

Paragon 89

Chapter 89 - 89: The Structure and Rules

The moment the voice echoed across the hall, everyone fell silent. All eyes locked onto the holographic projection of the lady. They knew the trial that could shape their future was about to begin, so no one made a sound.

Klaus and Anna, standing somewhere near the back, focused their attention on her as well. The lady in the projection glanced around the room sternly before she began to speak.

"You are all here because you are considered the best this city has to offer," she said, her tone firm. "You recently awakened and began your journey on the path of cultivation—the chaotic path of strength and endurance. Well, some of you."

Though her face remained neutral, her words showed subtle disdain. Klaus noticed it, and so did others.

It was no secret why she spoke this way. Cultivation was hard enough, but it became even harder for those without a strong background. It was well known that those who hunted higher-tier monsters after awakening gained far more power than those who leveled up by facing lower-tier creatures.

Klaus was one of the many without backing, unaware of the advantages that came from fighting stronger monsters early on. Had he continued down that path, his potential would have been limited.

The lady seemed to be pointing out that while some were here on their own merit, others were here solely because of their family's influence.

"Some of you will fail," the lady continued, her voice cold. "Not because you lack potential, but because you do not have what it takes to claim one of the few spots available. I won't sugarcoat it. Some of you are only standing here because of your families. But let me make this clear—your family name means nothing in these exams.

Even if you are the child of an overlord, if you do not meet the standards, you will fail."

Her words are like a sharp thorn in their side. However, nobody uttered a single word. They all know what she said was the truth. No matter what they think, what she said is indeed true. Many will wash out, and they will probably be the greenhouse flowers pampered by their families.

"Now, let's talk about the structure of the exams," the lady said, drawing everyone's full attention once again. "There will only be one exam this time."

As soon as she said that, murmurs spread through the crowd like wildfire. Confusion flickered across the faces of the young participants.

"What does this mean, senior?" a young lady bravely asked, her voice filled with curiosity and concern. The hall grew quiet as everyone waited for an explanation.

The participants were well aware that, in the past, there were three distinct exams. The first exam was written, focusing on history, monsters' anatomy, and the cultivation path. This part of the exam was why many attended school before awakening. It required deep knowledge and sharp intellect, testing their understanding of the world and their future as cultivators.

The second exam was a test of strength and endurance. Here, candidates were put through rigorous challenges to measure their power. This test could vary greatly from year to year. Sometimes, it would focus on mental endurance, pushing participants to reach their limits of patience and focus.

The third exam was combat. Participants would face off against monsters in a controlled environment. This test evaluated their reaction speed, combat techniques, mastery over their weapons, and their ability to maintain control over the battlefield. It was a critical test for those seeking to prove their warriors' worth.

But now, with only one exam mentioned, uncertainty filled the room. What kind of test could replace all three?

"As I mentioned earlier, there will only be one exam," the lady continued. "However, this single exam will include all the elements of the previous exams. Yes, you will still be tested on your knowledge, strength, endurance, and combat abilities. But unlike before, where these tests were separated, they will now be combined."

She paused, watching the crowd as her words began to sink in. Then, with a small, dramatic smile, she added, "This year's exam will take place inside the Oracle."

The room erupted in gasps of shock. Murmurs spread like wildfire as everyone tried to comprehend what they had just heard. The Oracle was something most people only heard about in rumors, and the thought of using it for their exams was overwhelming for many.

Except for Klaus. He simply stood there, clueless about what the Oracle even was.

Anna, noticing his confusion, leaned over and whispered an explanation. "The Oracle is a virtual reality world. Fifteen years ago, an engineer, a programmer, and an artisan—who were supposedly college roommates before the apocalypse—started working on it. They wanted to create a world where people could enter and interact with others in a fully immersive virtual reality."

Klaus nodded, trying to process what she was saying.

"They achieved their goal five years ago," she continued, "but it wasn't released to the public. It was only accessible to the military and certain security organizations for testing. People kept hearing about it, but most had never experienced it themselves."

