

Paragon 301

Chapter 301 - 301: Battle at Alpha

The plan was simple: if Klaus's team made it to Alpha first, all of them would enter and continue to a point they had selected on the map. He, on the other hand, would stay behind and thin down the number of their competitors.

The second part of the plan was that if they weren't the first to arrive, they would select their strongest members to fight while the weaker links tried to enter. It was the best strategy they could devise, knowing that the other regions would do whatever it took to stop Klaus's team.

Klaus knew that with 100 people traveling with them, he and his friends couldn't run off as they pleased. They would have to function as a team, and so, as a cohesive unit, they moved at a pace that everyone could benefit from.

But the first obstacle had to be dealt with. The next would depend on how capable they were. In truth, Klaus wanted something bad to happen on the other side of the door so that some of the individuals trying to act bossy would straighten up.

They needed to gain experience the hard way. So, despite the reasoning that since they were the first there, they should use the time to put some distance between themselves and the competition, Klaus just wanted to antagonize Ella's team.

His plan was straightforward: he would show them that no matter the alliances they formed, he alone was enough to stop them.

As soon as the Central Region team appeared, he smiled, knowing they were in for trouble.

"Klaus, what are you trying to do?" Max shouted, nocking an arrow in his bow.

Klaus leaned back in his ice chair, an amused grin stretching across his face as he observed the three legacies and the Central Region team. He could tell some of them were tired, probably due to the battle with the Stone Wolves.

"What's the matter, Max?" Klaus taunted knowing Max was the weakest link. "Afraid you won't be able to handle a little competition?"

Max glared at him, his grip tightening on the bowstring. "This isn't a game, Klaus. We all know what's at stake. You're putting your team at risk for what? A cheap thrill?"

Klaus chuckled, unfazed by Max's anger. "Risk? It's called strategy. While you're busy worrying about me, my team is getting a head start. That's what happens when you underestimate your opponents."

The Central Region team shifted nervously, some glancing at Ella, their leader, while others eyed Klaus warily. They had heard the rumors about him and seen what he could do, so seeing him so relaxed, seemingly unbothered by the weight of the competition, stirred something within them—a mix of annoyance and fear.

"Enough of your games!" Ella stepped forward, her voice commanding. "You think you can take us down? You're outnumbered, Klaus. We're not just going to let you sit there and toy with us."

Klaus stood his mood shifting to coldness. "Outnumbered? That's rich coming from you. Look around. How many of your team members are actually competent? You have a lot of bodies, but only a few true warriors."

Hearing this, they all gritted their teeth in anger. Being called Incompetent sure struck a cord in their heart. Klaus of course didn't care about their expression.

Ella's eyes narrowed, clearly both angry and wary of what Klaus might do. Yet a part of her hoped something favorable might happen. Fortunately for her, a minute later, the Southern team, now reduced to 64 members, appeared.

Soon after, the Northern team arrived with 70 members, followed by the Western team with 72 members. Although their numbers had thinned, Ella was more than happy to have her reinforcements present.

However, her happiness was short-lived when Klaus muttered, "The door will close in the next 5 minutes, and since I'm standing in your way, it's only logical to move me. So why don't you all come? I promise to leave 50 members from each team to advance forward."

Hearing this, their anger boiled to the highest degree, and without waiting for any command, dozens from each team dashed forward, ready to take him down.

But it only sped things up for Klaus. A spear appeared in his hands instead of his sword, and without even stepping forward, he spun it, igniting it with flames. He gazed at them with a smile, then slashed the spear forward.

A wide arc of flame cut through the teams charging at him. Klaus then stepped forward, dashing toward the Western team approaching from the side. Within a few swift movements, he killed a dozen before moving on to the next group.

In just a few seconds, he had finished off about 30 people and returned to his original position. However, as soon as he appeared there, an arrow locked onto him. Klaus smiled, knowing that Max had made his move.

Without even turning towards him, Klaus swung his spear, cutting the arrow in half. Max, seeing his arrow intercepted, was quickly reminded of his performance during their duel when Klaus dodged, caught, and cut through all three attacks.

This, of course, enraged Max. In a fit of anger, he unleashed a flurry of rapid shots, each aimed at Klaus's life. But none of them connected.

Klaus effortlessly defended himself, all while keeping an eye on the few who had yet to make a move. Ella and Ethan remained still, and from the other teams, their leaders hadn't moved either.

He knew they were saving their trump cards for later. This, of course, secretly pleased him for reasons unknown even to himself.

Although they were powerful and he could kill them when it came down to it, doing so early would make the rest of the trial dull. So, in a way, he was doing them a favor by thinning down their numbers first.

The quicker the weak ones were defeated, the more intense the competition would become. Klaus, however, wanted to instill in the minds of the legacies—and everyone watching—what he was truly capable of.

While he didn't mind entertaining them, Klaus was more focused on life-and-death matters, not petty conflicts with his peers. Although it wasn't technically a competition, someone of his danger level didn't need to engage in trivial battles with children from the Legacy Families.

He operated on a higher level—dealing with Great Families, Legacy Families, and even the Five Great Clans. Ella and her cohort were merely a bit of necessary fun while it lasted.

Two minutes later, only 200 people remained—50 from each team, just as Klaus had promised. He smiled and said,

"Use the next few hours to think about what you'll do: continue the trial as competitors, or chase me like a bunch of idiots with no understanding of the danger you're playing with." He ran toward the door while effortlessly deflecting Max's endless stream of arrows.

"Later, losers!" he called out, disappearing through the door. Ella gritted her teeth, watching Klaus's handsome back vanish. Once again, she had lost to him.

"Let's go," she said, resigned. With the door closing in three minutes, all they could do was move forward.

As soon as Klaus emerged on the other side, he was greeted by the remnants of a recent battle. He scanned the area for a few minutes, probably waiting for the four teams on the other side. After five minutes passed and no one appeared, he sighed.

"Looks like the Academy doesn't want one team carrying another right after crossing an obstacle," he muttered. With that, he dashed forward, running to catch up with his team.

Chapter 302 - 302: Ella Making Her Move

"Klaus sure knows how to antagonize his enemies," Cephas, the instructor, said to the other instructor back in the observation hall. The others around him, who were watching the various scenes on the screens showing the competition, nodded.

They all watched as Klaus eliminated almost 200 people from the game when he could have taken his team and gotten a head start.

"He and the Three Legacy heirs are not on good terms, so it's only natural for him to get back at them. But that left his team vulnerable," one of the instructors said, watching a screen showing Klaus's team clashing with a horde of Tier 6 monsters.

"Well, they're holding on, so if he hurries, he might be able to save them in time," Cephas said as he watched another screen showing Klaus running after his team.

The trial was designed in such a way that after crossing the gate at Alpha, each team would have to fight hordes of Tier 5 monsters before moving toward the Fractured Mountains. It was only after they crossed that obstacle that they entered the Fractured Mountains.

This also means that if they manage to survive the obstacle right after walking through the gate at Alpha, the real hunting can begin. The rest of the way would be a one-way path with different routes. If you want to reach the Willow Mountains quickly, it will depend on your cunning abilities as well as your strength.

Klaus's team took the first step immediately after they arrived at the Fractured Mountains on one side. The others would also appear on their side, and once they started moving, their paths would either converge, provided they all chose the same route.

After moving for a few minutes, Klaus heard the sound of battle. He slowed down, quickly hid himself, and started watching Anna and the team fighting different kinds of Tier 6 monsters.

Anna stood in the center, casting spells as she controlled the battlefield. Miguel, Danny, Daniel, and other heavy hitters were at the front, stopping most of the monsters.

Hanna, Kay, and the other archers were shooting at the monsters from a distance, aiming to reduce the rate at which they approached as the team slowly kept moving.

