

## Paragon 481

### Chapter 481 - 481: The True Ice Princess (1)

Watching Anna leave, Klaus couldn't help but recall his past life as Fruity, the renegade monk. He had only met the Ice Princess once, and it had been a fleeting encounter.

After that meeting, his life had turned upside down. So far, he couldn't remember enough to know whether they ever crossed paths again or if that single moment was all they shared.

Although he wasn't sure if Anna was her reincarnation, he knew one thing: if he couldn't have her in his past life, at least he had someone who looked like her in this one.

That would be enough, especially if he ever saw her again in one of his memories. For now, though, he could only focus on the present and be content with what he had.

'I really hope this is you, my Ice Princess,' Klaus thought inwardly.

Anna entered the arena holding her magic staff. Her opponent, Ruby, also stepped in, gripping her staff tightly. Both radiated ice Qi, their eyes locked in a fierce stare.

The arena seemed to freeze over with the cold aura emanating from the two combatants.

"Who are they?" a veteran disciple asked.

"The one in green armor is Anna Ross. She's from the Northern Union and the younger sister of the Wood Queen—Klaus's girlfriend."

"And the blue-haired beauty?"

"She's Ruby, a genius from the Ice Union. Among the new disciples who use ice, she's the only one who has awakened her Ice Element."

"That means she's likely to win this match easily since Anna hasn't awakened hers yet. Ruby even defeated Gideon, and he's already awakened his Ice element."

The two veterans continued their discussion while, in the arena, Ruby—known for her arrogance born from her exceptional talent—decided to open the match with some classic insults.

"I heard you are one of the sluts parading around with Klaus Hanson," Ruby commented, expecting Anna to fire back. But Anna said nothing and continued to stare at her.

"Can't talk, huh? I guess I'll have to defeat you and push you down the chart. Maybe that will knock some sense into you and make you realize not everyone beside him is worthy of being noticed."

"Oh, so you're jealous Klaus isn't paying attention to you. Now I remember—you're one of those legacies who think they're better than everyone else," Anna replied calmly.

"Hmm. Don't worry, Klaus doesn't like bitches like you. But even if he did, after I drag your face through the mud, he'll wipe that thought right out of his head.

"And just because you've awakened your ice element doesn't mean you're unbeatable. But don't worry, I'll go easy on you. Fragile creatures like you tend to break easily," Anna added, deliberately holding back her more profane insults.

Her words seemed to strike a nerve in Ruby. But before Ruby could retort, Anna gestured for the instructor to begin.

"You can start now, Instructor. If we keep paying attention to this nonsense for too long, I'm afraid our brains might freeze for no reason."

"Begin,"

The instructor gave the order, clearly uninterested in hearing more of their bickering.

"Ice Bullets!" Ruby waved her staff, sending shards of ice shooting down at Anna.

"Water Wall," Anna countered, summoning a water barrier around her.

The icy projectiles melted upon contact, their force dissipating harmlessly. This was just the opening stage of their battle—a simple display of elemental manipulation.

Both fighters were merely testing the waters, manipulating their elements as they saw fit. Neither had unleashed their full power yet, preferring to gauge each other's skills first.

However, this could only last so long. The longer they spent on minor attacks, the more energy they wasted.

"Call of the Morning Ice: Ice Shard!" Ruby invoked one of her ice mage spells. A massive shard of ice, nearly three meters long, materialized in midair.

"You claim you'll drag my face through the mud; why don't you defend against this?" Ruby taunted, sweeping her staff forward.

The ice shard shot toward Anna with deadly speed. But Anna didn't stand idle. Instead, she tapped into her water element, ignoring ice entirely, and began to chant her own spell.

"Rising Tide: Water Serpent!" Anna chanted, her voice steady.

The water around her surged upward, forming into the shape of a massive serpent. The serpent coiled and roared, its liquid body glistening under the sunlight.

The Ice Shard raced toward her, but the serpent struck with precision. Its powerful jaws clamped down on the shard, shattering it into countless fragments that melted instantly within its watery form.

"From the ice I call, may thy call be heeded: Rise, Scorpio!" Ruby chanted, her voice cold.

A cold mist swirled around her as the air crackled with icy energy.

Slowly, a massive scorpion-like creature began to form from the ice, its claws sharp and gleaming, its tail curved menacingly with a frozen stinger.

Ruby's expression hardened. She had underestimated Anna, but no more.

Seeing Anna effortlessly using her water element to nullify her attack felt like an insult. They are both Ice Mages, but Anna was using the water element instead.

That is a plain disrespect.

"You think you're better just because you can wield water too?" Ruby hissed. "Let's see how you handle this!"

Anna remained calm, her gaze fixed on the towering ice scorpion.

The scorpion screeched and lunged toward Anna, its massive claws crashing down. Anna stepped back. She channeled her water element once more, summoning streams of water to weave around her.

"Torrent Cage!" she shouted, raising her staff.

The water spiraled upward, forming a dome-like barrier. The scorpion's claw struck the cage, causing a shockwave of icy mist and splashing water. The cage held, rippling but intact.

Ruby smirked. "Let's see how long you can keep that up." She pointed her staff, and the scorpion lunged again, its stinger striking with deadly precision.

The cage held firm, but the scorpion continued its relentless strikes. Each blow was aimed at breaking through the dome and reaching its target.

Anna focused her water qi inside the dome, reinforcing the barrier. A small smirk played on her lips.

'You think I'll fall for your tricks,' she thought, her confidence steady. She knew better than to get careless. Losing focus just to show off would be a mistake.

Anna had done her homework.

She had someone gather information about Ruby's previous match. The report confirmed that Ruby hadn't used any powerful spells to defeat her opponent. This could only mean one thing—Ruby was hiding her true strength.

Anna had a variety of spells at her disposal, but her spiritual qi was limited. She couldn't afford to waste energy on flashy attacks. Instead, she stayed calm, countering Ruby's efforts with minimal effort.

Fifteen minutes passed. Despite the scorpion's persistent attacks, the water dome remained unbroken. Frustration flickered in Ruby's eyes. She had had enough.

Raising her staff high, she channeled her energy. Her ice began to glow an ocean-blue hue, radiating a chilling aura. The temperature in the arena dropped sharply, and frost spread across the ground, freezing everything it touched.

The air crackled as Ruby spoke, her voice cold and sharp.

"Awakened Ice: Frost Sovereign."

A wave of energy burst from her staff, and the arena was plunged into a frozen storm. Her awakened ice element was now fully unleashed.

Chapter 482 - 482: The True Ice Princess (2)

Immediately, she activated her Ice, and the entire arena and Anna's water dome were frozen solid. But it didn't stop there; the other arena beside theirs began to be affected, causing the ongoing battles to be halted.

"You may be arrogant, thinking your water can counter my ice, but you underestimate me, bitch. I have awakened my ice, and it's the Frost Sovereign."

"Now feel my ice."

"Heed my call and answer thy master, Ice Lizard," Ruby spoke her spell, and immediately, a 5-meter-long lizard made of blue ice appeared, radiating an ice-cold, freezing qi.

"Go."

The lizard lunged at the ice dome, ready to slam Anna to the ground. The ground began shaking as the Lizard charged at the frozen dome.

However, a chilling voice spoke from within just when the lizard was a meter away from the dome.

"Eternal Ice: Ice Possession, take over thy foe." A spell circle appeared beneath the lizard, causing it to stop in its tracks.

Ruby, who was commanding the lizard, frowned. She had lost connection with it. This could mean only one thing: Anna had taken possession of her ice lizard.

To confirm it, the lizard turned around and faced her.

