

Chapter 441: Chao Mundi

Luckily, he had access to a special method of progressing in his cultivation super-fast! And that at least soothed those subdued feelings of his a little.

"Let's change back." Entering the Shape-shifter Technology again, Virus transformed back to his original face and anatomy since he didn't find a reason to keep the fake one.

'So, where should I go hunting?' As he thought about that, some memories of the past during the time he was still in the Silver Sky Sect flowed into his consciousness.

He recalled how he had heard disciples discussing the subject of the most mysterious hunting ground and it was somewhere called Chao Mundi. In fact, he had heard this name more than once as it was said even the Animal Kingdom of monstrous beasts could only rule over a small part of it and did not dare to travel beyond their borders deeper into Chao Mundi for some unknown reasons. All the books he had read in the library of the Silver Sky Sect also confirmed that fact.

And when it came to cultivators, history itself had proven those who were courageous enough to venture too deep never came back! Due to that, everyone knew Chao Mundi was one of the most dangerous forbidden lands.

Of course, in case a cultivator only hunted at its very shallow borders and did not trek deeper, it was considered safe grounds unless one was unfortunate enough to come across a beast he or she cannot handle.

'Let's see... with the current speed of the spaceship, it should take about a week before I leave the Wild Islands, cross the ocean, and reach Chao Mundi which is a neighbor of the ocean.'

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Six days flew by in a heartbeat as Virus finally arrived at his destination.

Looking out of his spaceship, he could see oceans of trees right outside the cockpit. There were trees of any sizes perceivable which pointed at the fact that the jungle had definitely existed since ancient times!

'Shall we begin?' Muttering that, he jumped out of the entrance of the spacecraft with no delay.

In the past six days, Virus had checked the condition of his vehicle and concluded that he would need to fix it himself if he ever wanted to return.

Regrettably, however, according to his calculations, since he did not have many of the necessary parts and materials, that was going to take a long time since that's how awful the damage was.

Finally landing on the ground, Virus started searching around in hopes of finding prey. Fortuitously, it took only five minutes before he spotted a two-headed snake. Following that, It took a single charge from his part to behead both of its heads.

Letting out a disappointed sigh, Virus murmured next, "Unfortunately, it's only a monstrous beast of the First Order. It couldn't raise the synthesis percentage of my third pair even by one percent!"

In the Cultivation Multiverse of Qi, the cultivation stages of the monstrous beasts were graded by 'Order' count. Denoting, from the weakest to the strongest it was, respectively, First Order, Second Order, Third Order, and so on until it reached the monstrous beast of the Tenth Order!

Each Order corresponded to its own equivalent stages of human cultivators meaning the beasts at the 'First Order' were comparable to Human Cultivators at the 'Energy Disentanglement' Stage which was the beginning stage of Cultivation.

Following that were the monstrous beasts of the 'Second Order' who were as strong as cultivators in the 'Liberation Stage'.

The 'Third Order' matched the 'Sublimity Emergence' Stage and the list continued like that until the Tenth Order.

In fact, for monstrous beasts, other than their level of cultivation, what mattered the most was the grade of their bloodline which represented their potential as it was also one of the main factors determining their standing position and level of authority among each other. Their 'potential ranking' from the known strongest to the weakest was, respectively, Legendary-grade, King-grade, Beast-grade, First-grade, Second-grade, Third-grade, and so on.

Naturally, the stronger beasts with higher and more valuable bloodlines were respected by those of weaker bloodline grades.

And now, having come across a monster of First Order, Virus knew he had to go a bit deeper.

Therefore, as he sprinted into the forest, Virus came across many types of first and even second Order monstrous beasts as he easily beheaded them without even needing to pause or stop.

It didn't matter if the monster was in the lower or middle phase of the Second-Order, Virus was still capable of slaughtering them in leisure.

MOOOOO~

As he encountered a new monster, a cow-like creature with three sets of horns on its head and blood-red eyes to be exact, wanting to get rid of it as fast as possible, Virus hacked at its neck, only to feel as if he had just hit an unbreakable rock before all of the force came rushing back into his own hands.

'It's at the higher phase- no, ah, shit, it's at the 'peak' of the Second Order! Damn it!' A frown crept over Virus' expression as he casually began to contemplate whether to escape or try fighting the beast head-on, not that he was confident enough to run away on foot.

