

Paragon 541

Chapter 541 - 541: What Doesn't Kill You Makes You Stronger (1)

They say that when the odds are stacked against you, that's when your true strength awakens. Well... they lied to you. People just say stupid things just because they want to...

Klaus, whose odds were stacked against him, was struggling at that very moment. He was being tossed left, right, and center.

The feeling of helplessness overwhelmed him, and for the first time in god knows how long, our very own paragon was truly helpless.

Thankfully, he was wearing early-stage alien armour which was lessening the attacks...

Whenever the alien wielding the green-hilted odachi tossed him, the dual-wielding horned swordsman would also hurl him toward the shadowy assassin, who seemed to take joy in leaving shallow cuts.

Then, the orc shaman would bombard him with elemental spells. And finally, the last person who always made him curse in different languages was the red-skinned troll, who always sent him crashing to the ground with a thunderous thud.

He was screwed.

Luckily, the Succubus and the Dark Elf archer were being held back by the Dragon... perhaps that was for the best, considering the dragon was doing everything possible to stop the Succubus, who was helpless against its flames.

The Dark Elf, however, was looking for an opening to attack, but there was none. The dragon was doing a good job while also ensuring it wasn't killed.

That would be dangerous.

'Fuck, they aren't using any tangible skills, so I can't determine how to counter. But that's for the best. Aside from the assassin, the rest are tempering my body quite well.'

Klaus laughed inwardly as he wiped blood from the corner of his lips.

What a maniac... using his body as a meat shield to find openings and the attack patterns of his targets.

Outwardly, he was suffering; inwardly, though, he was helpless.

The attacks were coming from different angles, and for the past twelve minutes, he couldn't figure out how best to handle them.

Thankfully, his armour and quick reactions prevented him from getting completely overwhelmed. They would need to do much more than they were doing now.

'One...'

Klaus was struck by the horned demon, sending him crashing to the ground, only to be tossed back up by the orc shaman, who used an elemental attack to hurl him into the air.

Klaus's skin burned but was repaired almost immediately.

This change was due to the armour he was currently wearing. His natural healing abilities seemed further amplified as the armour continued forming.

In fact, he never expected this to happen, but it seemed the more hell demons he killed, the more this armour would take shape.

He was happy.

He was suffering... but it was for the best.

He only needed to kill all seven of them, and he would be free from his danger. Naturally, he hated the idea of facing seven Ascendants, but he welcomed it.

Why?

Because Klaus wanted to ensure that after today, he wouldn't be overwhelmed even if he had to face a level 4 or 5 Ascendant.

He wanted to ensure that once he left this trial, Ascendant-level experts wouldn't pose a threat to him. Of course, that was wishful thinking, but as a Saint, this was perhaps the most shocking thing to witness.

'Two...'

The troll struck Klaus's side with its massive mallet, forcing him to cough up blood. A sight like this would make his mother weep tears of anguish, but what could he say? The boys do crazy things like this for no reason.

The orc shaman cast a spell, conjuring a Layer 5 spell circle that immediately began raining down fireballs. These fireballs pack more punch than one might think.

Each explosion sends shockwaves several meters wide, making it difficult to completely defend against them.

Klaus used his star qi to raise a protective dome around himself, deflecting most of the onslaught. Of course, the shockwaves were far from pleasant.

"Enough!" Klaus roared, delivering a powerful kick that landed a brutal strike on the horned demon swordsman, drawing blood and sending him flying. His boot has spikes on it...so.

This opening allowed Klaus to charge toward the shaman, who had summoned hundreds of fireballs. He cleaved through them with his sabers, arriving in front of the shaman.

But instead of attacking, Klaus leaped backward just in time to meet the descending odachi of the alien warrior.

The clash sent both of them flying, though Klaus was less fortunate. A shallow cut appeared on his neck—not deep enough to be fatal but painful enough to make him wince.

Perhaps the dagger was enchanted, but Klaus could tell there weren't any enchantments; it seemed the enemy's cutting technique had perhaps amplified the pain several times over.

The shadowy figure vanished and reappeared four meters away.

Klaus's wound healed quickly as he locked eyes with the shadow.

"I'll kill you first," he snarled, dodging a descending mallet and leaping sideways to evade a thrusting sword.

A fireball—much stronger than the previous ones—struck him, sending him flying again. Klaus coughed up blood but maintained his unyielding strength.

"Die, human!" The Troll attacked.

His heavy mallet cast a shadow over Klaus, who smirked and then moved. A bone-breaking sound echoed the next second as a giant hammer met flesh.

"I have waited for this moment, bastard." A giant hammer appeared in Klaus's hand, delivering a powerful strike to the troll's knee, sending its mallet flying toward the Shaman.

The Orc cast a defence spell around himself, but at the last minute, he caught Klaus's smirk and instinctively turned to his right.

There, the mallet swerved and aimed at the horned demon swordsman. Klaus is a spirit master, so he uses his mind to move the mallet flying toward the shaman.

This forced the Shaman to wave his staff desperately, casting a new spell that surrounded the swordsman at the last second, stopping Klaus's precise strike.

But perhaps he shouldn't have done that.

Klaus's smile widened, almost teasing, as he glanced at the Shaman. The Orc felt a bad premonition, but it was too late to know why Klaus was smiling.

In his attempt to save the swordsman, the Shaman's staff exited the defensive barrier he had built, exposing it. Of course, he never expected that to matter.

But it mattered.

Klaus had waited for that moment, and just when the Shaman thought he had saved his teammate, the Void Piercing Needle tore through the mysterious gem inside the staff.

Klaus noticed this unique gem always glows when he casts a spell.

The gem exploded, making the Orc Shaman scream his heart out as blood flowed from his orifices.

"Now, you can read your spells like a true shaman," Klaus muttered before ignoring him as three attacks and a shadow converged upon him.

'Plan One was a success. Time to create the third backup plan so I can use the second plan too.'

Klaus laughed inwardly, giving himself a pat on the back.

His first plan was to take care of the gem inside the Shaman's staff. With his abundant soul energy, he had figured out the true nature of the gem—it was a soul item.

This allowed the Shaman to cast spells several times faster without even speaking them, which made things exceedingly difficult for Klaus, as those spells were his biggest obstacle.

So, he had to take care of that.

Thankfully, his brain hadn't disappointed him.

Ah well, he had dedicated two whole brain segments to reading the battle and coming up with a plan while trying his best to survive.

So, one point for his quick thinking and decision-making...

Now, he had to kill the shadow assassin, and to do that, he must not fail with his second plan...thus, he needed a third plan.

Chapter 542 - 542: What Doesn't Kill You Makes You Stronger (2)

Oscar, the half-demon, was watching the fight with... probably a frown. No one, however, could tell if he was frowning under the hood, but the situation currently wouldn't sit well in his mouth.

Klaus is still alive... which is shocking.

Battered and bruised, but still alive.

The Shaman had lost his touch, let's say, by 40%, thanks to Klaus's perfect and well-calculated use of his Spirit weapon – The Void Piercing Needle.

The battle wasn't progressing as it should now... though his side was still winning... maybe they were winning in numbers.

His team handling Klaus was winning.

However, the side-taking on the Dragon was not having an easy time at all. The Succubus was, without a doubt, useless in the battle.

The Dragon is pure flame; it doesn't have a mind, a heart, or both, so she couldn't use her charm on it. This made it impossible for her to use her sensual body and charm to have her way on the battlefield.

She was caught in a net, with the only thing she was doing being to survive long enough for the Dark Elf to take care of the Fire Dragon.

Things were not looking so good for her either... but she was doing a little better than the Succubus, who lost her beauty thanks to Klaus's Fire Dragon roasting parts of her body.

She couldn't use her illusion on the dragon. Locking eyes with a fire dragon was useless in this aspect, so, basically, she was rendered ineffective.