"You can have your toy back. Charge!" Anna commanded, and like a brute, the lizard charged forward, sending the attack back at its master.

"Bitch, you dare?" Ruby's eyes narrowed, radiating coldness. She raised her staff and activated ice spears, which decimated the lizard before it could get within a meter of her.

Then she charged forward, stabbing her spear at the ice dome.

Anna smirked as she watched Ruby charge forward at her. She knew she shouldn't underestimate her ice, but she also didn't want to look weak even though her own ice hadn't awakened yet.

But as Klaus's woman, she had to show some finesse, so she waited for her to draw near. She focused on the ice dome, feeling the energy within it.

"Let's see how you handle this," Anna muttered to herself.

The ice began to crack, building pressure from within. Ruby was speeding toward her when suddenly...

"Boom!" Anna shouted.

In an instant, the dome exploded, sending shards of ice flying outward. The force blasted Ruby off her feet, sending her flying back across the arena.

Ruby landed hard, sliding across the ground, but she quickly regained her footing, her eyes full of fury.

Inside the spectator area, Klaus, Nari, and the others continued to watch Anna's battle with great interest.

"I think Anna will win, seeing as she has the upper hand even without using any powerful spells yet," Lily said, watching her friend and sister with a happy smile.

"You are underestimating her opponent, Lily. So far, she has only used two strong spells, but her energy level hasn't dropped yet. I'm afraid Anna might lose this battle," Klaus said.

With his eye of malevolence, she could see the energy level of an opponent, and right now, he could tell Ruby was still packing too much punch for her size.

Watching as Anna raised her staff and unleashed a barrage of ice shards, Klaus could only smile and hope she realized her opponent had hidden her strength pretty well.

Ruby defended against the attack and unleashed her own. However, Anna also defended it.

Suddenly, Ruby activated a spell that immediately changed everything for Anna.

"From my essence, let the frost weave and form ice shadows to mirror my might. Ice Clones!" A spell circle appeared behind Ruby, causing the already freezing arena to grow even colder.

Three ocean-blue replicas of Ruby appeared. However, instead of wielding staffs, one held a bow, another a sword, and the last a dagger.

"Show your powers," Ruby said, bursting into resounding laughter as her three clones charged at Anna.

"Winds of the frozen north, heed my call—unleash your fury upon my foes: Cryo Tempest!"

Anna finally got serious as she unleashed a spell that instantly conjured a massive snowstorm and icy gales, creating hazardous terrain in the Arena.

The storm pushed back the clones charging at her, but the one wielding the dagger managed to pass through.

"Ice Rhino!" Anna unleashed the first skill Klaus had given her. A four-meter-tall rhino made of ice appeared and charged at the two clones.

Another rhino appeared and charged at Ruby.

However, just as Anna was about to summon a new one, the dagger-wielding clone appeared behind her and thrust the dagger forward.

Luckily, Anna was ready for something like that, and since the rhino had taken Ruby's attention off controlling her Ice clones. This momentarily delayed the clone's attack, giving Anna a chance to defend.

Anna stabbed her staff at the clone backward, destroying it.

At the same time, the sword- and bow-wielding clones were also destroyed. But the two rhinos perished as well.

"Futile," Ruby sneered. At the same time, the spell circle behind her glowed, and six clones appeared.

Two wielded swords, two bows, and two daggers.

Ruby sneered.

"All you have to do is destroy these clones, and their numbers will only increase. Keep destroying them, and more will come. Let's see how long you can hold on." Her laughter echoed across the arena.

Then, the clones began their assault. The two wielding bows fired ice arrows while the sword-wielding ones charged into action. The dagger-wielders, however, circled menacingly, looking for an opening.

This spell was like having different forms of clones that could be controlled with the mind. However, Ruby's version was slightly different.

Her clones performed preset actions dictated by the spell, but she still had to control their movements manually.

This adjustment significantly reduced the mental strain on Ruby, but the pressure would increase as the number of clones multiplied.

All Anna had to do was keep destroying them, and eventually, Ruby would be forced to stop using the spell. But doing so would require Anna to go all out, and at the moment, her ice abilities were far weaker than Ruby's.

However, Anna had something Ruby didn't. Thanks to Klaus's generosity, she possessed a powerful cultivation technique.

In addition to that, she had a vast arsenal of spells—hundreds of them. With enough Qi, she could unleash utter devastation on the battlefield.

The only thing holding her back was her lack of Star Qi. She was halfway there but still fell short. Meanwhile, Ruby was at the third level of core formation, making the gap between them even more apparent.

Naturally, Anna stood little chance. In terms of ice potency, she was outmatched. In terms of stamina, she fell short again. But in terms of spells, she had the upper hand with her vast array of techniques.

And so, Anna decided to rely on her spells, tapping into her arsenal and hoping for the best.

She began by raising a crystal barrier around herself. Ruby responded in kind.

"By the whispers of winter and the ice's edge, let the frost shards take flight: Frostbound Arrowcraft."

A two-layered spell circle appeared behind Anna, mirroring the one behind Ruby. But instead of clones, two-meter-long ice spears materialized and began raining down.

The clones were quickly decimated, but more emerged to take their place, multiplying their numbers.

"Hahaha, let's see how long you can keep this up, slut," Ruby sneered again.

This time, Anna's anger flared.

### Chapter 483 - 483: The True Ice Princess (3)

"Oh my god, is this just a ranked battle or a fight to the death?" a disciple exclaimed, shivering from the cold that spread far and wide.

"Don't you know? The two are like mortal enemies. From what I've heard, both are referred to as the Ice Princess within their respective Unions. But there can only be one Ice Princess."

"So, this is a battle to determine who becomes the True Ice Princess?"

"Exactly. While it might look like a Ranked Match to everyone else, it's really a battle for the title."

"Too bad they'll never be friends. If they worked together, this world could have two powerful Ice Mages to rely on."

"Indeed. But that's also what makes this so exciting."

All around, disciples murmured about the chilling battle that had turned the arena into a frozen wasteland. More and more of them gathered as they felt the bone-chilling cold emanating from the arena.

Klaus watched calmly, his eyes fixed on Anna as she struggled to maintain her spell. Now entirely frozen, the arena was littered with the remains of dozens of clones, which died and respawned in an endless cycle.

Whenever a clone perished, two more would take its place.

Because Anna wasn't holding back, the battlefield was teeming with over 12 sword-wielding clones, 12 bow-wielding clones firing ice arrows, and 12 dagger-wielding clones circling like predators.

Anna was encased in a crystal dome, her primary defense. Ruby stood opposite her, surrounded by a similar dome, a small smirk playing on her lips.

It had become a battle of attrition. Whoever ran out of energy first would lose. Anna was running low, but Ruby wasn't faring much better.

Still, Anna was far from defeat. She continued summoning spears, making her spell circle relentlessly rained down spears.

"Ice Rhino," Anna called out, unleashing the juggernaut to shatter Ruby's dome and create an opening for her spears. However, a massive scorpion appeared, intercepting the rhino and destroying it.

Another rhino was summoned, but the outcome remained the same.

"Just give up. With my Ice element awakened, I need only a fraction of the energy to cast my spells. You never stood a chance," Ruby said, her smile widening.

She aimed to provoke Anna, hoping to make her lose focus.

But Anna was no stranger to such tactics. Her experience leading Klaus's friends through forbidden zones and the trials in Oracle had taught her the value of keeping her composure.

"The winner hasn't been decided yet. And be careful—losing after awakening your Ice element won't look good on your record," Anna retorted with a calm smile.

She knew when to strike back with words. Her taunt hit its mark—Ruby's grip on her emotions was far from steady, though she was undeniably stronger.

