

THE FALL OF THE DIVINE

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Entering the Dawnligh Church

About ten minutes later, all the trial participants, guided by Zyros, made their respective choices.

In the sky above, three massive airships slowly descended, each representing a different divine cultivation organization. The airship from Obsidian Academy exuded an eerie black glow, cold and foreboding like a warship from the underworld, evoking a chilling sense of death's call. The one from the Shadow Guild blended into the night, silent and almost invisible unless one looked closely. In contrast, the airship from the Dawnligh Church appeared as a golden sanctuary suspended in the sky, surrounded by a soft halo of light, as though it had descended from the heavens, radiating endless warmth and authority.

Lucian gazed at the golden sanctuary, a flicker of light flashing in his eyes. The mysterious power emanating from it stirred a sense of reverence in his heart, but within that reverence lay a hidden desire—a yearning for power. Since Freya's collapse, this craving had been etched into his very bones.

The pale face of Freya appeared in his mind, causing his heart to ache. He vividly remembered the moment she fell into his arms, her breath weak and her life hanging by a thread. Lucian was willing to give up everything to save her. However, the persistent feeling of helplessness gnawed at him, breeding frustration and resentment.

One by one, the names of the trial participants were called, and soon Lucian's name echoed out. He, along with nine other trial participants from the Dawnligh Church, boarded the golden sanctuary. The expressions of the

other nine varied—some were excited, some anxious, and some neutral—while Lucian remained notably silent. Though a storm raged within him, outwardly he struggled to maintain a calm facade. The airship gently rocked as it ascended, breaking through the clouds, as if carrying them toward the celestial realm.

As the airship rose higher, the scenery outside began to change. At first, there were dense forests and towering mountains, with glimpses of wild beasts roaming the valleys. But as the airship pressed on, the landscape grew barren and desolate, eventually replaced by a vast, dark wasteland. Lucian stared out at this unfamiliar world through the window, feeling an inexplicable sense of oppression. The wasteland seemed endless, like a forgotten corner of the world, suffocating in its bleakness.

The other participants whispered amongst themselves, sizing each other up, but Lucian remained silent. He had no interest in their backgrounds or personalities. His mind was fixated on one thing—becoming stronger, strong enough to defy fate and save Freya.

After about an hour, the airship began to slow down. In the distance, a colossal fortress gradually emerged, shrouded in a mysterious glow. It stood majestic and awe-inspiring, exuding an aura of secrecy and grandeur. As they approached, Lucian could see countless ancient runes etched into the fortress's walls, faintly glowing as if they carried the memories of ages past.

“We’ve arrived,” the guide’s low voice interrupted Lucian’s thoughts. The airship descended slowly, landing smoothly on the plaza before the fortress.

Lucian and the other trial participants disembarked one by one, stepping onto the white stone slabs of the plaza. The air was crisp and tranquil, and an unusual silence filled the space, broken only by the faint rustling of the wind. Lucian took a deep breath, feeling a refreshing sensation flow through his body, slightly easing the exhaustion from the journey.

He raised his head, gazing at the main hall of the Dawnligh Church. It was a towering, magnificent structure standing at the far end of the plaza. The grand golden hall reached into the clouds, its radiant stones glimmering in the sunset, as though each brick exuded divine light. The entrance was a vast archway, thirty feet high, with a large golden plaque hanging above it, inscribed in ancient script with the words "Dawnlight Church."

Around the main hall, several smaller buildings lined up in a neat row, each reflecting its unique style and purpose. Lucian surveyed his surroundings, feeling a faint sense of unease. This place was unlike anything he had ever seen before, full of divine serenity, yet beneath the sacred surface, he sensed an oppressive atmosphere, as if every inch of land hid some unknown secret.

"From today, you are members of the Dawnligh Church," said Darius, the imposing guide, standing before them. His voice was low yet powerful. Even though his tone was calm, the authority in his words caused everyone to hold their breath in silence. "The day is late. Rest now. Tomorrow, you will begin your journey on the path of god cultivation."

Hearing this, Lucian felt both anticipation and an inexplicable anxiety. He knew that tomorrow would be the turning point of his fate, yet whether he was truly prepared for the unknown trials ahead remained a mystery.

As night deepened, Lucian was led to a simple yet tidy room. It was small, containing only a wooden bed, a desk, and a dimly lit oil lamp. Despite the modest conditions, after a day of travel and tension, Lucian found the tranquility of the room soothing.

He lay on the bed, exhausted, yet his mind replayed the events of the day in vivid detail—Zyros' god-like presence, the resolve of the trial participants, the massive airship, and the grand Dawnligh Church. These images flooded his thoughts, preventing him from falling asleep.

He closed his eyes, trying to calm himself, but the storm within him raged on. Gradually, his thoughts drifted back to that familiar face—Freya.

Her red hair danced lightly in the breeze, her smile warm and radiant. Yet in Lucian's memory, that image grew increasingly blurred, her figure drifting farther and farther away, until it disappeared into an endless fog.

"Freya, don't leave..." Lucian whispered in his sleep, but only endless darkness answered his call.

He awoke with a start, drenched in cold sweat, his heart pounding violently. He sat up, his eyes bloodshot, his fists clenched tightly. The pain and frustration in his heart coiled around him like a venomous snake, suffocating him.

Slowly, he unclenched his fists, taking a deep breath to steady his pulse. Despite his efforts, the storm inside him still raged. To save her, he had to become stronger—strong enough to change her fate.

Lucian bowed his head, closing his eyes as his lips quivered, his gaze softening.

The night grew darker, and the Dawnligh Church stood silently under the moonlight, watching over Lucian's every move. The air was thick with a faint sense of mystery, and as memories surged like the tide, the past resurfaced once more...