Her charm wasn't affecting the dragon. In fact, everything about her screamed danger, but in her current state, charming even a honey bastard with her appearance would be difficult.

She was burnt in all the right places.

The Chaotic Nirvana Flame was not something to be underestimated.

Her healing was slow, and her movement wasn't fast either. She wasn't built for combat—at least, not on this battlefield. Her strength lay elsewhere—perhaps, the bedroom.

So, the dragon was having a field day with her.

The Dark Elf was also doing her best to kill the dragon, but she could only do so much with the Demon Killing Circle reinforcing the dragon's defences.

She was injured in some parts of her body, but she was doing far better than the seductress.

The last floor of the dungeon.

Lissa and Alida, who were paying close attention to the battle, stared intently at the screen. They didn't know why, but watching such a terrifying fight made them start to reevaluate things.

"Perhaps Master is too powerful," Lissa said, watching as Klaus destroyed the gem in the staff.

"It's to be expected. He had to be strong to survive. That's what he always said whenever we asked him, isn't it?" Alida responded with a brief smile.

"True, but this is eye-opening. It's like watching Master grow up all over again," Lissa said with a cheeky smile.

"I quite remember when we first met him. He was so tiny and full of hatred. I even wanted to eat him back then," Alida replied with a mischievous grin.

"Wouldn't that have been a bad thing? Because of him, we got to see so much and experience a full life. We'll be having that again," Lissa said.

Both Alida and Lissa smiled, their thoughts drifting to the past.

They may have been prohibited from discussing Klaus's past with him, but they could discuss it among themselves.

Their expressions revealed how much they had missed their master and how deeply they hoped he would pass this trial and return to them.

He was just a Saint now, yet several times more powerful than he had been when they first met him. In fact, fighting Ascendants now should have been impossible... and yet here he was.

The only question anyone could ask was: how in the hell is a Saint fighting five Ascendants simultaneously?

And he was winning. Terribly.

It just didn't make any sense.

But it was happening, and at the moment, everyone fortunate enough to witness it was left slack-jawed.

Of course, only three people got to watch it. Nobody else was graced with this wonderful battle against the odds.

Lissa and Alida were thrilled to see their master, battered and bruised, still holding on—and winning even.

Oscar didn't share the same opinion.

'Jeez, fighting five Ascendants at the same time is not the best thing to do,' Klaus grimaced, wincing as he was thrown across the battlefield by the force of a wooden mallet.

His body hit the ground with a heavy thud, skidding several feet before coming to a stop.

Blood trickled from countless cuts and gashes, staining his torn clothing. His chest heaved with laboured breaths, his face twisted in pain, yet his eyes burned with determination.

Despite the gruesome injuries—minor and major alike—his body was slowly mending itself.

Luckily for him, his healing wasn't failing. He chuckled bitterly under his breath, the corners of his mouth twitching upward in a pained smirk.

'Guess I've practically turned into a pseudo-immortal now, huh?' he muttered, his voice tinged with sarcasm and relief as he glanced down at the alien armour encasing his battered frame.

'Perhaps the trial hasn't been entirely unfair. It did give me something to face this challenge,' he said, clenching his fists.

Wincing, Klaus forced himself to his feet, his legs trembling under his weight. His jaw tightened, and he wiped blood from his lip with the back of his hand, only to freeze as a shadow loomed over him.

The demon swordsman wasted no time.

With a feral grin and glowing demon eyes, he closed the distance in a flash, his blade slicing through the air. Klaus barely had a moment to react before the sheer force of the strike sent him flying once more.

His body crumpled like a ragdoll against the jagged rocks, but even as pain wracked his frame, his lips curled into a grim, defiant smile.

'I am not normal, I guess. But then again, I am what they call the breaker of rules... fuck, that doesn't taste good in my mouth.'

Klaus grinned, the corner of his lips quirking upward, and turned to face his five opponents. They were doing much better than him, yet he could tell they weren't happy with how things were unfolding.

No matter what they tried, Klaus just wasn't dying.

The alien Odachi wielder's displeasure was apparent even through his metallic face. His thick, wiry hair seemed to bristle with irritation, carrying his emotions in its movements.

The Orc Shaman was clearly furious. His soul item was gone, and with it, part of his soul had sustained damage. He still clutched his staff tightly, his knuckles white, his glare sharp enough to pierce stone.

The Troll, broad and blockheaded, looked as idiotic as ever—but even it couldn't hide its dissatisfaction.

Then, there was the shadowy figure shrouded in darkness. It lacked any visible expression, but Klaus knew the truth.

Beneath the façade of calm, the shadow seethed, frustrated that every near-fatal strike had been effortlessly blocked.

As for the demon dual-wielding Demon swordsman, his unease was betrayed by a subtle twitch in his tail when Klaus's eyes lingered on it a little too long.

Klaus smirked, his teeth glinting, and a catchphrase formed in his mind.

'Never bring a tail to a sword fight.'

Chapter 543 - 543: What Doesn't Kill You Makes You Stronger (3)

Klaus's arm was bent at an unnatural angle, but he still gripped his sabre tightly, showing no concern for the grotesque state of his limb.

Then, with a sickening snap, the arm straightened, almost mechanical like a robot arm. It looked painful to watch, but he was smiling.

Klaus wore a grin that seemed to mock his body's pain. His chest was torn open, blood flowing freely from the deep wound.

His sides were riddled with hundreds of cuts—some shallow, others viciously deep.

One of his legs displayed a glaring white bone, exposed and devoid of flesh, with no hope of healing anytime soon. Yet, not a single groan or pained sound escaped his lips.

He endured it all with unyielding resolve.

What a maniac.

"Three," Klaus muttered with a grin before he moved.

Well, vanished.

In an instant, he reappeared beside the Shaman, who instinctively cast a spell to teleport himself away. Klaus smirked and spat a mouthful of blood, his grin widening as if savouring the moment.

Then he moved again, relentless, shadowing the Shaman's every escape.

Soon, they were darting across the battlefield, a deadly game of predator and prey. But this wasn't some twisted chase for amusement. No, this was what Klaus called 'destruction'.

Connecting the pieces would take a minute, but a minute was far too long for his opponents.

The white-haired paragon pursued the Shaman mercilessly while the Alien, Demon, Troll, and Shadow scrambled to isolate him.

Klaus wasn't making it easy.

"Thirty seconds."

"Twenty-nine seconds."

"Twenty-eight seconds."

Klaus's countdown rang across the battlefield, each number loud enough to reach his five adversaries.

A collective unease settled over them, the numbers ticking down like the approach of a storm. Klaus wasn't making any attempt to plot in silence.

He was running with his battered body, every step forcing blood to sip out through the white exposed bone.

They all wanted to know what would happen when the countdown hit zero, but none of them wanted to be the ones to find out.

Unfortunately for them, it wasn't their choice. They weren't doing much against this diabolical, unyielding human who simply wouldn't die.

It was as if he had nine lives or something.

Actually, he did. But with his bloodline unawakened, those lives were dormant.

He wasn't immortal—not yet. But at this moment, no technique or spell seemed to measure up to him.

Klaus weaved effortlessly through their attacks, counting down almost casually. The five warriors had never imagined they wouldn't be able to subdue a single Saint.

It was surreal, but it was happening. The realization settled in for a moment—they were going to lose.

Losing was the easy part.

Dying? That was a terrifying possibility none of them were willing to face. If they could, they'd vanish from the battlefield, leaving this maddening human behind.

But then the timer hit zero. And everything changed.

Klaus moved. In the blink of an eye, he was behind the dual-wielding demon swordsman, who froze in shock, completely unprepared.

The swordsman barely had time to react, his breath catching in his throat. Panic seized him as he instinctively tried to defend himself—but he protected the wrong place.

"Not your neck, dummy. You won't be dying just yet," Klaus murmured, a sharp grin splitting his face.

His saber flashed, slicing through the air with deadly precision. The next second, a piercing scream, raw with pain and anguish, echoed across the battlefield.