"Let's see how long you can keep this up," Ruby said, her smirk fading as she waved her staff, summoning ten scorpions at once.

"Die, bitch!" Ruby snarled as the scorpions, accompanied by her clones, surged toward Anna.

In response, Anna increased the rate at which her spears shot forth. She also summoned five massive rhinos, hoping to turn the tide.

"Big Sister Nari, do you think Anna will win?" Lily asked worriedly.

She and Anna had made a pact: Anna would challenge the fourth ranker, Ruby, since she was a mage, while Lily would take on the third ranker.

The plan was crafted because both Lily and Mason Cole, the third ranker, used the wind element. However, Mason fought with a spear while Lily wielded a sword.

He was called the fastest among the younger generation, but Lily didn't believe it. She was determined to claim that title for herself.

Yet, seeing Anna struggling and possibly on the verge of losing, she sought reassurance from an expert.

Unfortunately for her, she asked the wrong one.

"She'll lose. Judging by how pale she's getting and that her opponent has awakened her Ice element, it's a miracle she hasn't passed out yet. Don't pin your hopes on her," Nari replied with a calm expression, her tone matter-of-fact and resolute.

Lily clenched her fists upon hearing the raw truth. Klaus could only shake his head at her painful yet honest take on the battle unfolding in the Arena.

"Nari, next time, don't answer questions like that. You could have sugarcoated it a little," Klaus said, starting to understand why the senior said she lacked empathy.

The battle continued for a while, with only one ending in sight—Anna's defeat. The fight had reached its climax, and Anna was turning pale—but so was Ruby.

"I have to hand it to you, slut, but you don't have what it takes to be called the Ice Princess. There can only be one Ice Princess, and that's me," Ruby sneered, unleashing another spell that sent dozens of ice bombs hurtling toward Anna.

"Now die, bitch."

The bombs exploded, encasing Anna in a frost-covered prison that rose several feet into the air.

Everyone gasped at the devastating power of the attack. The thick, icy structure enveloped Anna completely, blocking her from view. It was so dense that no one doubted Anna had been defeated.

There was no coming back from that—or so it seemed.

The next moment shocked everyone. A voice echoed from within the icy fortress, a voice so chilling that, as it resonated, Ruby felt her body freeze with terror.

And it wasn't just her—everyone in the arena began to feel the chill. Even Nari subconsciously started exuding her fire, warming herself and the ladies around her.

On the other hand, Klaus held a faint smile on his face, a smile that seemed to carry countless emotions buried deep within.

From the arena, Anna spoke.

"You are right, Ruby. There can only be one Ice Princess, and that is me."

Crack.

The ice structure encasing Anna splintered and then shattered, sending an icy mist spiraling into the air. When the mist cleared, an otherworldly beauty emerged, her features regal and striking—truly befitting a princess.

She was Anna but far more radiant. Her whitish-green hair cascaded down her back, nearly touching the ground.

"Ice Princess Manifestation: Ice Staff Blast," Anna declared, activating a spell. Behind her, a towering manifestation—a mirror image of herself—appeared, clutching a staff forged of pure ice.

The ethereal figure raised the staff high and slammed it into the ground. A powerful explosion erupted, hurling Ruby out of the arena.

Yet the devastation did not stop there—the entire 13-kilometer-wide arena was engulfed in a frozen blast, encasing everything in ice.

Still, it wasn't enough. The glasses blocking the spectators' rooms froze and started to crack. Every disciple inside shivered as a chilling cold traveled down their spines.

Fortunately, Nari acted swiftly. A wave of fire qi swept across the arena, melting the ice around the spectators' area. However, her flames were unable to affect the ice within the arena itself.

Klaus, who had been seated, suddenly felt a connection form within him. In an instant, as if through teleportation, he appeared before Anna.

Klaus immediately held Anna's hand, knowing she was about to pass out. Anna looked back at her, and a small smile appeared on her face before her eyes rolled and passed out.

However, before passing out, she called out a name that made Klaus's emotions flare.

"Fruity..."

Chapter 484 - 484: New Ability, Teleportation

"Ahh!" Klaus screamed, jumping down from his bed.

"Nari, what are you doing?" he asked, staring wide-eyed at Nari, who stood with fire coiling around her arm, her gaze fixed on him as if he'd done something wrong.

It had been five days since the battle between Anna and Ruby. Over those days, Klaus had spent most of his energy healing Anna, who had remained unconscious for four days.

She had suffered a backlash from her final attack during the duel, forcing Klaus to use his superior energy—Star Qi—to heal her. He had worked tirelessly for four days straight, only stopping when she finally woke up.

Exhausted, he'd come back to his room to rest, only to wake up to the sight of Nari crazily looking at him while he slept. The look in her eyes wasn't friendly at all.

"Calm down. I was just checking to see if you were still alive," Nari replied, her expression unbothered and vaguely righteous.

"I'm fine. Now, can you put the fire away?" Klaus said warily.

He wasn't entirely sure why she was staring daggers at his sleeping face, but one thing was certain—if he hadn't woken up when he did, he probably would have regretted it.

"A new rule: never stare at someone while they're sleeping. It's creepy," Klaus muttered as he shuffled into the bathroom.

"Tsk, what an uptight person," Nari huffed, crossing her arms. "I guess I made the right choice pairing him with Big Sister—they're both uptight."

Minutes later, Klaus walked out and started dressing.

"Hey, Klaus, what are those tattoos on your back? Every time I see them, they seem to change somehow," Nari asked, moving closer to him and brushing her fingers across the tattoos on his back.

"They're not normal tattoos, that's all I can say. And please, stop brushing your hands on my back. Also, go put some clothes on; nobody wants to stare at you half-naked all day," Klaus replied, hurriedly putting on his clothes.

"I'm going to visit Anna now." Before Nari could protest, Klaus vanished from the room, leaving her gritting her teeth.

"What a hateful brat. Ah, I'll get him in his sleep tonight," Nari muttered before entering the bathroom.

Klaus reappeared at Anna's apartment, where Hanna, Lily, and Lucy tended to her while he was asleep. He stood outside the room momentarily, sighed, and let a small smile cross his face before stepping inside.

When Anna used her final move during the duel, something strange happened to Klaus. The Paragon Mark, which had been dormant for a while, suddenly activated a new ability: teleportation.

So far, he had only used this ability to teleport near Anna. Despite not having the Paragon Mark, he could teleport within 100 meters of her.

He racked his brain for a possible explanation, but nothing made sense. He hadn't had sex with Anna yet, so she shouldn't possess the Paragon Mark.

This meant she couldn't use telepathic communication or benefit from the other perks associated with the mark.

Yet, he was able to use Anna as an anchor for teleportation. Naturally, he sensed three other anchors, which was expected since he had already been intimate with them.

With Anna, however, he had not crossed that threshold, meaning she shouldn't function as an anchor. Klaus knew it wouldn't be that simple, so he continued puzzling over the anomaly until the answer finally clicked.

The fact that he hadn't had sex with Anna in this life didn't mean it hadn't happened in his past one. This could only mean that Anna became an anchor and awakened this ability for him because they had been intimate somewhere in the past.

It also meant Fruity wasn't the monk Klaus had thought him to be.

"That old bastard," Klaus muttered with a smirk as he walked into the room where Lucy, Lily, Hanna, and Anna were chatting.

"Ladies," Klaus called out, prompting three of them to leap toward him.

"It's good to see you're doing well, Anna," Klaus said, holding her close.

The past few days had been dark for him. According to the healers, she had suffered from severe qi deprivation, and they estimated it would take her months to wake up.