On the other side, however, having just been attacked, the cow monster didn't need to think as it directly rammed into him using his horns!

MOOO!

"Argh!"

The force put behind the headbutt was so heavy that Virus promptly felt as if a truck had just hit him, only that it felt even worse since the cow's pointy horns had penetrated through his stomach. Luckily, due to the horrifying level of Virus' corporeal body defense, the injury wasn't that deep as it couldn't even reach his internal organs.

The reason for Virus' prior hesitation mainly had to do with the fact that the monstrous beasts at the 'peak' of the Second Order usually could rival those at the eighth and even in some rare cases the ninth level of Liberation stage cultivator.

Unfortunately, since most cultivators could only reach the sixth level of Liberation before breaking through to the next stage of Sublimity Emergence, they could only face these types of 'Peak' Second-Order monsters only when they had successfully elevated their Cultivation to the Sublimity Emergence.

Of course, even then, some rare geniuses could handle these kinds of monsters even at the sixth level of Liberation using various factors such as their talent or high-quality techniques to fight these monsters.

Sadly yet, the reason Virus didn't want to go against the beast was because he was aware with his third level of Liberation, he could at most go against peak seventh level Liberation even using all his three perks.

'Hmm, now that I have two fused pathways that can release energy outwardly to the world, it looks like I can only try using a technique.' Standing up, Virus sped up his processing speed to its absolute limits as he began going through countless 'Human-class' Techniques while quickly narrowing them down to 'attack-types' that required a

'longsword' for utilization, and then he further cut it down to the 'top three' that required 'two' liberated pathways.

In the Human-class Technique, the requirement for learning and using them depended on the number of liberated passages a cultivator had access to. That signified if someone had synthesized and liberated only 'two pathways', that person would not be able to use Human-class Techniques that necessitated at least 'three liberated pathways' as only those with that minimum of three pathways might have a chance of doing it.

Other than that requirement, the 'location' of the liberated pathways was also of utmost importance. For example, the 'attack-type' Human-class Techniques that uses the 'sword' usually needs the pathways on the 'hand' to be liberated while the 'movement-type' Human Techniques are commonly needed for pathways of the 'feet' to be unlocked and liberated. That was precisely why Virus was currently searching for attack-type techniques and not those of movement-type since his two liberated pathways were located on his hands and not legs.

Following that, Virus swiftly looked through the top-three most suitable ones as he picked a Human-class technique for the very first time. The reason why he had not done this before today chiefly had to do with the fact that techniques that utilize only one released pathway are simply too weak and no different from releasing the energy outwardly by himself.

「Delirious Judgment Slash」：

[Description: A madman thinking him God! The first form is a vertical hacking attack using two liberated pathways, the more 'delirious' you are, the stronger the attack in both forms and vice versa. The second form is a horizontal slash and needs three liberated passages. Requirements: Longsword, minimum of two pathways liberated in the hand area.]

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「Twisting Tempest Thrust」：

[Description: Twist like tempest a hole in your enemy! The first form requires one pathway as it focuses on the word 'Thrust', the second form requires two liberated pathways as it concentrates the 'Tempest', the third form needs three liberated energy paths as it needs the 'Twisting', the fourth form has a requisite for four liberated pathways and it fuses all three aspects 'Twisting', 'Tempest', and 'Thrust'! Requirements: Longsword, minimum of one pathway liberated in the hand area.]

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「Trash Lash Bash」：

[Description: No place for trash! The technique only has one movement and that is to concentrate all energy on the sword using two liberated energy pathways in order to bash trash with a lash! Requirements: Longsword, minimum of two pathways liberated in the hand area.]

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Quickly analyzing the three options he had, Virus didn't need to consider before picking the second one, [Twisting Tempest Thrust].

Virus chose that not because it was a Mid-Human class Technique, but rather because he will be able to use it for a longer period until he breaks through and out of the fifth level of liberation.

In fact, until he achieves and comprehends the fourth form of the technique, it was only considered a Low- or Early-Human class technique, but that was only possible after he liberates his fourth pathway!

Therefore, to the current him, there wasn't really much of a difference between the three techniques other than one still being useful in the long run.

Nevertheless, having already set his mind on it, Virus started the comprehension process of the technique on the nail.

Usually, depending on the complexity of the technique, a normal cultivator needs to spend around a month or two to comprehend and train a form at this stage.