Anna lowered her voice. "In the Oracle, everything feels real. It has a 100% immersive experience that replicates your cultivation base, talents, and abilities. You can use your strength and skills just like you would in the real world. And even better—death in the Oracle is temporary. You respawn after you die."

Klaus's eyes widened as he absorbed this new information. It was incredible. A world where death wasn't permanent, where they could fight and train without risking their lives. The Oracle sounded like something out of a dream.

Anna smiled at him. "A lot of people have been waiting to try it, but since it's not available to the public yet, they've had to be patient. But now, we get to use it for our exams."

Klaus nodded, finally understanding what the Oracle was. The idea of entering a virtual world where everything felt real was both exciting and a bit scary.

"The test will work like this," the lady's voice continued, clear and precise. "You will face different breeds of monsters. Each will have a unique anatomy, so you'll need great knowledge to figure out their weaknesses and how to kill them. Some monsters will be familiar, but many will be new to you."

She paused for a moment, allowing her words to sink in.

"These monsters will challenge your knowledge and combat skills, strength, and endurance. Each monster possesses different abilities. Some may be fast, others incredibly strong, and some will have special powers. You must be ready for anything."

Klaus listened carefully, picturing what was ahead.

"To succeed," the lady continued, "you will need more than brute force. You will need strategy and sharp instincts. Pay attention to every detail because a single mistake could mean failure."

"The Oracle will simulate these monsters with complete realism," the lady added. "Their attacks will feel real, their strength will feel real, and so will the pain they inflict. Remember, this is your chance to show what you're truly capable of."

"And before you think you can use a battle of attrition to study your opponent," the lady said with a smirk, "know this: you will be facing waves of monsters. These waves will start from Tier 2 Lesser to Dark. After each wave, the tier of the monsters will increase, becoming more powerful and dangerous."

She continued, her tone more serious. "While you can take your time to defeat them, which will earn you the same points as someone who kills them faster, there's a catch. If you manage to defeat the monsters quicker, the remaining time before the next wave will multiply the points you earn."

The hall was completely silent now as everyone absorbed this new information.

"For example," she explained, "if you're required to clear the first wave within 5 minutes but you do it in 3 minutes, the remaining 2 minutes will multiply your points. The faster you are, the greater your advantage."

Klaus clenched his fists. Every second counted. Klaus felt a wave of relief when someone asked the question that had been on his mind as well.

"Senior, can undistributed points be allocated while in the Oracle?"

"Yes, you can," the lady answered calmly.

Klaus felt a weight lift off his shoulders. He still had most of his points unallocated, and he knew he would need them soon. Though, he chuckled inwardly. He had already cleared out an entire region of monsters before; this should be no different. Or so he told himself.

The lady continued, "Also, for those who won't make it into the top 200 selected ones, know that your trial video will be made public. This means your performance could still gain recognition, and you might attract attention from other academies. So, even if you don't succeed here, your chances are not entirely gone."

Klaus could hear the sighs of relief around him. It was clear that not everyone expected to be in the top 200, but knowing that their effort wouldn't be wasted gave them hope.

"Now," the lady's voice continued, "you will all be transported to your test areas. Prepare yourselves to enter the Oracle and start your trial."

Immediately after her words ended, countless doors opened along the walls. "Enter one by one," she instructed. People began walking through the doors without wasting time, and soon, the hall started to clear out.

Anna turned to Klaus, giving him a nod and a smile. "Good luck," she said as she headed toward one of the doors.

"Same to you," Klaus replied with a smile as he approached a different door.

As Klaus stepped through, he found himself inside a small, futuristic room. In front of him was a sleek, bedlike chair, and beside it, a helmet that looked like something out of a video game.

"Sit inside the chair and put on the helmet," a calm voice instructed him.

Taking a deep breath, Klaus did as he was told. Immediately, he put on the helmet, his vision darkened.