Fortunately, the senior had found a way. This accelerated her recovery significantly by tapping into Klaus's infinite expanse of Star Qi.

"Thank you, Klaus. Whatever you did to me, I feel stronger. I've even advanced to the third stage. Just one more, and I'll become a Saint!" Anna said with a determined smile.

"Congratulations, Anna," Klaus said, kissing her cheek.

"Ruby has declared she will challenge me again in two weeks," Anna muttered with a slight smirk. "Next time, I will indeed drag her face through the mud," she added, puffing her chest proudly.

"Yeah, well, take it easy on her. She might lose it if she gets defeated again," Klaus replied, smiling before turning to Lily.

"I heard the third ranker challenged me before you got the chance to face him. Don't worry, I'll defeat him and push him down two levels. This will make Anna the third ranker. Then you can challenge him and take the fifth spot."

"Okay," Lily sighed.

"Of course, if you can defeat Paula, the summoner girl, you can go for the fourth-ranked. That would also be good."

"She has one Tier 7 and three Tier 6 intelligent monsters under her command. I don't think I can handle her," Lily replied.

"She challenged me yesterday. I'll wait until you reach fifth before defeating her. That way, you'll climb to fourth. But after two weeks, she'll probably rechallenge you," Hanna said casually.

"Don't worry; in two weeks' time, I'll make sure you two are prepared to handle anything," Klaus said in a tone that only Lucy seemed to understand. It made her blush slightly.

"Lily, let's give these two lovebirds some alone time," Anna teased as she dragged Lily and Hanna away, leaving Klaus and Lucy alone in the room.

"Finally, some alone time," Lucy said, jumping on Klaus. It took just a few minutes for their clothes to come undone.

Soon, Klaus Paragon Rod entered her body and began thrusting.

Her sweet moans filled the room. Klaus hadn't had much time on his hands during the two weeks they spent together, so now that she was around, he could only use the time to have fun.

Lucy, who hadn't had Klaus touch for months, has been hungry for his divine rod since arriving in the academy. So now that he had some time with him, she wouldn't let him go for the next 8 hours.

In the end, the two fell asleep after the intense bonding session. Klaus, who seemed to have been cursed to fall asleep, easily entered a deep state of sleep, only waking up the next day when he felt Lucy's lips around his dragon.

After exchanging greetings, they resumed their bonding session for another three hours until it was time for both of them to go to class.

Klaus left for Spirit Master Class, and Lucy returned to the Inner Section with a satisfied smile, which made a certain Dagger Queen jealous, forcing her to gather the courage and take the next step with Klaus.

Chapter 485 - 485: Let Him Cook

"You look happy. Tell me, what happened?" Nia asked immediately as Lucy appeared in her apartment in the Inner Section.

"Oh, it's nothing," Lucy giggled and entered her room. She wasn't about to tell Nia about her freaking time with Klaus. If Nia wanted to know, she could find out herself.

"I think something happened between them. Wait, did she do 'that' with him?" Her cheeks turned deep red as she said that.

She had spent a day with Klaus during their two weeks together after he arrived at the academy. In those 24 hours, she got to know him better, and Klaus had also focused on understanding her more.

Since his ladies had already welcomed her into the fold, it was only natural for the two of them to get along. However, they never went beyond kissing.

Klaus didn't want to rush into anything. He wanted to know more about her first.

He wasn't sure where this obsession of his had come from, but he was increasingly inclined to understand the women he was interested in before taking the relationship further.

He had done the same with Aoi and Lulu, who were delighted to learn more about him. In the end, he told them not to rush things.

Although they hadn't consummated their relationship, he assured them he recognized them as his women.

This filled them with great happiness. But seeing Lucy cheerful and humming some tunes, Nia was tempted to get to the bottom of it.

Thus, she decided to torment Lucy for the next few days to uncover what had happened during Lucy's "marathon" with Klaus.

\*\*\*

Klaus, on the other hand, attended the Spirit Master class, which turned out to be more informative than he had expected.

Although he had low expectations going in, he found the theories they explained to be fascinating. This piqued his interest and made him want to visit the library for further research.

From what he learned in the class, Spirit Masters focused primarily on the mind and soul—something he was already familiar with.

However, he also discovered that Spirit Mastery extends beyond just the mind and soul; it also emphasizes the importance of the heart.

According to the teachings, without a stable heart, one risks losing control over their weapons during combat.

He consulted with the senior, who advised him to rely on his world knowledge and conduct his research. In other words, the senior encouraged him to become a dedicated student and avoid seeking shortcuts.

After leaving the library, Klaus ran into his friends, who were heading toward the Arena for their duels.

Everyone wanted to top the charts, so they were busy strategizing on defeating their opponents and claiming their positions.

"Daniel, you're up first," Klaus said as they sat in the spectator's room. Today, he, too, would be fighting Mason Cole.

Mason had accused Klaus of using Nari to intimidate others, so he planned to challenge Klaus and show everyone that he was a nobody.

Daniel stood up, slinging his massive hammer over his shoulder as he walked toward the Arena. It was his first battle, and he was determined to leave a lasting impression on the souls of everyone watching.

The opponent Daniel had challenged was ranked 21st. Unlike Anna and Lily, Daniel wasn't particularly ambitious.

He didn't care much about climbing the ranks but wanted to make an impact. With his hammer, he intended to prove that he wasn't weak.

Of course, his ultimate goal was to break into the top 20.

His opponent, Fredrick, was a mage specializing in earth magic. The two seemed destined to clash.

"My name is Daniel. I'll give you a chance to surrender now because things will get ugly for you if you don't.

There's no shame in admitting defeat when you know you can't win," Daniel said arrogantly, standing tall with confidence.

"Just because you're friends with Klaus doesn't make you a monster like him," Fredrick shot back, gripping his staff tightly.

"You're right—I'm not Klaus. But that doesn't change anything. Step back now while you still can."

"Over my dead body," Fredrick growled, taking a firm stance that made it clear he was done talking.

"Your choice," Daniel replied as he swung his hammer to the ground, sending a tremor through the arena.

Fredrick's eyes narrowed at the heavy thud, a bad premonition settling in his gut before the fight began.

"Are you two ready?" The instructor asked.

""Yes""

They both answered.

"You may begin the duel."

Immediately, the instructor gave the order; Daniel leaped high into the air, his hammer raised. Knowing what was coming, Fredrick quickly raised four layers of earth defense and shielded himself.

"Futile attempt," Daniel muttered as his hammer tripled in size, its weight multiplying by five. Then, like a demon's weapon, the massive hammer ignited in flames.

"Let him cook!" Sitting among the spectators, Klaus shouted just as Daniel descended with his devastating attack.

"Let him cook! I said, let him—Boom!"

A powerful explosion shook the arena as Daniel's hammer smashed through the earth's defenses. The barrier shattered, and Fredrick, hidden within his protective dome, was launched like a cannonball, hurtling out of the arena.

Fortunately, he wouldn't die; the arena's defenses had been reinforced after Anna's duel with Ruby.

However, that didn't stop the arena itself from sustaining significant damage. It would be out of commission for a few days before being usable again.

Daniel's attack completely destroyed the Arena, taking it out of commission for a few days.

Everybody who witnesses the violent attack seems to have taken in yet another monster on Klaus's side.

Daniel walked out of the Arena like a mountain barbarian with his Hammer back on his shoulder.

In a room somewhere within the arena, Head Instructor Victor watched a projection of the battle, showing Daniel walking away from the wreckage. He let out a heavy sigh.

"Just Grandmasters, and they're already this strong. What kind of monsters did we admit into the academy this year?"