Of course, that only included the cultivators at the Liberation stage since those of higher stage can comprehend them much easier since with each stage, the cultivators' physique gets faster and their processing and thinking speed increases substantially while their perception of time slows down.

What that meant was that as cultivators get stronger, they can attain the calculative levels of artificial intelligence and even exceed it at some point.

Nonetheless, even though it would take a normal cultivator a month or two to understand the first form of [Twisting Tempest Thrust], Virus pulled it off at once!

Not stopping there, he also actualized and attained the second form which necessitated two liberated pathways, and that was about his current limit!

Returning his perception of time to somewhat normal next, Virus yelled in excitement. "Hahaha, I'm ready now, let's get back to it!"

To Virus, every time he starts using his terrifying processing speed to its utmost limits, it felt as if time freezes up entirely!

As a matter of fact, not only does it feel like time has stopped, even his body gets trapped in time as he gets motionless like a statue. His physique is simply incapable of keeping up with his sharp mind.

Nevertheless, since the time was back to normal now, Virus could see the enraged cow storming toward him, about to headbutt him even harder!

Chapter 442: Twisting Tempest Thrust

'Twisting Tempest Thrust – First Form!'

FWOOSH!

Immediately, from one of his liberated pathways, energy began to gather on the tip of Virus' longsword as he thrust it like a spear at the rushing cow.

Bam!

Both opponents were flung backward.

While the cow seemed a little dizzy, Virus's arm felt numb.

MOOO!

Still, intent on ripping Virus apart, the cow lunged at him once more!

"Huh! Come!" Virus's eyes shined brightly as he sensed nothing but exhilaration at the struggle he was going through. It was at times like this that he felt most alive.

'Twisting Tempest Thrust – Second Form!'

As he went into stance, twice the former energy started radiating off from both of his pathways before they gathered on the sharp end of the longsword.

However, it wasn't merely gathering this time. Rather, the energy was clearly in a restless state as they created wind-like turbulences and fluctuations on the very tip itself.

MOOO-

FWISH!

As the cow roared in wrath, Virus' weapon was launched and the two clashed head-on!

BAM!!!

Prttt~

Instantly, the longsword penetrated the cow's head right into its brain as the creature went down. After creating a trail as long as a few meters on the ground with its corpse, it finally stopped moving!

"Haaa.... Phewww!" Taking a deep breath, Virus deactivated his longsword as it disintegrated into his ring again.

Pitter-patter~

"That felt great!" He proclaimed looking up and closing his eyes as he enjoyed the sensation of droplets of rain that had just begun.

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Over the next two days, Virus continued his hunt while resting in the spaceship at night.

SWISH!

Right now, he was just done slashing the neck of a huge fish-like creature that apparently lived on land.

During these two days, he had been enjoying his hunt so much that no thoughts other than the monsters that he killed had occupied his mind.

He had long forgotten everything distracting and irrelevant as he only felt engrossed in the sensation of the kill and the pleasure it resulted in! The only notion going through his head was how great it felt to take a life that would in return benefit him!

Then, just as he was about to head to his next target, his energy began to bubble up, this promptly focused his attention on his physique as he checked what was happening.

'Hmm, so I'm finally breaking through!'

Following that, as the fusion of his third pathway was complete, his energy automatically rushed out into the world while the Origin unlocked his fifteenth single pathway. And next came the breakthrough!

Fourth Level of Liberation!

"Hahahaha!" Letting out a burst of uproarious laughter, Virus was jovial as he looked forward to the rest of his hunting journey.

"Would you look at that, even the way he laughs feels so nice!"

"Wow, bro, look at that face though, he's definitely selling for a high price! A living treasure!"

Interrupted all of a sudden, Virus' chuckle vanished as he looked in the direction of the two voices that had interrupted his celebration time.

During the past two days, Virus had encountered a few people and even groups busy hunting monstrous beasts at the vicinity of the border of Chao Mundi.

However, they had been all minding their own business, therefore, Virus did the same and didn't care about any of them. But now, from their conversation, Virus knew a group of hostile people had arrived.

Thus, looking at them, he saw around ten people led by two on horses strolling toward him.

What garnered his attention the most about this group, however, was their insanely huge physiques. Each and every one of them was at least three meters and they had been bulked up to the brim!