"Never bring a tail to a sword fight," Klaus quipped with a smirk, but it quickly faltered. He frowned. "Damn it... I ruined the line. It should be 'never bring a tail to a saber fight.'"

Klaus smirked.

There was no time to dwell on it. He moved again, swift and calculated. Behind him, the swordsman's body began to glow ominously.

His eyes turned bloodshot, red smoke curling and seething from within as an unholy energy surged through him.

Klaus's smile returned, but it was tight. "That's not good," he muttered under his breath. Then, with a quick exhale, he added, "But it's within calculation."

The sound of chains rattling reverberated across the battlefield, accompanied by a devastating impact that shook the ground. In an instant, the 200-meter radius was plunged into a fiery hell.

Flames erupted, consuming the space, while chains forged of fire snaked and rattled everywhere, creating a chaotic and terrifying scene.

Klaus had unleashed the Law of Self he had claimed from the Demon Hellhoundm Zarok he defeated in the first trial.

The [Hell Chain Domain] materialized, turning the battlefield into a nightmare of heat and destruction.

"The first rule of killing a shadow," Klaus said with a sly smirk, "is to heat things up."

As if summoned by his words, the shadowy assassin's full form emerged from the flames, now tangible and vulnerable.

Klaus wasted no time, launching himself into the fray. He activated [Shared].

He moved like a boomerang, striking fast and retreating before his enemies could retaliate. Each hit was precise, calculated, and relentless, ensuring they couldn't disrupt his rhythm.

The demon swordsman, who had activated a body-enhancement technique to crush Klaus, quickly became outmatched. His plan to dominate the battlefield crumbled under Klaus's sheer speed and agility.

No, the swordsman wasn't having an easy time at all.

Klaus was a blur on the battlefield, and his movement technique barely made him visible. The Ascendants could track him, but their reactions lagged behind his otherworldly speed.

Klaus was pushing his body to its absolute limits, knowing he had only 60 minutes to finish this fight. If he failed, there wouldn't be another chance.

The [Shared] last for only 60 minutes.

"Silly me," Klaus muttered with a mischievous grin as he remembered the latest [Law of Self] he had acquired: [Sky Dominion].

When activated, it granted a 300% boost to his stats—but the condition was that the battle had to take place in the air. Glancing around, Klaus realized the fight was already airborne.

He grinned wider at the thought of what might happen. Could he activate two [Laws of Self] simultaneously? Or perhaps fuse them into one? The sheer possibility made his heart race.

"Time to find out," he said with a mad gleam in his eyes.

Klaus activated [Sky Dominion], and his body surged with power. Energy erupted within him, his speed tripling, strength, stamina, and everything else.

And so did his grin.

At that moment, Klaus felt like a god.

But his body was also overwhelmed, and as such, he could explode if he forced himself too much. He only managed to contain the power because of the alien armour he wore.

Still, he was now strong, and he wouldn't risk his life for nothing. No, he wouldn't. Klaus declared it in his heart.

'The fighting ends in the next 30 minutes.'

That's how long his body could handle the overflowing energy. Any more time wasted, and he would explode.

'Time to kill some bastards.' Klaus moved, and the next second, he clashed with the Alien Odachi wielder. The long Odachi swung toward him, but Klaus was fast—very fast, in fact.

He always evaded, as if he knew what was about to happen.

Of course, he knew. After all, he was also using [Weapons Domain]. This allowed him to anticipate his enemy's moves. Thankfully, he loved the hand-to-hand combat.

"AaarrggH~!"

That was the cry of a shadow assassin whose shadow heart had been pierced by two Void Piercing needles.

The shadow assassin died...Klaus killed a Level 3 Ascendent...

Chapter 544 - 544: What Doesn't Kill You Makes You Stronger (4)

"First rule of slaughter: always kill the assassin first," Klaus grinned.

Oscar held his chest in agony as part of his soul was chopped off along with the shadow assassin. His life, and theirs, had been linked when he summoned them using his life force.

So the moment they died, a part of him died with them.

That was the price he had to pay for power.

He could only blame himself.

Klaus resumed his battle, putting the third plan into motion. The dual-wielding swordsman had to go.

"Crap..." Klaus was thrown away, his body latched onto by the thick, pointy alien hair. It had turned into ropes—or so it seemed—wiggling and twisting in the air.

"Let go of me, bastard!" Klaus pulled, but he couldn't break free from the countless strands of hair gripping his arms and legs.

BOOM!

A mallet crashed down on him, sending him flying. Still, the hair clung to him, and it felt as if it were creeping toward his soul. Klaus felt a bad premonition about what would happen next.

If he doesn't free himself fast, something horrible will happen to him...

'Fuck... I have to improvise now.'

He hadn't expected this, but he planned to make it more exciting.

"Face of Starvation!" Klaus finally used it for the first time since opening the face of starvation on the Demon bead.

The heavens rumbled as a large, twisted, and grotesque face appeared—one with a combination of smiling and crying expressions.

"Physical Starvation"

Klaus activated the only ability of the Face of Starvation that he wanted at the moment: Physical Starvation. This ability causes something akin to hunger but on their strength and stamina...

Thus, their nightmare began. The hunger was caused by their stamina and strength getting sucked away. They were screwed.

'What a brute.'

Klaus watched as the troll charged at the Face of Starvation, a smirk gracing his lips. The next second, a beam of soul energy shot from the eyes, sending him flying back.

Klaus used the eyes on the Face to unleash a soul attack. Just like the Eyes of Malevolence from the Face of Despair, this allowed him to use soul attacks through the eyes.

There was no way to approach the Face to destroy it. They could only come at Klaus, and since their stamina was falling, Klaus began to see openings.

But he wasn't in a position to make a move. He was literally locked in place by ropes of hair.

'Well... I will be damned.' Klaus smiled when he sensed something. At the same time, the alien sensed danger and quickly retracted his hair.

But he wasn't fast enough. Klaus had already gotten hold of five strands.

His eyes crackled with lightning, and then he tapped into the natural conduit—the hair. The next second, the alien's head was fried crispy.

He died.

Klaus coughed up a mouthful of blood, but he smiled, showing his bloodstained teeth. In fact, his smile was more of a grin mixed with laughter.

He was indeed feeling the pain, but at the moment, he could feel his ninth core forming steadily. The bodies of the Assassin and Alien dissolved, along with their weapons, but they had blessed him with EXP points.

Of course, he never saw the message, mainly because he wasn't in the heaven domain. But he was thankful. Two Ascendents are dead, and now, he is nearing the Sage stage.

He had killed his second Ascendant. It was a mere coincidence, but he made it happen. Now, two variables were removed from the battle, and his third plan was set to go.

Or so he thought... The next second, his plans changed again.

Some people are merely born unlucky. They never had the luck they wanted, mainly because they always found themselves in anything but encouraging situations.

The succubus lady was one of those.

From the start of the battle until now, she never had the chance to use any of her skills. She was basically useless—more like unlucky.

The domain of battle she found herself in wasn't the best or most encouraging for her skill set.

The dragon was a menace.

She never stood a chance, and thanks to her overly exposed body, the dragon was practicing its roasting abilities quite well. Now, she was charred in all the right places.

The damn dragon burnt her butt cheek... the savagery.

In fact, having an elemental dragon was the best. The dragon was practically unkillable. But that didn't mean it was having an easy time. The Dark Elf was showering it with arrows.

But they overlooked something.

The dragon wasn't an entity on its own. No, the dragon was more like a spirit that came from Klaus. And as such, spirits tend to carry traits from those they came from.

Klaus was a savage, fearless, and a maniac.

But on top of that, he was competitive. And the dragon seemed to have carried that trait. The trait that made it the most dangerous in this regard.

The moment Klaus killed the shadow, the dragon became competitive. It also wanted to kill its own target. And thus, the dragon became a savage—another trait it got from Klaus.

