins. I'll be away for a few days, but when I return, we'll start your training," Yuying said, and Fruity nodded.

Finally, this was the "rich kid" treatment he had envisioned back when he and his uncle Monk were in Hammond City. He had seen the luxurious lives most of the youngsters there, who were also there to awaken their classes, were living.

He had asked his uncle about their situation, but all his uncle said was, that as long as Fruity had food and a place to live, he wasn't poor. Fruity, of course, didn't believe him—not even slightly. So, seeing this step up from his life back at the monastery, he was more than happy to spend the next few days relaxing.

Of course, he still had his priorities straight. For seven days, he relaxed and calmed his thoughts. On the eighth day, when Yuying returned from wherever she had gone, they began his training, which would last for the next five years.