According to the books Virus had read at the library of the Silver Sky Sect, the only people that possessed such qualities were called the barbarians!

"But damn! What merchandise! That face even makes me want to have a go at him, now let's not talk about those old haggard women at the slave auction house! They would pay a fortune for him!" The bald one among the two horsemen said toward the other rider who was clearly the true leader. Even their horses were of gigantic proportions.

"..." Virus remained silent, wanting to see where they were going with this. Up to this point, he noticed that they were probably slave traders that had come to the Chao Mundi in order to kidnap people.

"Not only that, it looks like he just broke through to the fourth level of Qi Circulation, which makes him even more expensive!" The bald one added.

By 'Qi Circulation', the bald barbarian meant the 'Liberation' stage.

In the Cultivation Multiverse of Qi, the first two stages had differing names compared to the multiversal name the technological multiverse of the future had come up with.

Here, the first stage, aka Energy Disentanglement, was called the Qi Passage Opening stage while the second stage, Liberation, was instead named the Qi Circulation stage.

However, from the third stage onwards, denoting Sublimity Emergence, the cultivation stage names were the same in both multiverses since the technological human beings

of the future had deemed it unnecessary to rename them to a multiversal one. They thought their original names do indeed fit quite well in any multiverse!

"Boss, let me handle him." At this point, the barbarian standing at the very end of the group stepped up, volunteering for catching and immobilizing Virus.

Evident from his cultivation at the Fourth Level of Liberation, it was obvious he was the weakest amongst the group and now that he had found someone at the same stage as him, he wanted to fight Virus himself in order to elevate and cement his position in the group.

"Ohhh! So our weakest newbie wants to prove himself, huh?" The bald barbarian said with a smirk while gazing at the leader, awaiting his response.

"Sure." Was the leading barbarian's answer.

Listening to the confirmation, the newbie barbarian reached his back and grabbed the enormous ax attached to himself as a triumphant smile crept over his face. He could already imagine hacking Virus into two equal separate parts!

SLAP!

"You idiot! We want him alive!" However, he felt an abrupt slap to the back of his neck, reminding him not to use his ax.

"Ah, I see. Okay!" Placing the ax on his back again, he charged in Virus' direction with no delay!

Patiently studying the incoming assailant, Virus remained expressionless and merely connected to his ring and transmitted a command.

'Trigger Initial Configuration – Longsword!'

At once, his longsword, 'The Darkest Night, The Shining Moon', materialized.

"Ohhhh, he has a treasure too! We hit a jackpot!" The bald barbarian voiced watching the pitch-black longsword that was giving off a blue hue.

"AHHHH!" Meanwhile, the enormous minion had gone into a grappling pose as he run toward Virus.

Swish!

When he was just upon Virus, however, he suddenly stopped.

That made the bald man question, "Oy, oy, oy! Why did you stop!? Grab-"

Unfortunately, before he could even finish, he witnessed the frozen barbarian's body get separated into two equal vertical parts as it fell on the ground!

"..."

"..."

"What the..."

Silence descended upon the group of barbarians while their eyeballs were already about to pop out of their eye sockets as they gaped at all the internal organs that had spilled out from their comrade's two body segments!

They could not believe what had just occurred. Since none of them had seen Virus' slash due to the newbie's gigantic physique covering their line of sight, they felt stupefied at such an extreme turn of events.

The leader's face had gone very dark at this point as he stared at Virus with clear venom in his gaze while the bald barbarian's face had gone ashen white as he looked at his boss and said, "Bro, let me murder that bastard! He dared kill one of us!"

To that, the commander replied, "Go! Capture him if you can, if not, just kill him and let us drink his blood in our newbie's funeral. That wouldn't feel so bad as well."

"Understood! Heeyah!" Seizing his great ax from his back which happened to be even bigger than the ax of the killed subordinate, the bald barbarian charged at Virus on top of his horse!

NEIGH~

Clip-clop! Clip-clop~

Soon, the massive mount was already upon Virus as energy began to spill and gather on the bald barbarian's ax and arm as he hacked it right at Virus' head.

It was clear he had no intentions of wanting to capture Virus alive. All he wanted was to take revenge for his lost comrade!

Just as the ax was about to land on his head, Virus dodged doing a side jump using his entire body before landing on a different corner.

'Sixth level of Liberation!' Virus determined.