However, according to Klaus, savagery goes hand in hand with another trait he calls [Equal Opportunity As Whooping].

This trait basically means no matter the gender, he will give everyone equal treatment. And so, the succubus became the steak the dragon was practicing its barbecue on.

In the next ten minutes after Klaus killed Alien, the dragon bathed the succubus in an unholy baptism of flame. It was breathtaking... I mean, devastating, to say the least.

Oscar, who had recovered from the death of the shadow, saw this and nearly passed out from fear. The two cats watching from the top floor of the dungeon also saw it and broke into a cold sweat.

The dragon decreased its size to thirty meters long, which seemed to increase the burning force of its fire.

This was the day a succubus regretted being a succubus.

The dragon barbecued her for ten whole minutes until she couldn't take it anymore and died. Her entire body was charred, with no sign of even an unburnt part.

Everything was burnt.

Then the dragon roared, making Klaus, who was about to implement his next plan, look in its direction. His plans immediately changed because he never expected this outcome, but it had presented itself.

Instead of going after the Swordsman, Klaus looked toward the Shaman and smiled.

He had picked him as his next target. Since the Shaman was making things difficult for him by empowering his teammates, he needed to go.

After destroying his soul gem, the shaman was almost missing from the battle. But while that was true, the buff spells he was casting kept making things hard for Klaus.

So he had to go...

Klaus didn't hold back as his attacks began raining down on the three remaining targets he was facing. The battle was chaotic, but Klaus was enjoying himself with the [Face of Starvation] still active.

He moved between attacks, making sure every strike was calculated.

It didn't take long for him to receive a stab to his side, but at the cost of losing one arm.

Now, the demon had lost a tail and an arm, but Klaus was also badly injured. He was running low on blood now.

But he managed to get close to the Shaman and then used his skill, "Mind In a Whirlwind."

It was a mind attack that immediately sent the Orc down a spiral. But the next second, his nightmare came true when he heard Klaus speak.

"Buddha command, Buddha dispose. Instant Teleportation."

What he felt afterward was a scorching burn that reached deep within his soul.

Chapter 545 - 545: Cries of a Hell Demon

Oscar lay sprawled on the ground, dark blood seeping from his mouth and nose. His hood had fallen off, revealing a human demon's pale, ghastly visage. His face was ghostly white, a chilling sight.

Thanks to Klaus and his Dragon killing the summon demons, he had already lost four-sevenths of his soul.

Klaus hadn't expected the Dragon to manage to kill any of the Ascendants, but it had. His plan was for the dragon to hold the succubus and the Dark Elf back so he could deal with the other five.

But it managed to kill one. He was grateful for that small miracle.

As a show of gratitude, Klaus gave the Dragon another task. The result? The Orc Shaman's charred body collapsed, breaking into crisp, blackened fragments.

Nearby, the Dark Elf clutched her wounded right arm, her face contorted in frustration and pain. It had become nearly impossible for her to draw her bow, leaving her vulnerable.

The demon-killing circle was gone.

The Alien had met his end after his brain had been fried, his lifeless body sprawled in the dirt. The Assassin hadn't fared much better, succumbing to the Hell Chain Domain.

Now, only a few remained. The dual-wielding swordsman was giving everything he had, his movements desperate as he tried to bring down the annoying human who just wouldn't die.

The Troll, however, was far too slow, lumbering uselessly in the chaos. Klaus had decided to save him for last.

After all, it was the Troll who had inflicted the most damage on him earlier, and the pain still lingered in his battered body and broken bones.

That pain, combined with the strain of his collapsing body, was becoming impossible to ignore. The inevitability of it all hung in the air like a heavy shadow.

Klaus moved swiftly, continuing his battle with the Demon Swordsman, who was surprisingly agile despite the [Face of Starvation] eating away at his essence.

The pain coursing through Klaus's body was unbearable, yet he held on with sheer willpower, his jaw clenched and his breathing heavy.

Suddenly, Klaus evaded a sword strike, his reflexes razor-sharp. He retaliated with a kick, lunging forward and using his saber to steady himself as he regained balance mid-motion.

The kick connected, forcing the Swordsman back. Seizing the moment, Klaus dashed forward, slipping between the Troll's massive legs. His saber slashed upward but met resistance.

"Bastard's skin is ridiculously thick," Klaus muttered under his breath, his eyes narrowing in frustration.

The Troll's hide would require a special kind of poison to kill him. His body was an impenetrable fortress, and Klaus was running out of time.

Every second spent battling drained more of the volatile energy inside him, and the toll on his collapsing body was mounting.

He needed to release his boons, which is the [Sky Dominion] giving him a 300% boost and [Shared] giving him 240%, but to do so, the remaining two enemies had to die.

Luckily, the Dragon was almost done with the Dark Elf.

BOOM.

The Troll's massive mallet struck the ground where Klaus had been just moments before. Dust and debris erupted, but Klaus had already dodged, his sharp eyes catching an opening in the chaos.

Without hesitation, he went for it.

In the heat of combat, such moments could tilt the balance of power. Even a Demi-God could fall prey to an unexpected strike.

This time, the Demon Swordsman bore the brunt of the chaos. The impact didn't throw Klaus off course; instead, it sent the Swordsman flying through the air.

Klaus appeared behind him the instant he landed, his movements like a blur. A spear materialized, piercing through the Swordsman's head from the back, appearing through his mouth.

Lightning surged along the spear, crackling with destructive energy.

The Demon Swordsman's head was reduced to nothing but charred remnants, the air filled with the acrid stench of burnt flesh.

Klaus stood still momentarily, his chest rising and falling with controlled breaths.

The troll was the only one left, towering over him like an unmovable mountain. Klaus scanned the beast, his sharp eyes darting to the mallet in its hands.

He clenched his fists, frustration flickering on his face. He saw no clean way to bring the behemoth down.

"Tsk," he muttered, his lips curling in annoyance. "This isn't noble, but I need to win. For that, I'll lower myself to this."

With swift precision, Klaus grabbed a handful of dirt and hurled it into the troll's face. The grains struck true, blinding the creature. It roared, thrashing its massive head in confusion.

Seizing the moment, Klaus moved like a shadow. With a sharp, violent twist, his hand shot out, and he drove his spear into one of the troll's eyes.

It burst like an egg, sending dark ichor spraying across the battlefield. His spear found its mark again and, a heartbeat later, took out the second eye.

The troll howled in agony, its giant mallet slipping from its trembling hands and crashing to the ground.

Klaus stood back, a smirk tugging at the corner of his mouth. His posture straightened, and his eyes gleamed.

"Second rule of slaughter," he said, his voice steady, "if you can't kill them with your weapon, kill them with theirs."

Klaus extended his hand. The mallet shuddered and then flew into Klaus's hand.

With an effortless leap, he soared six meters into the air, his body crackling with raw energy. Lightning sparked around the weapon, crawling across its surface like hungry snakes.

Klaus's eyes blazed white as arcs of electricity burst from the mallet, illuminating the battlefield. The weapon pulsed in his grip, its size swelling threefold.

Its weight increased fivefold.

"Die, brute!"

His voice boomed like thunder as he brought the colossal weapon down. Lightning and thunder roared in unison as the mallet struck, splitting the troll's skull clean in half.

Blood and bone scattered in a violent eruption.

The mallet cracked under the force, breaking in half, but the job was done. The troll collapsed, its massive frame thudding lifelessly to the ground.

Soon, it dispersed and was gone.

Klaus landed heavily, his knees bending to absorb the impact. Blood trickled from the corner of his mouth, but he paid it no mind. His lips pressed into a thin line, his gaze locked on the elf in the distance.

He wasn't done. Not yet.

The ninth core churned within him, glowing faintly as it neared completion. He felt its power surging, almost ready to overflow.

The moment the elf fell, that would be it. That would be when his transformation into a Sage would begin.

As expected, when Klaus looked at Oscar, he saw the man was barely clinging to life.