Three more arenas were destroyed a few hours later after Danny and Miguel defeated their opponents.

Klaus gave Miguel a technique, but he wrote it down on paper before handing it over.

He wasn't sure what kind of person Miguel was at heart, but from what he had seen over the past few weeks, spending time with him and his friends, he knew Miguel was a good person.

Klaus wasn't ready to make him part of his inner circle just yet. He still had some reservations, but he trusted his intuition. Based on what he sensed from Miguel, Klaus knew he was someone he could trust.

More and more battles took place until, finally, it was the one everyone had been waiting for.

Mason Cole challenged him instead of Hanna. He was an ambitious bastard who couldn't gauge his opponent's strength.

Klaus walked to the arena, standing face-to-face with the dark-haired, henpecked boyfriend of a legacy. Klaus looked at him for a few more seconds before smiling.

"What are you smiling about, bastard?" Mason asked with a frown. He can feel Klaus wasn't taking him seriously.

"Not much. I just have one question for you," Klaus said. "Are you doing this because you think you can defeat me, or is it because you're following the direction of the legacies?"

Chapter 486 - 486: Klaus vs Mason

"That is none of your business," Mason said, brushing off the question.

"But it is my business," Klaus replied.

"You see when facing an opponent, you must understand their motivation and how best to deal with them. I would have gone easy on you if you had said this was your own decision. However, you're just another henpecked boyfriend the so-called legacies are relying on. What a pity."

"Such talent, and you choose to bow down to some nobodies just because they promised you their daughter. Truly a pity. But don't worry, I will show you how insignificant you are.

"When I'm done with you, the idea of being that stupid will be wiped out of your brain."

The others listening felt a chill run down their spines as Klaus spoke. The thought of being used simply because of unknown grievances with him made no sense.

In truth, Klaus didn't understand where their hatred was coming from.

He had only clashed with the legacies from the Northern Union, so why were the legacies from the Southern Union also targeting him?

He couldn't comprehend their actions. He wasn't the kind of person to go around provoking others for no reason, so why were they coming after him without cause?

"Instructor, you can begin," Klaus said firmly. He figured this would be a good way to show these so-called legacies and their lackeys that he was no pushover.

'I can't kill him, but I can show him what real terror feels like,' he thought.

"Begin"

The instructor gave the command, and the two sprang into action.

Mason immediately lunged forward, appearing in front of Klaus in the blink of an eye. However, before he could land a blow, Klaus vanished, reappearing exactly where Mason had started.

Without hesitation, Mason pressed forward again, but the same thing happened. Each time he thrust his spear forward, Klaus would disappear and reappear in the opposite direction, effortlessly evading him.

Five minutes passed, and the pattern remained unchanged. Mason's fury was rising, but Klaus seemed just out of reach no matter how fast he moved.

"Stop running and fight me like a man!" Mason growled, frustration evident in his voice as he realized he hadn't managed to land a single blow.

"You're not a man, Mason," Klaus replied, his tone sharp. "A real man makes his own decisions. You, my friend, are what we call a puppet. You chose to become a tool for the legacies. So, you don't deserve much of my attention. But go on—keep attacking. Who knows? You might get lucky."

Another five minutes passed, yet Mason's efforts were futile. He came close to landing a strike a few times, but like clockwork, Klaus would vanish and reappear in the opposite direction.

"Bastard!" Mason shouted, his anger boiling over, but Klaus remained just out of reach.

"With this level of strength, you think you're on top of the world? Even my mom could land a blow or two on you before you'd realize what happened. Don't believe me? Watch this."

Klaus vanished, and in the next instant, a resounding slap echoed across the arena. Mason was sent flying as the slap connected with a brutal force.

The print mark of Klaus's fingers printed on his cheek.

Klaus smirked and moved again. In a flash, he appeared in front of Mason, who was just starting to stand up, dazed from the first strike.

Another slap landed, sending Mason flying once more. Before he could fully process what had happened, Klaus was in front of him again, delivering a third slap that sent him sprawling.

Subconsciously, everyone in the audience reached up to touch their own cheeks when the three slaps rang out.

Their eyes were glued to the arena, where Mason's cheeks had turned bright red, swelling visibly with each blow.

Two minutes later, Mason lay outside the arena, passed out. Klaus sighed and walked away. Initially, he had considered using the [Night of Terror] skill on him but decided against it. Using that would have broken him.

He wouldn't want that, not after everything he started to know about the earth.

From what Queenie had told him and what he had been learning in the Monster and Beast Anatomy class, he knew he didn't want to destroy a talent Earth could rely on.

Slapping him silly was a wake-up call. But if Mason wanted to continue walking in the shadow of legacies. That was his own cup of tea.

"You let him off easy," Hanna said.

"Well, we're all disciples, and while I may hate the legacies and the clans for their foolishness, he was just being used. In fact, I might have gone overboard back in Union City, but that's in the past now.

I won't hold back if he comes at me again next time...outside this place."

Klaus wasn't angry at Mason; his frustration was directed at the legacies for using a talent like Mason to do their dirty work.

"Do you think they'll stop targeting you?" Anna asked.

"I don't think so, but don't worry. I'll climb up there soon and put them in their place. For now, they can keep playing their childish games."

"So, what now? I don't have any classes for the rest of the day, and since I don't want to go back to Nari, why don't we go see if we can buy some stuff?" Klaus proposed. But before he could finish, he felt a threatening presence appear behind him.

"I am here," Nari said, materializing behind him like a ghost.

Klaus gave her a guilty smile, realizing she had heard what he said. Twenty minutes later, Klaus's ears were burning hot as they walked toward the mission hall to take on missions.

Nari had suggested they take on missions early, giving them the next two months for themselves. She handed them a generous amount of cores, ensuring that during those two months, most of them would ascend to the rank of Saints—especially Hanna and Anna.

Each of them selected high-level missions. Anna chose three solo missions, and Lily and Hanna followed suit. The guys each picked two solo missions.

Klaus, however, went all out and selected five solo missions. Then, they formed a team and picked five additional team missions.

The ladies would earn between 100,000 and 150,000 Celestial Points if they completed all their missions, while the guys would make close to 100,000 each. Klaus, on the other hand, stood to earn somewhere around 200,000.

"All of our missions are in the Tier 6 Forbidden Zone, where most of the strongest monsters are on the same level as Sovereigns—and there will be plenty of them. Each of you should prepare. We leave tomorrow," Nari instructed.

After parting ways, Klaus went to rest, knowing he and his friends would head into the wild the following day.

Since most of the competitions take place in the inner section, everyone was eager to enter as quickly as possible.

Miguel and his group would also go for their missions the next day following Klaus's instruction.

The next day, they departed for their missions, which were expected to last the next two weeks—if everything went according to plan.

Chapter 487 - 487: Red Stripe Crimson Wolves

Boom!

An explosion rocked a grassy field, sending a figure wielding a large hammer flying several meters away.

"Daniel, are you okay?" Danny called out as he swung his axe at a two-meter-tall Red-Striped Crimson Wolf, a Tier 6 monster with an agile body and deadly attacks.

"I'm fine, Danny, don't worry. We won't die." Daniel propped himself up and began hammering at the monsters. Danny sighed in relief and focused back on his battle.

"Damn it!" Kilian exclaimed as he slashed his flaming sword at a Tier 7 Crimson Wolf. Beside him, Mark thrust his spear forward, aiming for the neck of another Tier 7 Crimson Wolf.

On another side of the battlefield, Anna was surrounded by chilling ice as huge rhinos wreaked havoc. She did her best to send out ice spears at Tier 6 and 7 Crimson Wolves, shooting fire with every swipe.