"Lily, go support Kilian and Omari," Anna ordered, prompting Lily to move quickly, like the wind, stopping only when she was within attacking range. Kilian, her brother, and Omari Hackman were locked in battle with a Tier 6 Demon-Face Dagger-Legs Spider.

It was a huge spider with a twisted demon face and razor-sharp, twelve legs that could easily tear through armor. Thanks to Omari's sharp sword attacks, empowered by his awakened sword aura, and Kilian's lethal fire sword strikes, they were holding their ground and had even managed to cut off one of its legs.

Lily quickly executed a series of slashes, sending wind arcs that swiftly cut off two more legs, reducing the spider's total to nine. With her joining the fight, the two swordsmen were able to relax a little.

However, the battle wasn't over. Lightning arrows streaked through the air, piercing the heads of monsters charging at the team.

Hanna, who had improved greatly after months in seclusion, was using minimal essence and great strength with pinpoint accuracy to land precise strikes on the monsters. She has improved greatly from how she was during the Regional trial.

However, she wasn't the most brutal on the battlefield—that spot was reserved for Danny, who brandished his huge axe with terrifying strikes.

One thing about brute fighters is that most of their essence goes into enhancing their stamina, as they need full endurance for prolonged battles. Danny was swinging his axe, taking out monster after monster.

Daniel, his sworn brother, wasn't far behind either. He was swinging a massive hammer—huge, heavy, and with enough force behind each strike to burst skulls and shatter bones. He was swinging with all his might.

Miguel was also doing everything he could to keep killing, all while avoiding the use of any active skills. Klaus had already told them that when it came to battles with monsters from Tier 6 and below, his involvement would be minimal.

He wanted them to understand that he wouldn't carry the team—that would be boring for them. While his presence gave them an upper hand, they would have to do the work. He had already given them a head start; what they did with it depended on their own strengths.

The initial ratio was 100 against 400, but after thinning down the number of the Legacy alliance to 200, the rest would depend on how well they played their cards.

Klaus knew his presence in the team would put the others in danger, so while he provided extra support, they had to fight for their spot and the chance to win additional Mountain Dew and cores.

Back in the observation hall, the instructors and those who had been eliminated were watching the screens showing the trial. Some were shocked when Klaus chose to stay behind and watch his team battle the monsters.

However, those who knew what Klaus was capable of decided to ignore him and his team, opting instead to watch the other teams. The Northern, Southern, Western, and Central region teams, after crossing the door, clashed with the Tier 5 monsters.

Thankfully, none incurred any casualties, so they quickly advanced forward. However, just as they were about to enter the Fractured Mountains, another horde of monsters descended on them, forcing them to enter combat mode immediately.

But not everyone engaged in combat. Ella, who was leading the Central team, used the messaging feature in Oracle to send messages to the other teams. Just like in the real world, you can call or send messages to anyone in Oracle.

Immediately after receiving her message, the other teams followed Ella's strategy. Half of her team went into combat mode, while the other half, led by her and Ethan, maneuvered around the horde and started advancing.

Max took charge of the remaining half of the team, leading them into battle as they clashed with the monsters. The other regional teams also adopted a similar tactic—sending half of their members into combat while the rest bypassed the fight and proceeded into the Fractured Mountains.

A little over an hour later, the Central team converged with the Southern, Northern, and Western teams at a location Ella had marked on the map and shared with them.

Once the 100 participants gathered, Ella issued another command, dividing the teams into three groups again—one led by her, the second by Ethan, and the third by an archer named Alvaro, who had topped the regional trial in the Northern region.

"Ethan, your team should head toward the waterfall. My team will move around the river, and Alvaro's team will take the normal route," Ella instructed.

"This way, we can ambush them from both sides while they're engaged with Alvaro's team. If my calculations are correct, Max and the others will be behind them, so all we have to do is hold out for a while.

Remember, don't engage Klaus directly. Eliminate his team first—his time will come soon enough."

They nodded and headed their separate ways. This time, Ella wanted to be ahead of the game, as it should have been from the start. She liked being in control, and finally, she had taken the lead.

After half an hour of combat, Klaus's team managed to clear the horde of monsters with no casualties. Klaus watched as some struggled to fight through the hundreds of monsters, but in the end, with Anna's impeccable control over the battlefield, they succeeded.

"Great teamwork, everyone" After Hanna's arrow pierced the last monster, Klaus walked toward his teammates.

They all turned to look at him, some showing signs of wanting to say something, yet they held back. The way he said it made it clear that he had witnessed their battle but had chosen not to join in. If only they knew Klaus had joined in without revealing himself.

At the last moment, his Viper Piercing Needles did some work, stopping a few monsters that were coming at them. It was clear this obstacle was significant—one that was meant to test their teamwork and skills.

This begs the question: what happened to the other half of Ella's team? And the ones who chose to divide their group further down to 25 members? If Klaus's team, using all 99 members, only managed to win after 30 minutes, what about the 25 who were holding back the monsters while the other half moved to intercept Klaus and his teammates?

They fought bravely, but in the end, many died, and the few who survived only ran when they saw an opening. The central team led by Max managed to escape with 12 members, while the southern and northern teams moved ahead with 10 members each. The Western team only advanced with 8 members.

It was a chaotic battle—one they couldn't win since it wasn't designed for more than a few people. But those who managed to flee are now behind Klaus's team, moving deeper into the fractured mountain.

The place wasn't exactly a mountain; it was more like bits of mountains, each with different terrains. Klaus led the team toward a specific waterfall where they planned to stop and strategize on how to cross the river right after the waterfall.

However, just as they arrived at the waterfall, they were ambushed by attacks from the front, left, and right. Klaus's team quickly sprang into action as they clashed with the 100-man team that Ella had led away from the battle at the mouth of the fractured mountain.

Klaus, who had been leading the team from the mouth of the mountain, was immediately swarmed from three different angles. Ella, Ethan, and Alvaro started attacking him—a rather unusual tactic for those looking to disgrace him.

Well, that had been the plan from the start. They wanted to humiliate him, but they soon realized he wasn't the normal master-stage warrior they thought he was. Klaus was a monster, and they now knew that, so they quickly intensified their attacks.

Ethan charged at him, brandishing his spear crackling with lightning. Ella, who specialized in water magic, was on the left, casting spell after spell.

When Klaus defended against a water bomb, he felt his energy draining. When Max had challenged him, Lucy had given him a general rundown on their powers, and she mentioned that Ella possessed a unique water element called Annihilation Water.

Klaus, who had just experienced it, immediately recognized that her water was similar to his Annihilation Ice from when he was Fruity. Although the attack wasn't aimed to kill him, he could tell it was very powerful—something that fascinated him.

As an Elemental Overlord, sensing something like that made him want to experience it more. However, Ethan and Alvaro weren't making it easy for him.

"Humans are indeed cunning," Klaus chuckled. Had it been Zombies, he would have found it less annoying. Not that these opponents were giving him a hard time or more like they were overestimating themselves. Still, Klaus wanted to entertain them.

He knew not to underestimate anyone, something Miriam had told him repeatedly. Ella and Ethan were still holding back, and even Alvaro's presence made him alert, knowing they were planning something.

But he wasn't worried about his friends. Just like the legacies, he was also planning something, and despite knowing they would be ambushed there, he led them there anyway. He wanted to check something, and soon, his answer came.

A swordsman fighting beside Omari was clashing with another from Ella's team. But instead of going for the kill, they seem to be toying with each other.

Suddenly, the two stopped and then lunged at one of Klaus's team members. Just like that, Klaus lost his first member to an attack from a fellow team member.

And it didn't stop there; seven more of his members betrayed them, backstabbing their fellow teammates, making Klaus's team drop from 100 to 86. Seven traitors, seven dead.