Klaus chuckled, glancing again—this time at the seven cards still hovering in the air. His blood boiled with excitement, his lips curling into a sly smirk.

He couldn't wait to get his hands on them. Since Oscar believed his soul could unlock the true nature of the Seven Deadly Cards, Klaus was determined to accomplish what Oscar could not.

Parts of Klaus's body were nothing but exposed bone, but he would survive... somehow.

ROAR

Suddenly, a powerful slash tore across the once-beautiful sky.

The Dark Elf was sent hurtling downward, her scream echoing before being abruptly cut off. The bow in her hand snapped, and her charred body hit the ground with a sickening thud.

She was roasted alive, her body sizzling like a cruel mockery of a barbecue. The Dragon had cooked her.

The moment she died, Oscar's body stilled as well. But unlike hers, his body didn't vanish.

Klaus sat cross-legged in a lotus position, his breathing ragged and his expression hollow. Then, his head dipped forward as his mind gave out.

He passed out.

Above him, the heavens split open. Tribulation runes rained down, glowing with divine love as they poured into his battered body.

Chapter 546 - 546: Finally Sage

Oscar was dead.

The Alien Odachi wielder, the Demon Swordsman, the Troll, the Orc Shaman, the Succubus, the Shadow Assassin, and the Dark Elf—all gone.

It was anticlimactic, to say the least. The seven deadly summons, never meant to exist in the mortal realm, perished along with their summoner. The one who had sacrificed his soul for power ended up with nothing.

Ultimately, it amounted to little, and Klaus managed to kill him — kill them, completing the 4th Trial.

A faint, triumphant smile tugged at Klaus's lips as his 9th core shifted, glowing brightly before condensing into a Sage Core... But he must first pass out.

The heavens above roared to life, splitting open once more. Tribulation runes cascaded down like a celestial waterfall, etching their divine energy into his battered body.

Klaus had finally ascended to the rank of a Sage. Soon, he would step onto the path of a Great Sage.

Unknowingly, he had already begun walking the path of transformation, though he had no idea...He has long passed out smiling.

The first thing that changed right after the tribulation started was the injuries on his body. Klaus began to heal, with all visible and internal wounds mending almost immediately.

He was still unconscious, but the changes didn't stop. It took just five minutes for even the most severe injuries to heal completely, leaving his body as good as new.

Then, the next phase of his transformation began.

Klaus wasn't born with white hair.

No, this change occurred when he first went through his tribulation and became an Ascended. That was when these transformations began.

Of course, he had no idea why these changes were happening, but now, he could tell it had something to do with his [Nine Reincarnation Divine Body].

The changes were a result of his physique adapting to the [Paragon Star Diagrams] so his body wouldn't break when channeling energy into his attacks.

He had already witnessed how harrowing that could be.

A less durable body filled with such powerful energies could kill him without a doubt. In fact, when he used the [Shared] technique along with the [Sky Dominion], had he been a normal cultivator, he would have died.

In truth, even with just his body, he would have perished.

Luckily, the alien-like armor forming within him was able to hold back the energy from overflowing. This saved him, somehow. And fortunately, after 30 minutes, he managed to bring the fight to an end.

Now, his body seemed to be undergoing new changes.

He had finally become a Sage, but just like what happened when he became a Saint, the tribulation runes didn't stop flowing into his body.

His first Great Core was forming.

In core formation, which occurs from the Saint stage to the Great Sage stage, the cores are given different names.

At the Saint stage, it's called the Star Core. Of course, in the vast universe, some call it the Saint Core or First Formation.

It's known as the Sage Core or the Second Formation at the Sage stage. Naturally, there are other names depending on the region of the universe, but these two are the most recognized.

At the Great Sage stage, it's commonly referred to as the Great Core. While all races don't universally acknowledge this, it is the term most humans and similar races use.

However, in the realm of beasts, the Great Sage stage is given a different name—it's called the "Devil Core." The naming continues differently from there, but since those are specific to beasts, the emphasis here remains on humans.

Klaus had formed his first Great Core without even realizing it. His consciousness was currently drifting elsewhere. Fortunately for him, he wasn't conversing with any past incarnation this time, so he finally had a moment of peace to relax.

The recently concluded battle was one he wouldn't forget anytime soon.

Fifty minutes later, Klaus formed the first Great Core, and the second began to take shape. His body underwent immense changes. Of course, he had already used almost 60% of the cores he brought from the outside during the Saint Stage.

Now, he could only rely on the tribulation runes—but that was enough for him.

Many hours later, the sixth Great Core formed, and not long after, the seventh followed until the tribulation finally came to an end.

One could say Klaus had stumbled upon a cheat that made things astonishingly easy for him.

Under normal circumstances, Klaus would need an entire year just to break through to the next stages due to the sheer number of cores he had to form.

But ever since he created his Qi Seas, events that seemed like coincidences began to unfold.

First, just when he thought he would need to absorb thousands of cores to become a Saint, fate intervened through an unfortunate event in Queenie's life.

Her tribulation benefited him immensely. Although it was a tragedy for her, Klaus gained more from it than he could have ever anticipated. It seemed as though the heavens—or perhaps his rivals—had blessed him.

Then, when he was preparing to face the heavens in his next tribulation, they resorted to underhanded tactics, nearly using his enemy against him.

Thankfully, he survived, which led him to leave the academy and focus on strengthening himself. This, in turn, brought him to the dungeon, where, instead of battling the heavens, he simply had to sit idly and let the tribulation empower him.

He became a Saint, and after a few harrowing battles, he had now ascended to a Sage.

He still had five battles ahead of him, but as a Sage, who knew how strong he would become? Then again, his enemies were not growing weaker either.

In many ways, he had finally reached the level where he could challenge Level 1 Ascendants. But with his buffs, even fighting Levels 2 and 3 wouldn't pose too much of a challenge.

But as we all know, battles are rarely predictable. Many factors come into play. Just as Klaus had fought enemies far above his level before, he could very well encounter a Sovereign tomorrow who would give him a real fight.

Surviving dangerous encounters often determines battle experience, and Klaus has had more than his fair share of those.

But there are many fighters out there with years of battle experience.

Take Nari, for example—the current Klaus wouldn't be able to defeat her easily. Her battle experience has been forged through years of perilous encounters. Beyond that, she possesses a powerful and unshakable foundation.

In this regard, she was somewhat similar to Klaus. However, Klaus's advantage lay in his nine cores and his superior energy source.

This gave him an edge. But even without that, compared to the average cultivator, Klaus was still leagues above them.

Why? He also wielded Spiritual Qi just like everyone when he awakened. However, even back then, he could fight across realms—something his peers couldn't even dream of.

He was a monster from the very beginning.

But the question still remains: now that he had found a way to cheat the heavens, what would happen after the trial ended and he could no longer use the dungeon? How dangerous would things become for him? Would the heavens finally exact their revenge?

As the cores stabilized, a dark gold cocoon formed around him. His second transformation was now underway.

Chapter 547 - 547: Rebirth of the Golden Claw Lightning Hawk

Klaus remains in the cocoon for days.

A month has already passed since he stepped into the dungeon. But within the month he entered, Klaus had grown several times stronger, and as such, he can now be called a powerhouse for Mother Earth.

He can now kill Ascendents, beings considered the pinnacle of the human race. He is now killing them on a daily basis. That is just too shocking.

Now, he had started a new path where his strength would rise severalfold even more. The path of his finally transforming into a Sage will yet again make him become much more powerful.

Klaus has become a monster in a way.

But while he was still held up in the cocoon, things were going on the outside.

[Celestial Mountain Academy]

A few days ago, Kathy, Hanna's beast companion, who had been diligently practicing the technique Klaus gave her before he left for the dungeon, finally made some progress.

The technique allowed her to assume a near-perfect human form once she broke through. Of course, it wasn't as simple as it sounded, but since she was determined to become human, she and Hanna had stayed in seclusion all this time.