Kay was bathed in flames as one arrow after another rained down on the monsters. He moved swiftly, dispatching them one by one.

As for Lily, she was flashing across the battlefield, ensuring her friends weren't attacked from behind. With her agile body and the aid of her wind element, her movements were lightning-fast.

On the other hand, Hanna was dealing with three Peak Tier 7 monsters that seemed to have entered the next phase of their evolution, making them early-stage pseudo-beasts.

They couldn't take on humanoid forms yet, but their battle power was devastating, to say the least.

She shot lightning arrow after lightning arrow, each release delivering a deadly strike to the three wolves, who stubbornly refused to die.

The battlefield was utterly chaotic.

However, the most chaotic scene of all was unfolding 2 kilometers away. Klaus was clashing with two humanoid beasts, each thick and muscular.

They have wolves' heads with red stripes on one side of their faces and humanoid bodies covered in fur. Each wielded a bone club engulfed in flames as they attacked Klaus with lethal intent.

"Die, human!" one of them roared, lunging at him and clashing with his spear. Klaus was pushed back a few steps, a smile tugging at his lips.

'Finally, the thrill, the adrenaline, the feeling of not knowing whether I'm going to live or die. I can feel it all,'

Klaus thought as he sidestepped a deadly swing from one of the Tier 8 half-beasts, which called itself Aldrick.

A few hours ago, Klaus and his pals arrived in the Tier 6 Forbidden Zone called Monster's Den. It is a place packed with different types of monsters and beasts alike. Most are pseudo-beasts, but there are loads of them.

It's a very dangerous place, but it's also where their missions were. Klaus knew his friends couldn't traverse the place without his help, so they all decided to complete the team missions before starting their individual ones.

For their first mission, they were to go to a valley south of the Monster's Den and retrieve the Thunderberry fruit.

The Thunderberry is a rare fruit that can be used to enhance lightning-based abilities. Eating it will boost one's control over lightning, making attacks faster and more powerful.

It's also said to help heal injuries caused by lightning burns.

Per the mission, the Thunderberry is protected by a Tier 8 Lightning Hawk. Of course, Klaus was confident they could take down the Lightning Hawk.

However, they failed to realize that the path they were taking led through the den of the Red-Striped Crimson Wolves.

These wolves are among the Overlords in the Forbidden Zone, mainly due to their fighting force and two Tier 8 Pseudo-Beast leaders, male and female.

The male, called Aldrick, is the Alpha, and the second-in-command is the female named Lyra.

They are in the final phase of evolution, where they will soon receive the heavenly tribulations and become true beasts.

Unfortunately, nine tiny humans disturbed their peace this fine morning.

Klaus sensed them, but what he didn't know was that the wolves also sensed them, and they laid an ambush for them.

Now, 30 Tier 6, 10 Tier 7, and two Tier 8 Crimson wolves were attacking with the force that suggested they wanted them down.

Klaus, who hadn't had a good fight in a while, was already joyful as he attacked and defended against the assaults from Aldrick and Lyra.

This was his first time fighting an intelligent monster. The past had been against brutes and zombies. Now, with 6 cores formed and the 7th almost there, Klaus felt like a champ.

He could kill the two at any moment, but he wasn't about to do that. He brought his friends along to drill into them the experience they needed.

Right now, they were cornered, but they weren't at the helpless stage. Of course, his senses covered the battlefield, ready to intervene if they needed help.

But since they were holding on, as long as there were no Tier 9 (Transcendent) level threats on the battlefield, he was fine.

He might be strong, but he wasn't that strong.

"Colossal Giant Hammer Descent!" Daniel shouted as he jumped high into the air and descended with a huge hammer, immediately blasting three Tier 6 and one Tier 7 wolf away.

"Wind Slash," Lily flashed past Daniel, and before the three Tier 6 wolves could get back up, her attack claimed their lives and injured the Tier 7 wolf.

"Finish it, Daniel," Lily commanded, and Daniel obeyed. The next second, his hammer descended on the Tier 7 wolf, instantly claiming its life.

"None of you should use your techniques yet. Let's see how far we can go with our normal skills and techniques," Anna commanded, channeling more ice spears as she rained them down on the monsters.

Anna and the others knew Klaus wouldn't let any harm come to them, so she was counting on that to ensure they could see their limits despite the danger surrounding them.

Right now, they were lacking one thing: battle experience. They had little of it, and Klaus, who noticed this, told Anna to prioritize fighting extended battles to see how far they could go.

Of course, he also told them he would protect them only when they were at death's door, so in case the situation wasn't favorable, they shouldn't do anything reckless.

This didn't seem dangerous enough, so they used the chance to address their lack of experience.

Thirty minutes later, Klaus killed one of the Tier 8 Crimson wolves and was toying with the last one.

Anna had also dispatched all three Tier 7 monsters and went ahead to help Anna deal with five more.

As for Lily, she managed to do her job well, ensuring none of them got attacked from the rear while also delivering the final blow.

This also meant she earned more experience points than her friends, but they said nothing. In the end, that was the formation Anna had come up with.

She would control, Hanna would protect her while killing, Danny and Daniel would act as shields, and Mark, Kilian, and Kay would be the all-rounders.

Lily, on the other hand, was meant to support all of them and kill at the same time.

Forty-five minutes later, the battle ended.

## Chapter 488 - 488: Evaluation

"Good job, everyone," Klaus said, walking toward his friends, who were catching their breath after the intense battle.

The dead bodies of the Crimson Wolves littered the battlefield. The battle had lasted less than an hour, but it gave Klaus a good sense of his friends' fighting power and styles.

Klaus collected the cores before stopping in front of his friends.

"There's a cave a few kilometers that way. It belonged to the Alpha wolves I just killed. We can rest there and evaluate our performances," Klaus suggested.

His friends accepted his suggestion and soon began moving toward the cave.

"Interesting. It seems the wolves are much more humanlike than we thought," Mark commented, observing how well-maintained the cave was.

"The two I killed and some of the Tier 7s you took down are in the phase of becoming beasts. This means they've started to gain human-like intelligence. So it's only natural for them to have such a clean place."

Klaus, who had witnessed the true nature of beasts multiple times in his past life, knew it wouldn't be long before his friends' perspectives on monsters began to change.

"Klaus, what's the difference between monsters and beasts?" Anna asked.

"Monsters are brutes," Klaus began. "They only know how to destroy. They don't have the intelligence to act with purpose. You could say monsters are mad and insane.

"Beasts, on the other hand, are just like us humans—intelligent, cunning, and very powerful. If you can take down a Tier 7 monster at your current level, you wouldn't even be able to land ten blows on a Tier 7 beast.

"That said, beasts can also take human form. However, the moment you see them, you'll know. Despite having human shapes, they still retain some part of their beast nature. But they can talk and think like intelligent humans."

"Sounds scary," Hanna commented.

"Very scary," Klaus agreed. "I have a feeling the Lightning Hawk we're going to face for the Thunder Berry has already stepped into the True Beast stage."

"How do you know that?" Kay, the quiet one in the group, asked.

"Because the missions were only posted three days ago, and the Crimson Wolves we just dealt with were in the medium stage. But you saw how dangerous they were. This only means the one we're going after is either already a True Beast or very close to becoming one."

"I see. I just hope we can complete this mission so we can focus on the rest," Kay said with a nod. The others followed suit.

"Don't worry," Klaus reassured them. "If we can't take it down, we can always negotiate. I doubt it chose to guard the Thunder Berry instead of taking it for itself if it weren't reasonable."