But Klaus wasn't bothered. He knew it was necessary. But that doesn't mean he wouldn't do something about it

"Lin, Zing, do it!" Klaus suddenly commanded, and the ground beneath the feet of the seven traitors collapsed, burying them up to their necks.

As for the legacy members fighting Klaus's team, the Void Piercing Needle shot forward, and before they could even blink, their heads were pierced through. They all died, their heads exploding.

Now that Klaus had started cultivating the Sage Mind and Unshakable Mind techniques, his mental strength had risen so high that he could control all 360 needles. But to take down these small fries, he used only 120 needles, which formed a thick enough Void Piercing Needle.

As soon as the Needle appeared, Ella issued the order for her team to retreat, but just as they were about to move, Klaus spoke.

"Since you chose to poke my people, why don't you pay for the seven who died?"

He had already killed 20 of the legacy members, but he wanted more, as the seven that died had been used by him to fish out the traitors. He could have used his Eye of Malevolence to discern their intentions and hopefully root them out, but that would reveal one of his trump cards.

It wasn't worth it.

The Void Piercing Needle sliced through the air, and before 20 of Ella's team members could scream, they all fell to their knees. Klaus incapacitated them, their legs broken and arms pierced with holes.

"You monsters!" Ethan screamed, channeling lightning into his spear as he charged forward. Watching 20 of his people being overwhelmed by Klaus's members was heartbreaking, even if they were hired muscle.

Klaus simply stood there with a smile on his face as Ethan was dragged away by Ella. Despite the defeat, she never faltered in her commands or control over her team. This, for some reason, intrigued Klaus, though he was also a little concerned about what she still hadn't shown.

People who remain calm in chaotic situations are often regarded as the most dangerous foes.

In the end, he had to kill the 20 he had incapacitated.

After the Legacy alliance teams fled, Klaus turned his attention to the seven people trapped in the ground. He walked toward them, surrounded by the remaining 80 members. Six had died in the clash, and while seven were backstabbed, the other seven turned out to be traitors.

"Klaus, please! They threatened us into betraying you. Please don't kill us!" one of the traitors said, tears nearly flowing from his eyes. They were buried to their necks.

Klaus smiled and turned to Miguel. "How long has it been since we entered the trial?"

Miguel knew Klaus was just teasing him, but he went ahead and responded, "11 hours and 45 minutes."

"Good. It still hasn't been long enough for these traitors to earn any rewards for betraying their team," Klaus said coldly.

"Klaus, please, have mercy! They forced us; that bitch forced us!" another shouted. But before he could finish, a thick needle shot forward, piercing through all seven heads.

Everyone held their breath as Klaus executed the seven members without even batting an eye.

"I hate traitors." He muttered coldly.

Chapter 304 - 304: Team Divided

Silence...

That was what fell over everyone as they stared at the spot where the seven traitors' heads exploded. It was a bizarre sight for all of them, watching heads explode in rapid succession.

None of the 79 young warriors standing beside Klaus had ever taken a human life before. They are all green when it comes to that department.

They are warriors, training to fight both internal battles—against their fellow humans—and external ones against the monsters and Zombies that have plagued them since the apocalypse began.

Yet, as it stood, none of them had killed a human before. Despite competing in Oracle, where they battled other humans, seeing heads explode up close was simply too shocking.

Klaus had given them a chance to kill twenty opponents, but instead, they only beat them until Klaus chose to kill them instead. The ones Klaus had immobilized weren't killed by his teammates either; the twenty surrendered to Klaus's attack before he expected the seven traitors.

"You guys are too soft," Klaus said, looking at them. Even in this virtual world, where death wasn't permanent, they still hesitated to kill their opponents.

They were too scared to move. Hearing Klaus's voice now, they felt fear run down their spines. And it wasn't just them. Outside, the participants who had been washed out and those watching from their various resting areas wore frightened expressions.

"This kid is ruthless," Cephas said with a slight smirk. "But it's a good quality. At least he won't chicken out when it comes time to face his fellow humans," he added.

The other instructors nodded. Despite humanity's constant battle against monsters and Zombies, there were always those who sought to cause disharmony. For that, warriors would be needed to put them in their place.

When the time comes, no one will ask who's ever taken a human life—they'll deploy everyone. So despite the reluctance most of them feel about killing their fellow humans, when the moment arrives, they'll have to do it. It's better to start now and get used to it.

"However, this kid is something else. Look at his eyes—there isn't a shred of mercy in them. For some reason, I'm even getting chills just looking at them," Cephas added. Klaus's gaze was beautifully icy right then.

Back in Oracle

Klaus watched as, one by one, the 79 members of his team started to recover. After about 10 minutes, they had regained enough strength for him to put his next plans into motion.

"We're about halfway through the Fractured Mountains. If we take the straight route, we'll converge with those idiots," Klaus stated.

"How do you know that?" Lawrence asked, not daring to meet Klaus's eyes.

"Because while we were fighting them, Max and a second part of their team circled around us and headed that way," Klaus answered, making everyone raise an eyebrow.

"So the battle was a distraction?" Miguel asked.

"Yes and no." Klaus sighed, knowing he had to explain a few things. "While they truly ambushed us, it wasn't just to distract us alone. Yes, it was a big distraction, but Ella wanted to use the opportunity to thin down our team, and she succeeded—big time.

"However, she also lost 40 members, so while her distraction worked, her losses were also huge. But the team led by Max has roughly 40 members, which means we're still lacking in numbers," Klaus explained.

"All the more reason you shouldn't have killed the seven from our team," Lawrence protested. The members Klaus killed had been a significant blow to their numbers.

"They were traitors, and as such, they deserved to die. I just did you all a favor," Klaus replied with a smirk.

"How so? How does killing your own teammates do us a favor?" Lawrence added, clearly not pleased with how Klaus had handled the seven. "You could have banished them from the team, giving them a chance to at least cross the first 12-hour mark."

"Doing so would have been mercy. I don't show mercy to my enemies. But even if I decided to go soft, banishing them wouldn't bring back the seven they stabbed in the back. So let this be your first lesson from me: if you get a chance to take out a traitor, do it without hesitation.

At least when they're dead, they won't cause any more trouble for the team," Klaus said coldly, as expected.

"Still, you could have asked for our opinion before taking action. Acting on your own was disrespectful to us as your teammates. A leader should know when to consult the team," Lawrence replied, refusing to back down. He didn't like what Klaus did, even if it was necessary.

"Oh, so you think you could have made a more 'sound' decision?" Klaus asked with an amused expression.

"I know I wouldn't have killed them without the collective decision of the team," Lawrence said, and for some reason, a few members began nodding in agreement. Clearly, they were siding with Lawrence.

"Lawrence is right. You should have asked for our opinion before killing them," one youngster said.

"I think so too. Killing them was a cruel move. At least you could have allowed them to cross the first 12 hours so they could earn more rewards," another added, and soon, a few more voices joined in.

Klaus wasn't stupid. He knew exactly what was happening and, for once, he immediately came up with two ways to solve it as Anna's voice was being drowned out.

Miguel stood by, doing nothing—no smile, no anger—just standing there.

Klaus looked at the members protesting and smiled. His first thought was to kill them all, but he quickly realized that was just the bloodlust talking. Even in the virtual world, he could still feel the thirst for blood.

So he switched to the second method he had come up with.

"It seems some of you don't like the way I'm running the team. Why not form your own team and pick a leader to guide you the way you would have wanted?" Klaus suggested.

He knew Lawrence wanted to lead. He had seen it during the planning and strategizing a day before the trial started. So, Klaus wasn't surprised by this ruckus. It was also one of the reasons he had taken decision-making away from Anna—she wouldn't have been able to handle Lawrence.

"Very well," Klaus sighed, seeing about 70 percent of the remaining 80 members move to Lawrence's side. He wasn't surprised.