Finally, Kathy made progress, and it was time for her to break through.

Hanna was overjoyed, so she went to Nari, who took them to the place where all disciples could face their tribulations.

"I will be waiting for you here, Kathy. We all will," Hanna said with a proud smile.

Anna and Lily were also there to show their support. They had already told Hanna that when Kathy was facing her tribulation, they would want to witness it.

"We're rooting for you, Kathy," Lily said with an encouraging smile.

They would soon have their own tribulations, so they wanted to watch and prepare accordingly.

Kathy nodded and walked to the tribulation ground. She was about to break through to the Transcendent stage according to the human cultivation scale.

Naturally, this would make her a True Beast. But, like Hanna and the others, she had no idea how dangerous the tribulation might be.

Monsters only undergo Tribulations when they are becoming true Beasts.

She possessed the lightning attribute, so when the clouds began to gather, everyone held their breath in anticipation.

Kathy assumed her monster form, revealing her brilliant blue feathers and wide wingspan. She soared into the air, waiting for the first lightning bolt to strike.

It only took a few minutes before the lightning began raining down. Hanna and the others watched anxiously as the bolts descended one after another.

To them, it looked terrifying. But in reality, the tribulation was relatively simple. The lightning contained 80% restorative will and only 20% destructive will.

It wasn't something that could truly endanger her.

If Klaus had been there, he would likely have cursed the heavens. The tribulation Kathy was facing was so mild that it wouldn't have harmed him, even if he was a mere human without any abilities.

The disparity was glaringly obvious, a clear sign of how the heavens viewed him.

They despised him to the core.

The lightning rained down for a few minutes until flying lightning monsters appeared. Kathy, of course, battled them and continued to absorb the tribulation rune, which lasted for another 20 minutes until the tribulation cloud finally cleared.

But that was when her changes began.

The moment the tribulation ended, Kathy soared down and transformed into her previous half-beast form. Then, using the technique Klaus had given her, she overrode the normal transformation that was supposed to happen and began channeling the technique.

Lightning burst out of her body, enveloping her in a storm that immediately summoned the lightning clouds back.

However, instead of a tribulation meant to kill, this was more like a blessing of lightning. She was shrouded in a storm of electricity, and for two hours, she remained within it.

A little after two hours, a powerful lightning bolt of pure golden hue struck. At once, a wave of immense energy filled the area, forcing Nari to move the three ladies back.

"What is happening?" Hanna asked, panicked.

"It seems she is undergoing a transformation and awakening her lightning element," Anna replied, her gaze fixed on the powerful golden lightning raining down on Kathy.

"It seems so. I have witnessed something similar before," Nari added, managing to calm Hanna's racing heart. Hanna and her Beast Companion had become close these past weeks, so she was anxious to see her undergo such drastic changes.

The four ladies waited patiently for another three hours until, finally, the clouds cleared.

As everything became visible, they were greeted by the sight of a stunning golden-blond beauty who, without a doubt, would become one of the top beauties of the academy.

Kathy had transformed. No longer resembling a bird, she now appeared more like a human female, seemingly the same age as Hanna.

In fact, she had adopted some of Hanna's features. They didn't look like twins, but she could easily pass as a family sister.

She had perfect cheekbones, similar to Hanna's, and her hair was even longer, flowing behind her like a golden waterfall.

Her slender legs, moderate chest, and, well, her backside would undoubtedly make many heads turn.

She had a flat tummy and pale skin with a faint golden hue. Her golden eyes, much like Klaus's, shone brightly, and her golden eyebrows had subtle strands of white woven through them.

On her back, however, were three pairs of golden angelic wings that seemed to be made from fibrous material. Golden lightning crackled around them, giving her an ethereal, divine aura.

On her forehead was a tattoo of lightning, crossed with another lightning bolt. This tattoo shows she had awakened her lightning element and gained Elemental recognition.

Hanna moved and appeared in front of her with a smile. She took clothes from her space ring and handed them to Kathy. Kathy received the clothes, and with a flick, her wings vanished.

She wore the clothes which made her look even more gorgeous.

Afterward, she used the connection between her and Hanna to convey something. None of the ladies watching could tell what she was telling her, but they soon saw the outcome.

Hanna obeyed, hugged her, and brought their faces together. Their foreheads met, and golden lightning immediately surrounded them.

A few seconds later, Hanna's blue lightning burst out, mixing with the golden lightning coming from Kathy. This continued for about three minutes before it stopped. They pulled back and smiled at each other.

Hanna gestured with her body, and two pairs of blue angel wings appeared, shocking both Lily and Anna. The wings looked majestic.

But that wasn't all. Hanna immediately felt her strength rise by 20%, thanks to Kathy finally becoming a Transcendent.

"Thank you, Kathy," Hanna said, making Kathy hug her again.

"Thank you. I wouldn't have gained this if not for you and your brother. I should thank him when he comes back." Kathy smiled, knowing Klaus would definitely be happy.

She had become stronger and more beautiful and could now help Klaus's friends go on missions without worrying about anything.

"Ladies," Kathy said, approaching Lily, Nari, and Anna, who were thrilled about her transformation. A pair of golden feathers adorned her hair, making her even more stunning.

"You've become very beautiful, Kathy. I bet the boys will be all over you when they see you," Lily giggled, taking her arm.

Anna did the same, and soon they returned to the academy. Lily and Anna quickly went into seclusion.

Within the week, they would become Saints, too. Nari went back to her and Klaus's room and, as always, fell asleep. Without even realizing it, she had started to miss Klaus.

Hanna and Kathy went to their room to talk about her transformation.

Chapter 548 - 548: Kathy's Transformation

"So you're saying you now have a race, like an actual race?" Hanna asked, laying her head on Kathy's lap. It seemed Klaus had poisoned her with the habit of putting heads on laps.

But Kathy didn't mind. To her, they were like sisters.

"Yes. I now have a race and a window that displays my information. I can share it with you if you want to see it," Kathy replied, making Hanna nod.

After her transformation, a lot of things had changed, and one of them was that she now had access to the system screen showing her details. It was the same window every human sees when they awaken...

Of course, the system had been improving recently—something Klaus had a bad feeling about. He sensed something wasn't right with the system.

Of course, he knew this was only for him, thanks to his unique situation with them.

But Kathy now had it, and since she was Hanna's beast companion, she could share her details with her. It was similar to how Klaus's women could share their profiles with him.

Kathy shared her details.

"Hmm... It says here your race is Thunderwing. Do you know of any other bird beasts of the same race?" Hanna asked.

At first, Kathy only saw herself as a beast with no distinct race or lineage. But now, she has a race called Thunderwing. It may seem random, or maybe it was because she had transformed herself.

However, with no active knowledge of what she was made of, Hanna could only wait for Klaus to come back. He seems to know a lot of things for someone his age.

After all, back in the Tormented World, Klaus, in his past self as Fruity, fought a demon beast from the Thunderwing race.

Of course, back then, the demon's race was Blazing Thunderwing, but they were similar in a way. He would need to come back first to confirm.

But if they were the same, Hanna had indeed found herself a powerful companion with incredible fighting power.

Kathy had never heard of a Thunderwing before, but she was happy to have that lineage. Perhaps, soon, she could awaken that bloodline and claim some Bloodline Aspect and abilities for herself.

"Your lightning element is also cool. It's called Zephyrion Golden Blaze, and it has two aspects, each with its own abilities.

On top of that, you've unlocked four additional skills you can use with your spear. Once we reach the Inner Section of the academy, I'll help you buy a powerful spear you can use."

Hanna and Kathy were happy about the changes that had happened to her.

But, of course, they should be.

Kathy's lightning contains a trace of celestial energy, making it one of the most powerful lightning elements in existence.

For now, without the senior determining the rank of her lightning element, it can be placed somewhere in the top twenty on the Absolute Lightning Chart.