On the other side, getting off the horse, the barbarian sprinted toward Virus again, this time on foot.

"DIE!" He screamed as he was upon him again and chopped using his heavy weapon.

Raising his longsword in response, Virus blocked!

BAM!

"Ah..." Astonishingly, Virus realized he had underestimated these barbarians. There mere force put behind that chop had been so great that Virus was certain it could rival someone at the peak of the eighth level of Liberation!

Although his opponent was truly at the sixth level of Liberation, his body strength was truly terrifying. Although it didn't reach the absurd level of Virus' own physique which he had achieved after accomplishing True Sixth Level of Corporeal Tempering, it was still something great to take note of!

'His cultivation level at the sixth level of Liberation plus his body's natural strength makes him as strong as someone at the very peak of the eighth level of Liberation.' He calculated internally.

Beside him, the hairless barbarian's eyes had long gone wide open. He could hardly comprehend that Virus had stopped his full force attack! He was in utter disbelief!

"H-how!?" He shouted in rage while chopping at him again.

Bam!

"How can a little man at the fourth level of Liberation defend against my attack!" Unfortunately for him, his attack was blocked once more.

BOOM!

The barbarian attacked again, but again, the result was the same.

Swish!

At this time, finding an open spot just as he had blocked the ax, Virus parried it before slicing his longsword upwardly.

Slash~

Targh~

"AHHH!" Subsequently, an oversized arm fell on the ground as an agonized shriek reverberated in the area.

"Retreat!" Ordered the boss of the group of barbarians seeing blood gushing out of his closest subordinate's detached arm. He had never imagined the situation would get this serious!

Simultaneously, having already seized his ax, the barbarian boss ordered, "All of you! Attack after me!"

Getting off his horse at once, the barbarian boss started running toward Virus' location like a hurricane, his feet were so heavy and powerful that each step left a deep mark on the ground itself.

On the opposite side, looking at their leader about to reach him and sensing the energy gathering on his ax, Virus concluded quickly, 'The seventh level of Liberation!'

That immediately amazed Virus because due to the usual limitation of the number of pathways, most cultivators could only achieve up to the sixth level of Liberation!

But here it was, someone who had attained the seventh level!

HACK~

Already upon him, the barbarian chief chopped down using all his might!

BOOM!

Barely taking a step back at the final moment, the ax missed Virus before making direct contact with the ground, exploding it into many bits!

Following shortly, a grave and urgent expression took over Virus' countenance while he spotted a tear on his dress, he had narrowly dodged it this time!

Honestly, the current Virus wasn't confident he could win against this opponent. A mere calculation from his part stated that the barbarian's seventh level of Liberation plus his extremely robust body which was perhaps even beyond the previous bald man's might would result in his opponent's force at the minimum reaching a whopping peak ninth level of Liberation!

That in addition to all of the other incoming attacker barbarians lowered Virus' confidence even more!

Now, the leader had stopped underestimating Virus entirely and decided to go all out!

And that put Virus in grave danger!

Chapter 443 - He Is Talking!

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TECHNOLOGY EARTH

Currently, inside the highest floor of the Royal Suite of a luxurious hotel, a woman was sitting cross-legged facing the city of lights beneath her feet as she took out a crystal from within her mouth.

Throwing away the empty crystal next, from the small mountain of Red-Crystals beside her, she picked another one.

Then, putting the fresh Red-Crystal inside her mouth like a lollipop, she closed both her eyes before sinking into the process of absorption once more!

'Huh, how many have I absorbed till now? A few hundred? More than a thousand? I've lost count already...' She wondered to herself.

After having repeatedly consumed crystals, she had long since gone totally numb to the ten percent affliction that remained even after consuming the Resistance Pills.

Every day, someone would deliver a huge bag filled with Red-Crystals to her doorstep while she would consume them the very same day!

And today, after doing nothing but digesting Red-Crystals while being secluded in her private space, just as she sucked all the content inside the crystal beneath her tongue, abruptly, changes were initiated!

Therefore, sensing the transformations occurring, slowly fluttering her eyelashes open, she murmured, "My Trait just went through another qualitative leap... let's see if it can be done now."

Subsequently, she blinked once. But when the blink was over, stupefyingly, her irises and pupils had vanished entirely as only the whites of her eyeballs remained.