They had their reasons for leaving. The major one was his feud with the three Legacies. They didn't want to get caught up in that conflict.

The second reason was a promise Lawrence had made to them. He was quite wealthy, so some joined him for the money and resources he had offered.

"Since you 64 are no longer part of my team, if we win in the end, the reward meant for the region won't go to you 64. The same applies to us if you win," Klaus said, making it clear they were no longer on the same side.

"I'll give you half an hour—no, an hour grace period. Use that time to run off, because the next time we meet, I won't hesitate to behead you all," Klaus stated. Without any hesitation, Lawrence's team fled.

Klaus turned to the 15 members still in his team. Miguel had stayed, along with the Zhou twins and Omari Hackman. Three others remained—Lucas, an archer, and two mages, Scarlet and Ruby.

"Let's go. We'll take the left route," Klaus said, and his team of 16 began moving again.

Chapter 305 - 305: Twisted Hunting Vines

"So, you stayed?" Klaus asked, walking beside Miguel as they took the left path. From the waterfall where the team split, there were three routes—left, right, and center.

The Legacy alliance took the central path, Lawrence's team went right, and Klaus's small team chose left. All of them were heading toward Willow Forest, just through different routes.

Miguel staying behind had come as a surprise to Klaus.

"I did stay," Miguel said, his face devoid of expression.

"Why?" Klaus asked. "I thought you and Lawrence were buddies."

"I stayed because this is the team I signed up for, where you're the strategist and Anna's the leader. And Lawrence is not my buddy; we're just from the same city," Miguel answered, picking up his pace to avoid walking side by side with the annoying white-haired bastard.

Klaus watched as the brute, double-bladed axe fighter walked away with a smile on his face.

'I guess I didn't misjudge him. He's a good guy, just a dick who couldn't take a loss,' Klaus thought to himself. This tension all boiled down to Anna. It seemed both Miguel and Omari Hackman had their eyes on her, but Klaus swooped in and won her over.

While that might have been reason enough for Miguel to jump on Lawrence's bandwagon, he chose to stay. It was unusual behavior for someone who had a grudge against Klaus.

The same could be said for Omari, who Klaus knew still hadn't accepted the fact that the Ice Princess had already been claimed.

What Klaus didn't know, however, was that Ella had already tried to recruit Miguel to join their crusade against him, but Miguel rejected it without a second thought.

Although he disliked Klaus, Miguel still had his integrity, something Klaus respected in a person.

The group quickly advanced. Hanna and Kay, along with the new archer Lucas, were now leading due to their enhanced eyesight. Klaus stayed at the rear, using his superior senses to sweep the surroundings for any threats.

'My senses are getting restricted the deeper we go,' Klaus suddenly realized. He had started with a 40 km wide scanning range, but now it was down to 35 km. The deeper they ventured, the more confined his range became.

By the time they had crossed 70% of the Fractured Mountain, his sensing range had shrunk to 15 km. This meant his team members were now only a few meters within his detection range.

The archers, with their enhanced eyesight, could still see as far as 2 km, but even that range was dropping lower by the second.

'This trial was built well,' Klaus sighed inwardly.

It had been 26 hours since they entered the trial. They had already passed through Alpha and were now 85% of the way through traversing the Fractured Mountain, crossing fractured terrains teeming with vicious monsters.

They had fought and killed dozens of creatures. With their numbers reduced to just 16, Anna was able to manage the battlefield far more effectively—something Klaus knew was because they were all working cohesively as a single team now.

They had each faced many harrowing monsters, some Tier 5 and even a few Tier 6, but they never faltered in their attacks.

Thirty hours into the trial, they had crossed 95% of the Fractured Heavens. They took a brief rest to recover before pressing on. Oracle was just like the real world—except death wasn't permanent.

"Ruby, watch out!" Klaus shouted as a vine shot toward Ruby, one of the two mages who had stayed. Before she could dodge or defend, the vine was already upon her.

But just as it was about to wrap around her, a sword flashed forward, cutting off a few feet of the twisted vine.

Although it didn't stop the vine's advance entirely, the severing gave Ruby a few crucial moments to move away.

Lily had saved her in time, but there was no chance to celebrate. Vines were all around them now—dozens of them, slithering and closing in.

"Archers, move closer to me. Mages, cast barrier spells. Swordsmen, keep cutting them down. Lin and Zing, create defenses around us. Klaus... do whatever you want," Anna quickly commanded, and everyone sprang into action.

Hanna, Kay, and Lucas, unable to fight the vines with their bows and arrows, quickly moved closer to Anna, who, along with Ruby and Scarlet, managed to raise a few barriers that slowed down or stopped the advancing vines.

Lily, Kilian, Omari, and Mark also sprang into action, cutting down the vines as they came. Although Mark was a spearman, he kept up with the flow, efficiently cutting down the vines.

Miguel, Danny, and Daniel brandished their heavy weapons, following up with attacks that cut and shattered the vines.

"Keep moving," Anna urged, as the group advanced slowly while defending themselves.

Klaus kept swinging his sword, cutting down the vines that kept coming at him. He scanned his mind for the type of vines these were, but he couldn't identify them, so he asked.

"Anna, what kind of vines are these?"

"They're called Twisted Hunting Vines. They attack using echoes and are highly resistant to ice and fire. So, the only way to avoid their attacks is to move out of their sensing range," she answered.

"Thanks," Klaus smirked and stored away his sword. With a flick of his hand, a ball of flame appeared.

"What are you planning, Klaus? Fire can't burn them," Anna said as she saw Klaus holding the flame.

"Ordinary fire, maybe. My fire? I don't think so." He moved forward and, with a quick throw, hurled the flame ahead.

Boom!

An explosion erupted the moment the flame hit the ground. Like a dragon unleashed, the fire roared and engulfed the forest in front of them.

He quickly moved to the left and did the same, setting more of the forest ablaze.

"Klaus, what are you doing?" Anna asked, watching the fire burn furiously.

"What do you mean, what am I doing? I'm burning the forest down. No trees, no vines, right?" Klaus said, hurling another flame to the right. Soon, fire surrounded them.

Anna quickly cast an ice barrier, but it was too weak against the intense heat. It dissipated almost instantly, making everyone grimace. Klaus smirked and then summoned the Ice Lotus, immediately activating the Absolute Ice Domain.

Instantly, everyone was enclosed in a domain of ice that quickly extinguished the flames around them. The fire burned fiercely for a few minutes before calming down.

However, in those few minutes, they had managed to destroy 4 kilometers of the forest. It was both bizarre and effective for what they were trying to achieve.

"That worked better than I hoped," Klaus said, watching as everything green had been reduced to ash.

"Let's go. We're almost out of the Fractured Mountain. We need to hurry before the others beat us to the main goal," Klaus said with a smile, despite the shocked expressions on his team's faces.

If only they knew it could have been worse if he had called forth the dragon instead—but who was asking? They quickly left the area, and soon, they exited the Fractured Mountains and stepped into the Willow Forest, where they were immediately greeted with a chilling surprise.

Chapter 306 - 306: Into The Willow Forest

"How far can you all sense now?" Klaus asked as they entered the Willow Forest's range. At a glance, it was clear this forest would be their toughest challenge yet.

"I can only sense about a 200-meter radius, but it's dwindling the further we advance," Anna sighed.

"I can sense up to 500 meters, but if I focus in one direction, I can reach 700 meters," Hanna said. As an archer, her perception was slightly more enhanced than most.

The others also shared their ranges, but aside from Miguel, who could sense as far as 600 meters around him, Lily also possessed a unique passive ability that let her sense through the wind around her. It was similar to how Klaus used elemental particles to move.

"Then we have to be careful," Klaus said. "This forest isn't going to be simple at all. Stay close, and don't cut anything unless it's attacking. If you can dodge when something does attack, that would be even better."