"Then again, we could always tame it. I think it would make a good companion for fighting and training." Klaus smiled slightly.

"Well, we're not beast tamers, so that's out of the question," Lily sighed. "Though I'd love to have a flying beast as a mount."

"Who said you have to be a beast tamer to tame a mount?" Klaus asked. "I can do it in my sleep. The only advantage beast tamers have is the ability to create Beast Space in the Sea of Consciousness."

"But I can do that too. In fact, I was already thinking of creating two or three spaces for you guys and helping you tame a few beasts. That way, I wouldn't have to worry about your safety when you go on solo missions."

"You can do that?" Lily's face lit up.

"Of course. I am not only handsome, cool, and strong, I am also very capable. In fact, in one of my past lives, I had a beast companion who was a Nine-Tail Demon Fox. She was the best," Klaus said with a smug expression.

"Tsk. I wonder who's going to believe that," Anna chuckled. His friends wore similar expressions after hearing his shameless comment.

Hanna, on the other hand, narrowed her eyes when she heard Klaus talk about his past life. But, of course, she said nothing.

"You guys should just relax. I promise that after this mission, you'll all find where your strengths lie and work on them.

However, I think our team will be complete once we add Lucy, Nia, Asha, Aoi, and Lulu. For now, Anna will play the role of control, but once Lucy joins us, you can switch to support."

"Wait, I won't be controlling the flow of the battle anymore?" Anna frowned at hearing that.

"Yes," Klaus said plainly, not wanting to hide anything.

"Why?" she asked.

"It's simple. While your water element is good for controlling the battlefield, I think it will be better suited for support, such as healing. Just imagine healing your teammates by letting them step into the water.

Also, I want you to switch to support because Lucy's wood element is meant for control. She can reach places on the battlefield you wouldn't be able to.

Plus, she has the ice element, perfect for protecting herself without needing Lily and Hanna to do that. This works out best for you, too, because aside from supporting, you can fight more actively with your ice.

And with you and your sister working together, you can control and support each other far better than one person doing the job alone."

"I see. I guess I'll have to talk to my big sister and see if she'll allow me to be her support." Anna was disappointed, but she knew Klaus was right.

She really wasn't suited to control the battlefield.

At first, Klaus had wanted her to handle control, but after learning of her ice element, he realized she would simultaneously be better suited for support and offense.

Klaus wanted to prepare them for when things went bad. After attending Instructor Simon's class a few times, Klaus started to see that Earth was far more vulnerable than anyone might think.

If and when things went south, he wouldn't have to worry about his friends and could fight more actively. Right now, Klaus wanted nothing more than to grow stronger, and one way of doing that was by having capable friends.

While they were away farming beast cores, he could simply absorb them. In fact, he wanted to turn them into his beast core mules.

But to do that, he first had to dig into their potential and bring out their best. It was also one of the reasons he wanted to help them tame a few beasts.

Since the legacies and clans were after him, he knew it was only a matter of time before they set their sights on him. The last thing he wanted was to worry about his friends when they were away on missions.

"Let's relax for now. In a few hours, we'll visit the ThunderBerry tree and see if we can pluck one with or without resorting to violence," Klaus said, retrieving the cores from their recent battle.

"Since these are fire-type cores, only I, Kilian, and Kay can absorb them." He divided the cores equally and handed them over.

Three hours later, they were ready for their first mission.

#### Chapter 489 - 489: The Bird Lady

"As I said, the chances of the Lightning Bird allowing us to take the ThunderBerry are next to none. However, we don't have to kill it either.

All we need to do is buy Big Sister enough time to sneak in and pluck a few. We don't want the guardian of the ThunderBerry to die suddenly. Who knows? The monsters it's been guarding the fruit from might attack.

"I might be awesome, but I'm not confident I can handle multiple Tier 9 True Beasts," Klaus said to his companions as they made their way toward the valley where the ThunderBerry fruit was located. Their mission was to secure just one.

"Little brother, can we handle the beast guarding it? Since the mission is ranked high, the chances of it being very difficult are also high," Hanna said.

"Don't worry. I can handle it if it's a single beast, even if it's a Tier 9 beast. But everything will depend on how fast you are at taking the fruit. Remember, if you're not confident, take one. But if there's a chance, grab two or three.

It will help with your lightning element, and I'll need it too to strengthen my lightning."

"Okay, brother. I'll do my best," Hanna said firmly.

Lily was the best option for this snatch-and-grab mission. However, she didn't have the lightning element, which meant her chances of succeeding were slim despite her otherworldly speed.

Luckily, Hanna was fast and had an affinity for the lightning element. This would give them an advantage to complete the quest easily.

They only took on high-level missions and were now learning how challenging such missions can be.

They ventured deeper into the forbidden zone. The tree they sought was located in a valley surrounded by three mountains.

Wary of any potential ambush, Klaus instructed his friends to move cautiously as they neared the location.

Half an hour later, they arrived a few kilometres from their destination. Ahead, in the distance, stood a blue tree crackling with lightning.

"I suppose that's the tree," Danny said, pointing forward.

"Indeed. Luckily, it's not tall, and there are more than three ripe fruits on it. However, we're unlucky," Klaus said, narrowing his eyes toward the tree.

"What is it?" Anna asked.

"There's good news and bad news. The good news is, the guardian of the tree isn't around. The bad news is... the guardian is right behind us."

Boom!

No sooner had Klaus finished his sentence than a powerful lightning bolt shot toward them. Klaus quickly raised an ice wall, blocking the attack.

Before they could react, something flashed before their eyes, and another lightning bolt was hurled toward Danny. However, Klaus acted quickly, blocking the attack just in time.

"Turn around and leave this place. You have no business here."

Suddenly, a feminine voice reached their ears, forcing them to turn to their right. There, they saw the attacker, who was already preparing to strike again.

"You know, your behavior is no different from that of a monster. As a beast, you should at least ask what we're doing here before getting aggressive," Klaus said, stepping forward.

Up ahead, a bird lady with the head of a hawk and the legs of a bird—yet a human-like body—hovered in the air. Her figure was covered in feathers, and she held a bone spear tightly in her grasp.

Behind her, a pair of wings spread wide. However, her hands caught Klaus's attention—avian but functional.

This signified that once she underwent the trial by lightning and broke through to Tier 9, she would transform into a True Beast, or as many called it, a Spirit Beast or Guardian Beast.

"There's no need to ask what you're doing here. It's obvious you're after my Thunderberries. The answer is no. You are not allowed to take even one," the bird lady declared.

"Perhaps we can negotiate. By the way, my name is Klaus. Klaus Hanson. May I know the name of this auntie?" Klaus asked with a slight smirk.

He knew full well that a battle with a Peak Tier 8 beast in the air would be far from easy. The oppressive killing intent radiating from her made it clear: her path had been one of relentless slaughter and bloodshed.

Klaus, however, was not foolish enough to act arrogantly. Instead, he chose to negotiate—not to save his own life but to ensure the bird's inevitable death didn't occur if they were forced to fight.

Still, he didn't want that outcome. If he could tame this bird lady for Hanna, she would grow immensely powerful in no time, easing his constant worry about his precious sister—one of the keys to his future.

"I don't need to negotiate with a bunch of children, so I will only give you three seconds to vacate my domain and never show your faces here again—unless you want to die," the bird lady threatened.

Kent smiled and glanced back at his friends, who, for some reason, were more fascinated than afraid at the sight of a beast talking to them.

Instead of fear, their faces held an expression of reverence.

'What a bunch of weirdos,' Klaus thought, smiling. He decided to go with the second-best plan.