In a matter of a few seconds, she blinked once again as her eyes returned to their normal state!

Following quickly, droplets of cold sweat filled her forehead while blood seemed to have left her face at once! She also began to pant and breathe with some difficulty.

Hee~ Haa~ Hee! Haa!

"I-I need to meet them at once!" She proclaimed before rushing out of the hotel suite with no hesitation whatsoever.

...

Soon, in a luxurious hall, thirteen people were sitting around a round table with their faces covered in masks. All the seats were the same and only one was of more luxury compared to the rest.

"Liliana Tudor! Why did you request an emergency meeting with all of us included? This better be good! Or even though you are of royal blood, we might regret having sponsored such an irresponsible woman." One of the seats, the seat of Galahad, scolded while questioning in a deep tone.

"Everyone! Please be rest assured for this matter is of utmost urgency and importance! But before that, please let me thank you all for having supported me with so many Red-Crystals! Thanks to you all, I can somewhat foreshadow again!" The woman, Liliana Tudor, announced while standing on her feet some distance away from the round table.

Indeed, having completely lost her Trait after the appearance of the Rifts, Liliana, aka the Foreshadower, had no way of getting her hands on Red-Crystals since her Trait simply wasn't the combat type, to begin with. She was totally useless when it came to anything battle-related and that meant most would deem her useless as an Abnormal.

It was only years afterward, just as she was about to nearly despair and give up on using her Trait forever, someone had teleported right beside her and notified her that since she was of royal blood, there was a group willing to patronize her with all the Red-Crystals she will need in return for her services in the future.

And having been presented with such a golden opportunity to utilize her power once more, Liliana didn't have to think before making a decision. Therefore, she followed that person as she came to learn of the terrifying existence of the 'Thirteen'!

At first, she just could not believe or comprehend how such a cryptocracy, a shadow government, that could exert absolute power and control from behind the scenes even existed!

Nonetheless, it didn't take long for her to get used to it as she began her journey of reactivating the use of her Trait!

"Hooo! So you're saying you can foreshadow again?" The masked man sitting behind the seat of Sir Balin inquired in curiosity.

"Yes, sir! And I have already foreshadowed the cause of me losing my ability before and let me say the result was simply too big for me to keep it to myself. I believe it's something that is probably related to you as well... no, it's related to everyone!" Liliana explained in a single breath while color seemed to have left her face. Apparently, the mere thought of what she had seen frightened her.

"Please go on, miss Liliana." Seeing how oddly startled she looked, the seat of Sir Lancelot which was placed on the right side of the most luxurious seat stated.

"Please call me Lily." Liliana insisted humbly even in that state.

"Yes, please proceed, miss Lily."

Phew!

"Alright," after releasing a deep breath to calm down, Liliana continued, "this time, it could be said my foreshadow was in words, and it is as follows."

"..." Everyone went unusually quiet, waiting for what was to come since they were fully aware of how crucial Liliana's foreshadowings could be.

As a matter of fact, the Thirteen had always put a great deal of importance on Liliana's Trait even before the appearance of the Rifts.

They even knew the history behind her ancestry about how Elizabeth I, the last Tudor monarch, the virgin queen, had utilized this exact Trait in order to bring much glory to her kingdom in the past.

Although they were also aware the virgin queen wasn't much of a virgin since Liliana Tudor was the opposite proof of that.

"Please listen carefully and don't interrupt me till I'm over." With that, she began.

He who has the all-eyes of Argus,

Once faithful dog to Odysseus,

The sin of the bore, swum the river of time

The rebel came in joy, wishing for prime,

The traitor dog, now a thirsty monster

Wounds the time, with every step, disaster!

"..."

Afterward, silence descended upon the hall for some time until Liliana finally opened her mouth again. "That's all the lines I got."

"Huh? What do you mean that's all? What's that supposed to even mean? Please translate it for us." From one of the seats, precisely the seat of Sir Balin, an impatient voice was heard.

"Well, as you may know already, my Trait is about foreshadowing. It merely gives me some indications or hints in regard to some unknown matters, meaning even I may never understand the true meaning behind the foreshadows." Liliana patiently elaborated.

However, it was clear that clarification had made Balin even more frustrated. "Don't tell me you rushed all of us here at such short notice because of some random mythological gibberish you don't even know the meaning of, miss Lily?"