His own sensing range had dropped to 2 kilometers. But instead of panicking, he felt thrilled. Finally, he was walking on the edge of danger. It was an unusual feeling, but he could sense it—he craved the danger.

They moved quickly forward, and before long, they entered the dense forest. As soon as they did, they all felt their senses cut in half. Klaus smiled, now only he was able to sense within a 1-kilometer radius, though he knew it was bound to decrease even further.

"Klaus, do you think Lawrence and the others would betray us?" Scarlet, one of the mages who had stayed, asked as they moved.

"Isn't it obvious? Ella got to him, and I'm sure he took the deal. Not that I blame him; that girl is more cunning than any of you give her credit for," Klaus replied. The others exchanged looks.

Lawrence betraying them was troubling, wasn't it? They couldn't imagine it happening, but as Klaus had said, Lawrence had been approached—and so had many of them. The offer had been tempting, enough that most had spent hours contemplating their decision.

Some were even rethinking their choice to stay even as they moved.

Ella Duncan was an excellent strategist. It was just that she chose an unusual target this time, and that was her loss. Klaus wasn't an average warrior.

"But don't worry. If they make any move, I'll handle them accordingly."

At this point, Klaus knew his team members were still too inexperienced for the harsher challenges. He had thought about letting them face real danger in this virtual world, but since it was only a trial, he decided against it.

When their rivals' swords came close to their necks, they would get a wake-up call. After all, they wouldn't just stand there and let their enemies kill them.

The deeper they went, the more restricted their sensing range became.

"Anna cast a barrier spell," Klaus suddenly commanded.

Anna didn't need a second command; she followed his instructions immediately. Ruby and Scarlet reinforced it almost at once. They wondered why he had given the order, but the moment the barrier activated, a dense greenish mist struck it.

"Poison."

Klaus had sensed them when they were within 500 meters, but the Voracious Bloomwood was fast. These plant monsters could move within a 2-kilometer radius by twisting their roots through the ground like snakes.

Suddenly, twelve grotesque, flower-like plants with pistils resembling teeth sped toward them, their movements eerily similar to slithering snakes.

"Might wanna reinforce the barrier more; those are Tier 6 plant monsters," Klaus said. Anna and the other two mages quickly channeled more spiritual qi into the barrier.

The plant monsters attacked with their sharp, monstrous teeth and emitted a toxic, misty poison. Klaus examined them for a moment before coming up with a risky strategy.

"They're weak against ice and fire, but lightning would make them scream. And the best part? That scream scares off other monsters, both plants and animals," Klaus said, turning to Hanna.

She immediately understood the task but wasn't sure she could pull it off. After all, there were twelve tree monsters, and they would need to release the barrier for her to shoot her arrows.

Just as the barrier prevented things from entering, it also blocked anything from going out.

"Don't worry, big sis, you can do it," Klaus said encouragingly. "What's the worst that could happen?" he added with a smirk.

The others looked at him, half-expecting him to explain exactly what that might be.

"Relax, everyone. You won't die from a short exposure to the poison. But it'll hurt like hell, so brace yourselves."

Hanna nocked a lightning arrow in her bow, and as soon as Klaus gave the signal, the barrier dropped, and an arrow shot forward. She quickly followed with another, releasing fourteen arrows within three seconds.

Piercing, ear-splitting screams erupted from the plant monsters as the arrows hit their marks. She missed two attacks but immediately followed with two more making her shoot 14 instead of 12 lightning-infused arrows.

"Nice work, Hanna, but next time don't trust me blindly. What if the plants had sensed the attacks?" Klaus said, making Hanna, who was wiping tears from her eyes, look down.

The poison did hurt—intensely. It also made them overly emotional, to the point where people could find themselves laughing or crying uncontrollably, even willing to jump from heights if it got worse.

They'd only been exposed for a few seconds, but the effects were already hitting them. Well, all except Klaus. He looked completely unaffected.

"I'll do better next time," Hanna said.

"Good to hear," Klaus replied, bringing out the Lotus flower, which immediately calmed the effects of the poison.

"The next time you all encounter a Voracious Bloomwood, avoid using fire or ice unless you can deliver a quick, fatal blow. They're weak to those elements, but they're also highly reactive to them.

"If you can't kill them with a single ice or fire attack, make sure to have strong defenses and be ready to run. Once you're beyond their 2-kilometer radius, they won't be able to follow."

Everyone nodded. After making sure they were okay, he deactivated the Lotus flower, and they continued forward. Just as Klaus had said, the next few kilometers were eerily quiet—the screams of the Voracious Bloomwoods had driven everything else away.

In the observation hall, the instructors nodded as they watched Klaus's team skillfully handle the Voracious Bloomwoods.

"Instructor Simon, it looks like you've found yourself an expert in monsters," Cephass remarked, glancing at the instructor whose class Klaus had attended on Monsters and Beasts.

"We've already met, and those few hours together broadened my perspective. This kid is full of surprises," Instructor Simon replied.

"I guess he's not only skilled with his weapons but also sharp with his mind," Cephass added.

Observing the different teams, it became clear that knowing a monster's nature beforehand made all the difference.

Ella's team of 100 lost 14 members before managing to take down the Voracious Bloomwoods. Lawrence's team of 64 lost 4 members; it seemed he, too, had some knowledge of the Bloomwoods' nature.

"They're coming up on their first major obstacle. I wonder how many will make it through," Cephass said, watching as the three teams moved deeper into the forest.

Chapter 307 - 307: Night Hunters

Although the three teams are taking different routes, the obstacles set are the same for all of them. Of course, they could detour from the main path and try to use a different route, but there's no telling what obstacles they might face.

After facing the Voracious Bloomwoods, Klaus and his team encountered some minor obstacles that were easily handled. However, the other teams, perhaps due to their larger numbers, sustained some casualties.

After traversing the dense, eerie forest for a while, they stopped in front of a cave. As soon as they arrived, a voice that sounded like Cephas spoke:

"Welcome to the hunting cave. Each of you will have to enter, but once you do, you'll be transported to different locations where you'll face a test. If you pass, you'll be transported outside the Willow Forest, bringing you one step closer to the Sage Eye.

"And yes, you'll all be transported to the same place after passing the test, so hurry up. You have just 60 minutes to complete the test, so speed will be a factor as well. Good luck."

As soon as the voice ended, Klaus turned to his team. "I'm not sure this is going to be an easy test, so you'd all better prepare."

With that, he gestured for them to enter. Lily went in first, followed by her brother Kilian, then Anna, Miguel, Danny, Scarlet, Ruby, Omari, Kay, Daniel, Lin, Zing, Mark, Hanna, and finally Klaus himself.

As soon as Klaus entered the cave, he found himself in a gloomy, dark forest. The place looked eerily similar to the Tormented World at nightfall. Klaus quickly attempted to use his senses to scan the area but felt nothing.

At that moment, Cephas's voice spoke again:

"Welcome to the Hunting Forest. Your task is to kill the Night Hunters and their leader before time runs out. Oh, your senses have been cut off here, so rely on your instincts as a guide. Good luck."

"Well, that was unexpected," Klaus muttered, realizing this test was designed to thin their numbers. Fighting without senses—that was just too cruel. Every warrior depends on their senses to detect and predict their opponent's attacks.

Without one's senses, it's like being a piece of wood crossing a dangerous battlefield. Right now, all 149 warriors inside the Oracle felt like those pieces of wood—well, some, but not all of them.

Klaus quickly activated the Lotus Flower, and a mist began spreading everywhere. As soon as the mist appeared, his senses were restored and expanded along with the mist.

Suddenly, four 24-inch Void Piercing Needles appeared, hovering in front of him. A small smirk appeared on his lips. With his hands behind his back, the four needles moved in four different directions.