"First of all, you don't have what it takes to kill us. Second, I can kill you in two exchanges—the first being me flying closer to you and the second, the attack that will end your life.

However, I choose not to be violent and instead offer you a fair deal. Of course, you can ignore it and attack us, in which case, we'll be dining on bird meat tonight." Klaus glared at the bird, who stared back with an unreadable expression.

Well, it was a bird. No visible facial expressions.

"You have two options here. First, step aside and let us take four of the ripe Thunder Berries. Second, you can choose to attack, leaving me no choice but to kill you.

And okay, there's a third option: you can become my sister's beast companion. If you do, I promise to help you break through to the Ninth Tier within three months and finally step into the ranks of a True Beast.

The choice is yours, my lady. But don't for one moment think you have the upper hand."

To ensure she understood he meant business, Klaus activated his Eyes of Malevolence, turning his warm golden irises into a chilling crimson.

The beast ahead shuddered at the sight.

Although Klaus wasn't bluffing when he claimed he could kill the bird beast within two exchanges, the creature felt genuine fear when it gazed into his crimson eyes.

The sight stirred something unfamiliar within her—fear.

Klaus, of course, noticed this reaction.

But he knew it had to be done. If the Hawk Lady had been a Tier 9 beast, he would have retreated with his friends and planned an ambush later, though their chances of success would have been slim.

However, with nine of them, he was confident they could take on a Tier 8 beast. And if it came to it, he knew he could handle her himself.

The bird lady hesitated, reevaluating her position. But before it could decide, a deafening roar echoed through the forest, filling the valley with an overwhelmingly potent aura.

"Well, that changes everything," Klaus smirked.

Chapter 490 - 490: Razor Claw Storm Tiger

The roar was accompanied by a potent aura that immediately filled the surroundings.

Klaus quickly used his own aura to shield his friends, knowing they would lose consciousness if they remained under such a powerful aura for long.

Thankfully, the next second, the bird lady also unleashed her Peak Tier 8 aura to cancel a portion of the oppressive energy, which undoubtedly belonged to a Tier 9 beast.

"Hahahaha! Loewe, are you scared? You should be scared, right?" Suddenly, a voice boomed across the surroundings, shaking the trees and the very ground.

"Ko, what do you think you are doing?" the bird lady, Loewe, asked in a frightened tone.

It didn't take a genius to see she wasn't happy about the sudden turn of events. She and the presence seemed familiar with each other, but from her tone, it was clear this wasn't supposed to happen.

Klaus stood there with a calm expression, but inwardly, he was both excited and nervous. The presence carried the aura of a Tier 9 beast.

While he was eager to test his full strength against such an opponent finally, his friends were not equipped for this.

As if to confirm his feelings, a three-meter-tall humanoid tiger appeared. It had dark, tough fur, a tiger's head, juggernaut arms, and a pair of dangerously sharp razor-like claws.

"A Razor Claw Storm Tiger," Klaus recognized it immediately.

It was one of the monsters he had learned about from Instructor Simon. From what he knew, even long before they became true beasts, their claws were their most lethal weapons.

Just a single scratch would leave you in excruciating pain for weeks if not treated immediately. They are one nasty bunch that is not friendly to anyone, not even their fellow beasts.

The tiger, Ko, looked at Klaus and his group before returning to Loewe.

"Who are these prey? Have you developed a taste for human meat now? I thought you hate humans and their meat," Ko asked, his savage words making Anna and the others shudder.

"Whoever they are is none of your business. However, what are you doing in my domain?" Loewe demanded.

"Your domain is about to become mine, Loewe. You no longer have the strength to protect it, so it's only natural for me to take over in your absence," Ko replied, his gaze shifting to the distant Thunderberry Fruit.

Lightning crackled across his body, intensifying the already oppressive aura in the air.

"The rules are simple: you stay in your domain and guard the Lightning Apple Tree while I stay in mine and guard the Thunderberry fruit. That was the agreement we set for our territories," Loewe said firmly, though her voice betrayed a hint of unease.

Ko, however, responded with a sly smile.

"That was the rule until I broke through to the 9th Tier. Now, you're beneath me, and as such, I can kill you and claim your domain under my rule," Ko said. Then, his predatory eyes turned toward Klaus's group.

"And as for these preys... consider it a favor. I promise to kill you with dignity and not desecrate your bodies. That's the best I can offer," Ko said, salivating as he spoke.

Anna and the others glanced at Klaus, their wide eyes screaming sheer terror.

Ko and Loewe were both lightning-type beasts who had agreed to guard the two natural treasures that had suddenly appeared in the Monster Den Forbidden Zone.

Loewe, the bird lady, was in charge of the ThunderBerry Tree, which produced berries containing potent lightning essence.

These berries had the power to improve one's lightning affinity and control over lightning. They were a highly sought-after treasure for anyone looking to enhance their affinity.

But with a Peak Tier 8 half-beast guarding it, nobody dared to come close. This, of course, made Loewe believe she was invincible in her domain.

As for Ko, he was in charge of the Lightning Apple Tree, which had the ability to help lightning users awaken their lightning elements.

Of course, that was easier said than done, as consuming just one apple wouldn't make much of a difference.

However, much like Klaus's continuous consumption of Red Poison Peas, if someone were to eat the lightning apples consistently, their chances of awakening would greatly increase.

The apples also strengthened the lightning element. In short, anyone with a lightning element would find them irresistible.

However, unlike Loewe, who mostly deterred monsters and humans from approaching, Ko always went for the kill. Because of this, the academy removed his domain from the missions.

Now, back to Ko and Loewe.

The two had made an agreement to stay out of each other's way and never come into conflict. Because of this, they had never interfered with one another.

Well, that was until the ambitious Ko broke through to the Tier 9 stage.

With his newfound power, his first order of business was to invade Loewe's territory and claim it for himself. Loewe, who knew she couldn't defend herself against the now far stronger Ko, found herself in a dire situation.

"No need to resist, Loewe. We both know that you lost when I stepped into the 9th Tier. So just escape while you have the chance or face your death," Ko laughed arrogantly.

Klaus sighed, his gaze shifting from the tiger to Loewe.

"Looks like you've found yourself in hot soup Auntie Ladybird," Klaus joked, causing his friends' eyes to widen in shock.

At that moment, they knew their only chance was for the bird lady to clash with the tiger. During the chaos, they could make their escape.

But now, with Klaus drawing attention to them, Anna resisted the urge to pinch him and instead gripped his hand tightly. Lily mirrored her actions.

"Shut up, human. This is none of your business," Loewe shouted without even glancing back at Klaus.

"I know it's none of my business, but I'd like to make it my business," Klaus said calmly. "From where I stand, you have a 0% chance of winning and a 100% chance of escaping.

"But we both know you won't escape. No, you wouldn't leave your precious berries behind for this brute. So you really only have one choice—and it involves hearing the third option I gave you.

"My friends and I will help you take care of this brute."

"We are?" Hanna asked, her cute blue eyes fixed on Klaus in surprise.

Klaus smiled at her. "Yes. We will team up with the bird lady to take down the tiger. Bear in mind that we need just one berry to pass the mission, and I doubt this tiger will let us go if it kills Loewe.

"So our only choice is to join her side and win."

Klaus turned back to Loewe, who was now looking at him with narrowed eyes.

Deep down, she wanted to accept his offer, but part of her hesitated. After all, she had ended up in this forbidden zone after humans had killed her companions during one of their invasions.

Back then, only she and Ko had survived, fleeing into the Monster Den Forbidden Zone. She despised humans, yet survival instincts warred against her hatred.

Klaus smiled again, meeting her conflicted gaze. "Do you want me to repeat the third option...?"