Listening to Sir Balin, many of the seats nodded in agreement, they felt the same way in case that was all Liliana had to say.

"Well, one thing I know for sure is that it contains the answer as to why I could no longer use my Trait! However, no. That's not all, I only said that's all the lines I got." Pausing momentarily, she clarified, "I don't know whether it's because my Trait has been upgraded to the next level, but while receiving those lines, I could also see some events taking place in the background, and that is the main reason why I'm here."

"Hooo, go on." Behind the mask, a very sharp glint passed through Lancelot's eyes as he awaited the rest of her foresight.

"Yes," bowing in respect, Liliana opened her mouth again, "while those lines were filling my head, in the background of those lines, amazingly, I felt like I've gained a new sense as I witnessed our planet filled with every type of wave as a shapeless monster went wherever it desired in a matter of seconds!"

"It was like the monster had eyes everywhere. It could see whatever it desired. It could gain access to any information he sought. No, in fact, it 'was' constantly watching us all at once. It was nigh omnipresent!"

"I believe the first line of my foreshadows, the all-eyes of Argus, was also talking about that thing."

"And that's precisely why I asked to meet you all in the most secure location, somewhere that has no piece of technology and no waves to be found anywhere!"

Meanwhile, behind their masks, the eyes of most of the members of thirteen had long gone wide open in utter astonishment while they could feel their hearts trembling in alarm!

They could hardly believe that there was such a creature on their planet, someone that was constantly watching everyone's movements and information!

The reason why they didn't question or doubt Liliana's foresight was that they had long done their research and were confident everything she saw was definitely at least a part of the truth if not the whole!

"..."

"..."

"..."

For a long time after that, a deathly silence overcame the hall as not a single sound could be heard. That was until, finally, someone started talking.

That, however, promptly forced a shiver of incredulity down everyone's spine as they turned their heads toward the most luxurious seat in the hall since someone that rarely bothered to even open his eyes was finally talking!

'Ah! When was the last time he said anything? Arthur is talking!' This notion was quickly passing through all twelve's minds as the undisturbed yet impactful voice of the source of their gaze reached their ears.

"So, we have a mythological creature on our hands, an Argus."

Steadily shaking his head in unbreakable serenity, Arthur rejected the idea at once. "Hmm, no, not precisely an Argus, it's not a mythological creature exactly. This one utilizes technology and the so-called wavelengths to attain access, thus, probably a conscious or controlled Artificial Intelligence."

"I do not suspect it to be a Trait-user, an Abnormal, since constantly gaining access to all the information in the world at once is unambiguously beyond the current limits of Traits. Beyond the limits of the human brain at this moment."

After a short period of contemplation, caressing his chin behind the mask, he muttered further, "O, this one's dangerous. It's going to be hard."

"But before we talk any further on the topic, we need to come up with sure-fire methods to avoid his eyes first. Although our hall is far beneath the ground and no waves can reach it, we can never be one hundred percent certain." The reason why Arthur was addressing the formless Artificial Intelligence as a 'he' and not 'it' was because Liliana's foreshadowing had assumed it to be.

With no pause next, Arthur directly jumped to the possible solutions. "We have two ways to escape its eyes and both require the utilization of Traits."

"First, I heard we've recently discovered and hired someone whose Trait is to easily invent new pieces of extremely advanced technology on a whim and that the more Red-Crystals he intakes, the more advanced high-techs that person can invent. Use him to come up with a solution."

"Second, we just need to nurture some Abnormals who can control and deactivate all wavelengths in a certain radius." In fact, just as Arthur was claiming, it was indeed possible to nurture Abnormals with certain Traits, the only drawback was that it was an extremely expensive process.

For example, to awaken a Trait that was wavelength-related, they needed to gather and nurture all types of people obsessed with wavelengths or those that were somehow connected to them strongly and just keep feeding them Red-Crystals until they awaken.

The first awakened might be a failure just as might the tenth, however, if they continued awakening these types of people, one was bound to appear at some point!

"We shall do both. Now leave the matter at that and do not talk about it, until we accomplish the two." Pronouncing his final verdict, he once again became noiseless to the hilt.

Listening to Arthur logically analyze and conclude everything detail by detail and even come up with the possible solutions to solve the issues in a single turn of talking, an unkillable flame of reverence, trust, and admiration flickered within everyone's gaze silently as they put their fists on their chest and saluted.