Soon, the monsters began to fall. They were spider-like creatures that only emerged at night to hunt. They had a nasty habit of wrapping their targets in silky webs before killing them.

However, with Klaus's senses expanding by the second, he was able to detect them long before they detected him.

"Well, that was unexpected. Looks like some of them still know how to handle the spiders," Instructor Simon remarked, watching the screens that displayed the various battles.

Some warriors had begun to wash out due to their senses being cut off, but not all of them were helpless. Klaus was a prime example; he was managing the situation quite well, shocking everyone.

"That kid is one terrifying Spirit Master. At such a level, he can control weapons this effectively," Cephas said, observing Klaus as he walked around with his hands behind him, skillfully maneuvering the needles.

"It looks like the academy will get lively soon. I wonder what else he is hiding from us," another instructor commented.

They were all astonished by how Klaus was handling what they deemed their first hardest obstacle. If only they knew he could have done even better if he chose to unleash the Dragon.

Meanwhile, others weren't faring as well. In one part of the Hunting Forest, Lily had the air around her swirling within a 30-meter radius. That was her sensing zone.

Although small, her reaction speed was much faster. Despite how close the monsters were getting to her, she always managed to react quickly.

Just like Anna, Lily also hadn't awakened her wind element yet, but her control over it was much better. This allowed her to manipulate the wind more effectively.

However, it was draining her energy faster than usual. Still, with how quickly she was dispatching the monsters if she could hold on a little longer, she might just pass the test.

Hanna, on the other hand, looked rather majestic on the battlefield. Her body was bathed in lightning, making her incredibly responsive to anything that came within a 40-meter radius.

Miriam had given her two skills: one for forming lightning arrows and the other for wide-area attacks.

The skill was called Lightning Land. Essentially, she would spread the lightning around an area, and the moment a target entered it, they would be electrocuted, either killing them or immobilizing them.

However, since the spiders were on the trees and hanging from their webs, the lightning on the ground was utterly useless. But Hanna adapted; instead of coating the ground, she coated her body with lightning.

Now, when a spider came within her range, the lightning acted like a beacon, summoning them. This allowed her to quickly release deadly shots, though it wasn't as fast as how Lily was killing her targets.

But she was also holding on, and she might just get through the test if she didn't make any mistakes. After all, Tier 5 spiders were weak, but Tier 6 ones were on their way, and they would also have to kill their leader, which, no matter how they wanted to think about it, would be a Tier 7 monster spider.

Anna, on the other hand, was doing something similar to Lily. She also had ice particles swirling around her. However, instead of swinging anything, ice shards were attacking the monsters that came within her range.

Her speed in killing was much faster than Lily's and Hanna's. Klaus's male friends, with the exception of Danny and Daniel, were quick on their feet, as Kilian used swords and Mark used spears.

Kay, the bowman, was having a hard time. His flame arrows were lethal, but he didn't have the same sensing ability as the others, so he was struggling. Daniel and Danny were in the same boat; they were having a tough time as well.

Miguel was also facing difficulties. The spiders were not the kind that could be easily smashed with brute force; they were much more nimble.

Scarlet and Ruby also looked like they might not make it. They might be geniuses, but the test was a rather challenging one, so despite their prowess, they were just struggling.

However, those struggling the most were the Zhou twins. As defense-type warriors, fighting such annoying and clingy monsters was outside their area of expertise.

They had good defensive prowess, but they lacked offensive capabilities. So, despite doing everything they could to hold on, the attacks from the spiders were just too much, especially with Tier 6 spiders coming in.

Thirty minutes later, the number dropped from 149 to 40. Klaus's team lost the Zhou twins, Danny, Daniel, Scarlet, and Kay. Strangely, Ruby was holding on, albeit barely. The same went for Miguel, who just didn't want to give in.

Forty-five minutes later, Miguel and Ruby also joined them.

Then came the leader of the spiders—a rather large, 16-legged spider with hide so thick that Klaus's Void Piercing Needle bounced off when it struck.

It was a rather unusual and amusing thing, but in the end, Klaus merged the four needles into one, forming a 64-inch thick needle that sent shivers down the spines of anyone who witnessed what Klaus did to the Tier 7 Devil Spider.

Chapter 308 - 308: Showdown At Sage Eye (1)

In the end, Mark, Hanna, and Kilian couldn't get past the Tier 7 grotesquely tough Devil Spider. Only Klaus, Lily, Anna, and Omari managed to kill it.

Surprisingly, Omari was a rather good swordsman—actually, a great one. He defeated the Devil Spider by cutting off all 16 legs and delivering a lethal attack to its head, cutting it in half.

Everyone who witnessed his battle with the spider was stunned. Some even applauded him. His finesse in handling the sword and how calm he appeared while fighting was truly eye-catching. He won himself some admirers after that display.

The next to display similar finesse was Anna. Her battle was short due to a mistake made by the spider. Instead of using the trees, it stepped on the ground, which Anna had turned into water, making the soil muddy.

The moment it stepped on it, the water solidified into ice, trapping the spider for a few seconds. Those few seconds were enough for her to summon dozens of sharp ice shards that pierced the spider's relatively soft belly.

It was both decisive and chilling, yet strangely alluring to many who witnessed it. Perhaps seeing a Tier 7 devil turned into a statue was enough to earn her applause.

Even those from the other regions applauded her.

Then came Lily, the one who earned the nickname "One with the Wind." Her movement from the start of the battle to the end was silent. Her swings were also silent, but they were incredibly lethal.

Those who witnessed her battle wondered just how a human at her level could move like that. She was silent and swift—a lethal combination, to say the least.

But they weren't the only ones who got past the Tier 7 Devil Spider. The three Legacies also succeeded. They all displayed prowess that left many stunned, especially Ethan, who harnessed lightning with great precision and finesse.

He was like the god of lightning.

Max was also lethal. It took him just 15 shots to kill the spider, and all of these shots occurred within the span of 5 minutes.

He went all out, just like everyone else. Well, Ella Duncan was rather unusual. Everyone watching saw that she was still holding back despite going against a Tier 7 devil. However, she struggled, which meant she hadn't had it easy like Klaus.

They had all heard and seen what Klaus was capable of, but only a few had witnessed him fight. So seeing him live like that was a shock to them.

From the start of the battle to the end, his hands never left his back. Many spirit masters, especially inexperienced ones, use their hands to control the needles to reduce the stress on their minds and to add some force to the weapons. However, Klaus merely used his mind to control the needles.

In less than 10 seconds, the spider was riddled with countless holes. The Void Piercing Needle, after merging all 360 needles together, became thick and very pointed, so the spider stood no chance.

The traitors Klaus had killed broke into a cold sweat when they saw what he did to the spider. Subconsciously, they made a vow—even in a life-and-death situation, they would never betray their comrades again.

In the end, only four people survived from Klaus's team, ten from Ella's team, and six from Lawrence's team. Klaus was the first to be transported outside of the Willow Forest. He appeared in front of a vast sea.

Looking forward, he saw a large eye many kilometers out at sea. It was so large that he could see it clearly from 42 kilometers away. However, a barrier separated him from the sea.

A minute later, Omari was also transported. He wasn't shocked to see Klaus there and quickly moved to stand beside him, gazing at the enormous eye.

Soon, Alvaro, one of Ella's lieutenants, appeared, followed by Anna and Ethan, along with another member of Ella's team. Within four minutes, twenty people stood at the edge of the barrier.

Four on Klaus's side, ten on Ella's side, and six on Lawrence's side.

No one needed to be told what would happen next. But first, they had to know the details of the next trial, and as expected, Cephas's voice filled the space.

"Welcome to the last phase of the competition. Congratulations on making it this far. However, there is still one task left.

"For the last trial, you must traverse the Sage Sea and place your hand on the Sage Eye. Be aware that a Devil Sea Monster is guarding the eye. Good luck, and may the best person win."