But it's incredibly powerful. It even contains a trace of wind energy, which allows her to move very fast in the air when using her wings.

[[Zephyrion Golden Blaze]]

[[Aspect: Storm Sovereign]]

<Aspect Abilities>

-> Bolt of Sovereignty: Kathy can summon powerful lightning strikes that not only cause immense damage but also momentarily paralyze opponents in their path.

-> Thunder's Wing: By summoning the wind, she can fly at incredible speeds, leaving behind a trail of golden lightning that can confuse and disorient enemies.

-> Lightning's Embrace: A defensive skill where you can surround yourself with a storm cloud of golden lightning, redirecting energy attacks and shocking anyone who dares to get too close.

These abilities are enough for her to pack some serious punch in combat. With the [Bolt of Sovereignty], if she wanted, she could just paralyze her foe and allow Hanna to kill them.

She can even make it so all her opponents are paralyzed for weaker allies to kill. Then there is her [Thunder's Wing], where she can move at the speed of the wind, leaving trails of lightning in her wake.

As for the [Lightning's Embrace], it spoke for itself. She is packing some punches here. But that isn't the only aspect; another equally devastating one exists.

[[Aspect: Celestial Herald]]

<Aspect Abilities>

-> Divine Surge: She can call upon the celestial energy within her, releasing a massive surge of golden lightning that amplifies her strength and speed for a short period.

-> Radiant Resurgence: This ability allows her to absorb and redirect enemy lightning-based attacks back at them, purifying them with her golden lightning.

Only two abilities, but they are all-powerful.

The [Divine Surge] doesn't specify how short the duration is, but in combat, even a single second is enough to cause devastating damage.

Having an ability that amplifies her strength and speed to such an extent is more than anyone could ask for. In fact, there's no telling how lethal she could become in battle.

As for [Radiant Resurgence], it's best described as the ultimate embodiment of "what doesn't kill her will surely make her stronger."

If she manages to absorb a lightning attack from her opponent, she can redirect it back with devastating force.

However, this comes with immense risk—such an attack must be powerful enough to kill her. If she somehow survives and absorbs it, her opponent will surely regret it, perhaps even cry blood.

Of course, this ability is only effective against lightning elemental users, but there's no denying its overwhelming potential.

<Skills>

«Thunderstrike Spear (Legendary)»

->A swift, lightning-infused thrust that pierces through enemies, leaving a trail of electric energy.

«Stormpiercer (Legendary)»

-> A charged spear throw that creates a lightning storm in its wake, disorienting and striking multiple targets.

«Tempest Cleave(Legendary)»

-> A wide horizontal slash with the spear that unleashes a shockwave of golden lightning, stunning nearby enemies.

«Lightning Vortex (Legendary)»

-> Kathy spins her spear rapidly, generating a whirlwind of lightning that pulls enemies in and shocks them.

"Kathy, you are very powerful. All your skills are incredible," Hanna said, smiling cheerfully as she skimmed through the list of abilities Kathy had gained. Her heart brimmed with happiness, almost too much to contain.

The current Kathy was not only stunningly beautiful but also unbelievably strong. The only downside was that she couldn't transfer any of her skills to Hanna.

But that was okay.

It seemed as though the heavens had granted Kathy abilities spanning from the Saint stage to the Transcendent stage.

Hanna let out a soft sigh, relaxing her tense nerves for a few minutes before resuming her cultivation. She was in the final steps of her breakthrough, though it would still take a couple of days.

Meanwhile, Kathy returned to practicing a spear art Klaus had gifted her before his departure. Klaus had ensured all his friends were well-prepared, leaving no detail unattended.

In fact, he even took the time to write down techniques for his male friends to pass on to their partners. He didn't want anyone worrying too much about their safety in battle.

When the time came—and he knew it would come—he wanted his friends and their lovers to stand tall, unyielding, and face the challenges like true warriors.

Klaus might have been immensely strong, but even he couldn't do everything alone. He would need his friends and their loved ones to bear the dangers.

So, while he was away pushing his limits, he wanted them to grow stronger, too. Even the paragon sometimes needed others to lean on.

Chapter 549 - 549: The Awakening of Monsters (1)

Exactly four days after Kathy's tribulation, Anna successfully formed her core and prepared for her own tribulation.

As planned, Hanna and Lily came out from their seclusion to accompany her. Naturally, it was Nari who escorted them to the site. Klaus has already told her she should accompany them when they are about to break through.

Anna spent 30 minutes facing the tribulation. Unsurprisingly, like Kathy's, it was relatively easy. The lightning baptism paled in comparison to what Klaus had endured.

Yet, while the tribulation itself was simple, Anna's transformations were anything but. It felt like the heavens—or something far greater—had chosen her, granting her a stunning makeover and countless changes that only Klaus could truly comprehend.

After all, Anna was no ordinary individual. She was the reincarnation of his former lover—the Ice Princess.

Back then, Klaus, as Fruity, met her only once, but it was love at first sight. However, while Fruity only met her that one time, she had seen him many times before.

After all, it was she and her sister, Lucy, who ensured Fruity had those few years of peace, allowing him to grow to a certain extent.

But even back then, it was clear that wasn't her first time knowing Klaus. It seemed she had prior knowledge of him before that fateful meeting.

Their spark was immediate, and for that, she was destined to meet him again. She may have disguised her appearance back then, but she is still the same Anna.

This is why, after the tribulation, her appearance underwent significant changes that made her more confident in her beauty.

She already had blonde hair that wasn't too long or too short, but after the tribulation, it grew long, almost reaching her waist.

Aside from the length, her hair also gained strands of silver, making it even more breathtaking.

Her eyes, facial features, body shape, and overall maturity seemed to have transformed. As time goes by, she will grow even more gracefully in all the right ways.

But now, she is confident—she is truly beautiful.

But beyond her beauty, something far greater happened. She awakened her elements. Yes, she awakened not only the ice element but also the water element.

This awakening brought her a step closer to becoming one of the most powerful disciples in the academy.

According to a senior, her ice element ranks 7th on the Absolute Ice Ranking Chart, and it truly lives up to its rank.

When she awakened, a domain of ice formed, covering a radius of 4 kilometers. The temperature plummeted, and for a moment, the world around them turned unbearably cold, forcing Nari to unleash her phoenix flame to warm the group of ladies.

She awakened an ice element called [Infinity Freezing Ice] and a water element called [Universal Soul Water]. Surprisingly, both elements manifested an Aspect, each with unique abilities under them.

The Ice element came with an Aspect called [Absolute Zero].

The name said it all—the ice was meant for freezing things, and the coldness was evident in the name. This Aspect had two abilities: [Domain of Ice] and [Zero Degree].

The [Domain of Ice] allowed her to manifest a 400-meter-wide domain made purely of ice. Nothing else could exist within it—only ice could remain. Even someone with a powerful fire element would suffer a severe debuff upon entering.

This aspect of the ability was clearly overpowered. But it became even more terrifying when the second ability came into play.

The [Zero Degree] was the purest manifestation of her ice element. The ability ensured that no matter what, the temperature—or, more accurately, the strength—of her ice would never change.

In simple terms, even in hell, her ice would stay at zero degrees or drop even lower if such a thing were possible.

Essentially, her aspect ensured her ice was always freezing. In many ways, these abilities seemed to embody the true essence of ice.

As for her water element, she needed to evaluate how best to use it. Her water element is incredibly potent. In fact, it seemed the role Klaus had envisioned for her was finally beginning to take shape.

The [Universal Soul Water] was made for two purposes: healing and killing. Before she became a saint, she only used it to control the battlefield. But now, she seemed to have awakened a powerful water element capable of both healing and killing.

The Aspect was called [Soul Healer], and as the name suggested, it allowed her to heal at the soul level.

However, the name seemed misleading, mainly because of one of the abilities that came with it.