Klaus turned to look at Ella, then at Lawrence, and smiled.

"You don't have to stand there; you can join her. I already knew you were a traitor. I never expected you to be a pathetic one."

Lawrence's face turned green as he heard Klaus's words. Indeed, he had been with Ella from the beginning but had never revealed himself like the seven Klaus had executed. His job was to divide the Eastern Region team, and he had succeeded.

"I have to give it to you, Ella; you are very cunning. I really pity your future husband," Klaus said, turning toward her with a smirk.

Ella's expression remained calm, but a flicker of annoyance crossed her face. Klaus's words were just too raw.

"You think your words can get to me, Klaus? I have heard worse"

Klaus chuckled lightly,

"Oh, I'm sure you have. But it's not about what I say. It's about what you do next. You've managed to manipulate everyone around you, but I wonder how long that will last once we hit the sea."

"Oh, you won't be getting the chance to take the next step, Klaus. This is where you wash out," Ethan said from beside Ella. Lightning crackled around him.

"And what power do you have to make that possible?" Klaus asked.

In response, the people around Ella began encircling him, Lawrence included. Klaus watched as they created a circle around him and his team.

However, instead of panicking, he held a small smile and turned to the three with him. "You guys can head out the moment the barrier comes down. I will handle this first."

"I can't fly, Klaus, so I will be sitting this one out. However, I would like to see how the top genius from the southern region handles his sword." Without even a moment's thought, Omari lunged at a youngster also wielding a sword.

Klaus just smiled and turned to Lily and Anna. "Well, ladies..."

"You go handle those three idiots and their minions. I will handle Lawrence," Lily said before swinging her sword at Lawrence, taking him out of the equation.

Anna looked at a certain young lady also holding a staff. Without saying anything, the ground beneath her gave in, and the young lady sank into the earth. She died without even making a move.

Then, like an ice princess, a blizzard of ice gushed out from the ground, encasing two more members of Ella's side. Just like that, Ella's team was five people short.

Klaus smiled and made a mental note to reward his two girlfriends later. He turned toward Ella, but before he could make a move, She spoke a spell...

"Decipio Manus."

Chapter 309 - 309: Showdown At Sage Eye (2)

Klaus, who was about to taunt Ella and her minions, suddenly felt his strength, stamina, and access to his Star Qi drop by 70%. The drastic drop caught him by surprise, but instead of panicking, he felt strangely excited.

Even if the entire 5000 who past the Trial come against him, he has what it takes to kill them all. That is how powerful he is. The debuff may weaken an ordinary warrior but not him.

"Hahaha..." Klaus burst into a resounding laughter.

Ella, expecting to see a frown or panic on Klaus's face, frowned instead as Klaus burst into laughter.

"What's so funny? Your strength and Qi are down by 70% for the next 30 minutes, and you're surrounded," Ella said, frowning.

"What's there to be concerned about? Even without my Qi, I could kill you all with my eyes closed," Klaus replied, not even bothering to summon his sword or spear.

"Attack..." Ella commanded, but before her minions could move, Klaus raised a finger, halting them.

"Just so we're clear, are all of you choosing to side with Ella? I won't attack if you step back now," Klaus said, summoning his sword. His bloodlust was starting to surface. Strangely, the drop in his strength only made him feel more alive, more invigorated.

After a few seconds, no one stepped back. Klaus's smile vanished, and in a cold tone, he spoke.

"Since we're all in agreement, don't regret your decision later," Klaus said, turning as if facing a camera. "To those watching, I apologize for what you're about to see."

"Demon Killing Circle," Klaus muttered, swinging his sword. Instantly, a red circle appeared around him and the eleven he was about to face.

As the circle appeared, all eleven, Ella included, panicked. But when nothing seemed to happen, she smirked. "Wasted skill."

"Wasted, yes, but it will prevent you eleven from logging out until I say so." Before any of them could process his words, Klaus was upon his first target—a spearman who froze in panic as Klaus's cold gaze met his.

Moving quickly and without using any skill, Klaus swung his sword, knocking the spear out of his opponent's grip.

Bang!

An elbow landed on the spearman's face, sending him flying back. Klaus didn't stop there; he jumped, evading an attack from Max, and landed in water that immediately began eating away at his boots.

"Tsk," Klaus smirked, freezing the ground around him. Thanks to the water, he could do it without using much Ice Qi. Ella gritted her teeth, frustrated as she watched Klaus effortlessly counter her attacks.

Water against ice, really?

Klaus, unfazed, moved swiftly to his next target. He landed a kick, sending the opponent flying. Strangely, the spear that had fallen from the first opponent was now beside him.

He glanced at the spearman, whose weapon now lay at his feet. The guy's nose was broken from the kick he landed earlier, but the next attack was far more brutal.

Klaus kicked the blunt end of the spear, and before the spearman could even attempt to evade, his own weapon went through his head, splitting it in half.

Gasps echoed across the battlefield and among those watching. They had all just witnessed Klaus kill the spearman in a rather gory way. His head split in half—a shockingly brutal display. But Klaus wasn't done.

He moved, evading a lightning strike from Ethan, who now seemed to be taking the fight seriously. Ethan was arrogant and initially saw Klaus, stripped of 70% of his strength, as an easy target. But watching the spearman die was a wake-up call.

Lightning filled the Killing Circle, sealing them in. For the next 15 minutes, nothing could enter or exit.

Thanks to cultivating the [Soul Mending Pagoda], Klaus's soul has become very powerful now.

Although he'd only cultivated the first two levels, it was enough to extend the Killing Circle's duration to 15 minutes—an improvement from the 5 minutes he could manage during his battle in the Demon's Abode Forbidden Zone. This was a great boon for him, though bad news for his opponents.

Max locked his gaze on Klaus, using his [See True Dark Eyes] to calculate every possible move Klaus could make to evade his shot.

After picking his mark, he released the arrow, but just before it could pierce Klaus's chest, Klaus shifted out of its path in an instant.

The arrow moved, and before Max could shout at one of the mages with them, the arrow went through his shoulder. The mage staggered back, but just as he was about to fall, Klaus appeared behind him, weapons at the ready.

The mage tried to defend himself with his staff-wielding arm, but before he could register what happened, his hand, along with the staff, was severed from his body.

A chilling scream of pain shot through him.

Under normal circumstances, this would be the moment to log out, as most Oracle users had set up an automatic exit option for such situations. Some didn't want to experience the pain, so they made it so they could log out at the last moment.

But today was different. The killing circle prevented him from leaving. The rules within the circle barred anyone, including Klaus, from escaping unless they were dead.

"Monster!" Ella shouted, waving her staff and sending a wave of water toward Klaus.

In response, his cold gaze unwavering, Klaus stomped on the ground, freezing the water. With a swing of his sword, the ice shattered, sending shards flying at her.

She raised her staff, summoning water as a defense. The shards struck the water melting away. Klaus didn't wait for her to counter. He had to take care of an annoying Spirit Master bug.

The guy was hidden behind three others using his mind and sword to attack. A rather laughable fellow considering not even Sovereigns can penetrate Klaus's mind.

But points to his determination though. He was doing quite well for a trapped puppy.

However, when Klaus attacked, their momentum was broken. He contemplated using a soul or mental attack on the spirit master, but in the end, he decided against it—that would be letting him off too easy.

Instead, Klaus landed a punch to his chest and severed both legs, leaving him on the ground. His cries of pain filled the battlefield, causing the others, including Ella, to start panicking, their backs breaking into cold sweats.

They now realized they had provoked a monster, and now they were paying for their foolishness. Klaus moved through the battlefield, and for the next five minutes, he immobilized them one by one until only the three Legacies were left standing.

Some lost their weapon-wielding arms, others their legs, but they all had one thing in common: every single one had a broken nose. Klaus spared none of them, male or female.

"Monster! Can't you even go easy on the females?" Ella growled, her frustration mounting over the last five minutes.

Not only had Klaus rendered her [Decipio Manus] spell useless, but he had also shown he didn't need any fancy skills to take her down.

The level of dominance Klaus was displaying was enough to traumatize her for weeks. The [Decipio Manus] was a complex spell, the kind only available to the rich and powerful.

Its complexity and power had led her to expect it would hold Klaus back long enough for her and her team to dismantle him. Instead, they had awakened a monster that knew no pain or sorrow. She had held that spell back for this moment, but alas, it was all for nothing...

The cries of the young warriors on the ground did nothing to faze him; if anything, his coldness only deepened.

Klaus watched Ella's frustrated face and, in a chilling tone, replied, "I don't discriminate, Ella. I'm an equal-opportunity ass-whooper."

With that, eight 6-inch Void Piercing needles appeared, and the eight on the ground tensed. But before they could beg or even scream, the needles flashed, piercing their bodies and sending them away in the most painful way.

Turning to the three legacies, he smiled coldly and said, "Now, what to do with you three?"

Chapter 310 - 310: Showdown At Sage Eye (3)

All around—whether in the observation hall where the instructors were watching from, the test room where those who had washed out were also watching, or the various resting areas where others looked on—everyone was silent. An eerie hush fell over them as they witnessed Klaus's dominance and utter cruelty.

"Isn't he being a bit excessive?" one of the instructors remarked.

"They had it coming," Cephas replied, surprising everyone with his lack of sympathy for what Klaus was dishing out to Ella and her team.

"Oh? And why do you say that?" Instructor Simon asked.

"Isn't it obvious? These rich, entitled kids thought they could use their authority and wealth to suppress a 'nobody' who suddenly took the world by storm. In my opinion, Klaus isn't even doing enough," Cephas answered.

"You think he's going to toughen them up?" Instructor Simon continued.

"Isn't it obvious"

"I don't know if any of you have noticed, but Klaus is holding back. The look in his eyes and the one he's showing are completely different. Honestly, someone who nearly died in an assassination attempt shouldn't be provoked. These rich kids picked the wrong target this time, and it's going to leave a mark on them."

They all sighed, realizing Klaus was doing this to send a message. Rivalries are supposed to foster growth among youngsters.

But to assume that, just because you're wealthy and hold authority, everyone else should bow to you—that's just foolish and selfish. The three legacies had chosen a path that demanded everyone bow to them, but Klaus was the wrong target this time.

He gazed at the three legacies, who wanted nothing more than to log out of the Oracle. However, with the Demond killing circle overriding their commands, they were stuck with him.

"Here's what I'm going to do to you three: over the next eight minutes, I'll inflict the most agonizing pain imaginable before sending you all on your way. And believe me, if after today you three don't change your ways, don't blame me when I cut your journey short—for good.

Your titles and family mean nothing to me. If I want you dead, believe me, I'll make it happen. So let this be a lesson."

Klaus executed a series of movement techniques as he closed in on Ethan, who was the only one capable of engaging him in close combat. Klaus intended to take him out first, before going after Max and Ella supporting him from behind.

"Lightning Burst!" Ethan channeled lightning into his spear and thrust it forward, sending a ball of lightning toward Klaus.

Klaus slashed forward, unleashing a wild arc of ice to meet the attack. Although his Qi was restricted by 70%, he could still use Moon Slash. In fact, he could use all of his skills, but he simply didn't want to go that far.

The Moon Slash alone was enough to handle them.

The lightning ball split in half, exploding as bolts streaked across the battlefield. Klaus stepped back, evading a water rope launched by Ella to trap him. Just as he landed, an arrow streaked past his ear, making him glance toward Max.

A small smile appeared on his face as he moved again, clashing with Ethan. In just a few exchanges, Klaus smirked, and with a quick parry, struck Ethan's knees.

This forced Ethan to lower his body, which was exactly what Klaus had anticipated. With a swift swing, his knee collided with Ethan's face, sending him flying, blood streaming from his nose, his ears ringing with pain that even his mind was struggling to process.

"Bastard!"

Ella roared, casting a series of spells that began draining her energy. Klaus merely smiled at her anger and frustration, slicing through her attacks as he closed in on Ethan, who was struggling to get back up.

Bang!

Before Ethan could rise to his feet, a kick landed on his ribs, breaking several of them. His scream, filled with pain and anger, echoed as Klaus delivered a few more kicks before dodging Max's arrow.

"Life into water, water into life; Aqua Lion, summon!" Ella cast a spell, instantly paling as a 3-meter-tall lion made of water appeared and charged at Klaus.

Without even looking at it, Klaus kicked Ethan's fallen spear, guiding it with his mind to strike the lion's head. The attacks collided, creating a brief stalemate before the spear pierced through, destroying the lion.

Ella was stunned, but before she could gather her strength for another spell, pain shot through her body coming from her left shoulder. She hesitated to look, but due to the pain she was in, however, when she finally looked, her eyes rolled back in horror.

"No, you're not," Klaus muttered, landing a kick to her face, and snapping her back to reality.

Outside, everyone gasped as Klaus kicked Ella's face. They had assumed he'd go easier on her, but Klaus seemed unfazed by gender, granting everyone the same ruthless treatment.

Two arrows were aimed at Klaus, but he parried them and then unleashed the Void Piercing Needle. Before Max realized what happened, his legs gave out—the needle had severed them at the knees, leaving countless punctures in its wake.

His scream of agony filled the Demon Killing Circle. Yet, as if that wasn't punishment enough, the Needle moved ahead, and within a minute, all three legacies lay on the ground, screaming, immobilized, their hands and feet rendered useless.

Klaus sighed looking rather bored. 'Maybe I should have played with them for a few more minutes' He thought.

"Before I send you idiots on your way, there are some things you should know," Klaus said standing over the immobilized Legacies.

"First of all, I am better than you; I will always be better than you, so get used to it. Second, the next time you think about using your titles and family name to intimidate or suppress anyone, remember today and ask yourself, 'Would it be worth it?'"

"You three might think that just because you're wealthier, you can intimidate others. Honestly, I don't entirely blame you three. You probably had a poor upbringing. It tends to mess people up when their parents are useless."

He paused, looking at them with an icy stare. "I'll only say it one last time: there won't be a next time."

With a flick, a small flame appeared in his hand.

"Do well to remember the pain," he muttered coldly, then threw the flame, setting the three ablaze.

The flames quickly engulfed the three legacies, their screams piercing the silent battlefield as they struggled in vain against the searing heat.

Klaus watched with an unyielding expression, his gaze cold and unwavering, as if he were a judge overseeing an execution.

The other spectators currently Klaus on the battlefield, to the instructors then the young warriors watching, and those who had washed out of the trials, stared in shock, some in awe, others in horror.

No one dared to speak, as if the weight of Klaus's presence and his merciless actions had cast a spell of silence over everyone watching.

Shortly after, the three legacies were burned to a crisp.

After the battlefield was cleared, Klaus turned to those remaining—Anna, Lily, and Omari. They seemed to have dealt with their targets and stood in fear as they gazed at him.

Although Anna and Lily tried to suppress their feelings, Klaus could see in their eyes and expressions that they were scared of him.

'Maybe I've gone too far. But it was necessary...' he thought with a sigh.

"I'll be going, then." In the end, he didn't want to say anything more to them.

With Ella out of the picture, his qi and strength had been restored. So with a thought, the Ice lotus appeared, and the absolute domain activated; soon, the water started to freeze.

He cast a sidelong glance at Anna and Lily before stepping onto the frozen water. Soon, he crossed many kilometers, moving closer to the Sage Eye.

Just when he was a few meters from it, a powerful presence stirred beneath the water.