The first ability, [Absolute Healing], allowed her to use her water element to heal herself and her allies instantly. All she needed to do was let them stand in it, rain it down on them, or have them drink it.

Of course, there were limits to this. One of them was that her health points had to remain above 10,000—a condition that seemed ironic, considering she now had 23,000 health points and an easy way to replenish them.

The second ability, [Soul Anchor], took things to an entirely new level.

This allowed her to place an anchor in the soul of anyone, enabling her to heal them anytime, from anywhere, because she would always know when they needed healing.

But this isn't a one-way street; no, aside from healing them, she can also take their soul energy and convert it into vitality to replenish her health.

So, in a way, she wouldn't run out of health, considering there's no limit to how many anchors she can place. It's both a cheat and, well, a cheat.

As for the last ability, perhaps whoever orchestrated the whole thing shouldn't have added that. It's too much to even call it an ability.

It's called [Demon Water], and basically, she can turn the battlefield into a waterlogged area where, the moment her enemies step in, their stamina and health start getting siphoned.

You already know where the siphoned energy goes. Basically, aside from mental fatigue, Anna can stay in battle for a very long time if she manages her spiritual qi well.

But while that might have concluded things nicely, she also received a technique—the same one she used against Ruby during their duel.

She received a technique called [Ice Princess Manifestation]. It has seven forms, and for now, she only has access to the first form.

It's called [Ice Staff Blast], and based on what happened during the duel, it doesn't need any further explanation.

Speaking of the staff, she also awakened a soul weapon called [Ice Queen Staff]. It's an elegant-looking staff with green gems embedded in it.

The staff alone is enough to make her a monster since it grants her a 30% boost to all stats and four times faster casting time.

In fact, without using any spells, just the staff alone is enough for her to clear battlefields like they're nothing.

She only needs her spiritual qi, and for now, she is a Saint, meaning her spiritual qi reserve is several times higher. She can now use more spells that pack more punch than when she was a Grandmaster.

But while Anna took the spotlight right after Kathy, two sunsets later, Lily also formed her core and underwent her tribulation.

She, too, just like Anna, has undergone some incredible changes.

Chapter 550 - 550: The Awakening of Monsters (2)

Two days after Anna's tribulation, Lily underwent hers as well, and just like Anna, she experienced some significant changes. Her changes don't pale in comparison to Anna's or Kathy's.

Klaus doesn't know if Lily is one of his past lovers, but he might have held a different opinion of her if he had witnessed her transformation.

Nothing about Earth seems normal...

...Nothing about Klaus seems normal.

Lily became much more beautiful, like Anna, which made her, like Anna, far more confident. They were quite envious of Hanna when she received her new body; however, now they can feel that they have become their own selves.

But while Lily may have become a beauty, something very powerful about her changed—so much so that it even shocked Nari and Queenie, who had accompanied her this time.

After the tribulation, Lily awakened her wind element. It was a great development for her but also marked the point where her danger level rose considerably.

She awakened a wind element called [Absolute Silent Wind].

It was a bizarre one, and while the name hinted at its nature, the attribute she awakened made her truly dangerous. She gained an attribute called [Silent Presence]. As the name suggested, her presence became nonexistent.

It was as if she had become the air itself. She held no detectable presence, yet she was undeniably there. You couldn't sense her at all. Even if she were walking beside you, you wouldn't feel her presence.

In a way, she had become a ghost of some kind. This shocked both Queenie and Nari. They couldn't discern any sound or trace of her, even with their superior senses. It was like she wasn't there, yet she was there at the same time.

This made her incredibly dangerous, as she could easily sneak up on people without them ever noticing.

However, aside from her attributes, she also awakened an aspect of the wind element called [One with the Wind]. Interestingly, the name was the same as the movement technique Klaus had given her.

One could call this a mere coincidence, but some things often hold deeper meaning than they might seem. It was as if the heavens themselves were shrouded in mystery regarding this aspect.

In fact, a lot has been happening on Earth that defies logic and holds no apparent meaning—crazy, inexplicable events. Yet, they continue to unfold, leaving one with no choice but to go with the flow.

Lily awakened three aspect abilities, and all of them are insanely overpowered.

The first, [Blessing of the Wind], boosts her speed by 40% for as long as she has stamina.

Of course, it drains her stamina, but there is a boon of her aspect that seems to restore her stamina much faster.

So, since she seemed to recover much faster, the ability was crazy enough to make anyone envious. It also grants her a 40% increase in agility.

The second, [Wind Conduit], allows her to use the wind as a medium for movement. Perhaps it could be better described as teleportation, as she essentially taps into the wind to move at an incredible speed.

This ability is perfect with her aspect, which also lets her use the wind to sense her surroundings. Currently, she can use her wind element to sense the 12 km radius around her.

This means that with this ability, she can move 12 km in an instant. That is powerful, and with her attributes that make her presence nonexistent, she is like a deadly blade teleporting.

As for the third aspect ability, perhaps they shouldn't have added that. It's just too powerful.

[One Who Harnesses the Wind]: This ability allows her, to a certain extent, to create an air bubble around people, depriving them of air to breathe.

In fact, this ability works so well that when the bubble is created, the air in their lungs is sucked dry like a vacuum. This makes the ability very powerful.

Queenie was impressed and promised to get her some wind cores, which would help her form her cores much faster and become a Sage.

But while she has one attribute and three aspect abilities, she also received a skill. For her, it was just a single skill, unlike Anna, who received a technique set containing seven skills.

She received a sword skill called [Fury of the Wind]. This allows her to harness the wind into her blade and unleash countless wind blades that hold 120% of her attack power.

Of course, it requires high stamina, but she doesn't lack in that field. She will definitely become a silent swordsman on the battlefield.

However, while all this was incredible, she also received a soul weapon that again shocked Queenie and Nari.

They were Sovereigns before they awakened soul weapons, but just like that, two Saints awakened soul weapons. From the look of things, they aren't ordinary soul weapons either.

[Lone Wanderer], that was the name of her soul weapon. From the look of things, there were seals on it, just like Anna's staff and Hanna's bow.

For now, the blade only allowed her to recover her stamina four times faster. Aside from that, it also amplified her attacks, although it didn't show by how much.

She had become a menace, and she could tell just by the energy coursing through her body. She immediately went into seclusion again to solidify her realm.

Three days later, she emerged and joined Hanna, who was ready for her tribulation. This time, Queenie, Nari, and Old Lu, the dean of the academy, accompanied her.

Lily, Anna, and Kathy also came. Klaus had already instructed them to pay closer attention to Hanna's tribulation.

As expected, her tribulation lasted for an hour, and it was far more dangerous than Anna's and Lily's.

This was due to many factors, but one of the primary reasons was that Hanna was Klaus's starlight—essentially his energy source. Naturally, the heavens didn't make it easy for her.

However, since she wasn't a paragon, things didn't escalate to the extent they did with Klaus. Still, it was an extremely perilous tribulation for someone at her level.

Thankfully, she wielded a powerful lightning element and a formidable soul weapon. These made the experience much more bearable for her.

In the end, she suffered some injuries.

After the tribulation, however, her gains were several times greater than before. Klaus granted her a unique body constitution, which remained sealed for now. But that wasn't all he gave her.

Her real body is a unique body called the [Divine Jade Body]. In Klaus's own words, it was a body containing divinity—something gods and immortals would kill for. It was a treasure many would cherish for its immense benefits.

After the tribulation, her body gained a form of attribute or perhaps a uniqueness called the [Lightning Body].

This granted her 80% resistance to all kinds of lightning attacks, a resistance that would grow stronger as she advanced.

This was one of the boons that made all her suffering worthwhile. She became even more beautiful, and her blue hair grew slightly longer, though she knew her mother would cut it when she returned home.

Beyond her enhanced beauty, she also awakened her element, received two aspects—one of which had two abilities—and gained a skill designed for AOE attacks.

She was elated. She had been waiting for this moment for a very long time.