"ALL HAIL THE KING!"

"ALL HAIL THE KING!"

"ALL HAIL THE KING!"

...

Chapter 444 - Cheeky

CULTIVATION EARTH – CHAO MUNDI

Retreating at the fastest pace he could, Virus gazed upon his opponents that did not even blink before rushing at him once again.

"KILL!!! KILL THE MOTHERFUCKER! AHHH..." With his spit flying around, the raging barbarian chief roared while his other subordinates accompanied him from the sidelines with no hesitation whatsoever.

Regretfully, since the chief was even faster than Virus himself, Virus wasn't successful at creating some distance between them.

As the chief was already upon him, rotating his ax from below, the barbarian hacked at him in a straight horizontal motion.

That attack, however, promptly brightened an idea in Virus' mind as he raised his longsword in front of himself in a blocking pose.

BAM!

As the two weapons collided, the intense might behind the ax transferred over to his weapon. But cleverly, Virus used that force to propel himself backward. As a result, he was sent flying back before doing a backflip and accurately landing on his feet some distance away.

'Now, how should I deal with this situation?'

BAM!

Just having raised that question, Virus was about to enter his extreme state of processing to discover any possible solutions and methods of either battling or escaping from the barbarians, a solution that he might have missed in his normal state, when out of nowhere, someone unknown landed in the middle of Virus and the barbarians.

"Barbarians are indeed barbarians! Ganging up on a single poor man, are you not ashamed of yourselves?!" The newcomer, wearing a veil over her face, exclaimed while facing them.

"Huh? Who the hell are you? Get out of the way, bitch!" Having no intentions of even pausing, the chief charged toward her while brandishing his ax at her.

"Hmph! Scram!" However, releasing a harrumph of contempt, the newcomer merely brought her two palms together and clapped.

BOOM!

Instantly, with her clap as its center, an energy wave was released in all directions, directly flinging off the barbarian chief and even all of his subordinates backward!

Landing some distance away, the barbarian leader wiped the blood off his mouth as shock and astonishment replaced his rage. "S-she's at S-Sublimity Emergence!"

"You bet I am!" Meanwhile, looking back at Virus, the veiled woman said, "Are you okay? Can you tell me what happened here?"

To that question, Virus decided to answer truthfully since there was no reason not to, "These barbarians suddenly appeared out of nowhere, saying that my face would sell really high at a slave auction. So, they attacked. They are slave traders."

"Ah, barbarian slavers, I see. But they were right though, you're so fucking hot." She admitted while preserving her deadpan tone.

"Huh?" Tongue-tied, Virus didn't know what to say.

On the other side, as the barbarian chief had calmed down by now, a realization hit him. 'That attack just now and that vulgar behavior... hmm, it's definitely her. We need to retreat at once and report this to the third prince. Everything else can wait.'

Afterward, he threw a brief gaze filled with hostility and venom at Virus and declared, "Brat, let's see each other again."

"We're leaving! Let's go!" Shouting the new command, he no longer wanted to linger around and escape the vicinity while his gigantic minions also followed closely behind him.

After they were gone, out of curiosity Virus decided to ask, "Hmm, why did you let them leave? Is it because this is none of your business when all things are considered, so you don't really want to bother killing them?"

"What? What are you talking about? Of course not! The moment they attacked an innocent person, it already had everything to do with me as it became my business. Eradicating evil is my cause!" The veiled woman elaborated calmly.

'Huh? What are you, a saintess of justice?' Virus pondered in amusement while another doubt occupied his mind. "But if eradicating evil is your cause, why didn't you kill them?"

"Hmm, that's because who can say for sure that they are evil?" Touching her chin, a sage-like light that screamed wisdom brightened her eyes.

"Uh... but they are slave traders who kidnap people though? Doesn't that passively qualify them as evil people?" Virus was now confused at her thinking process.

To that, the veiled woman didn't even need to ponder before responding, "Yes, but benevolence is my cause as well and my benevolence is telling me to give them another chance! They might redeem themselves in the near future."

'That's exactly the complete fucking opposite of everything you were saying before!' Feeling like he might lose some brain cells if he continued trying to understand this unknown woman's logic, Virus simply decided to stop.

Nonetheless, it was true she had aided him out of his previous quandary, so he was nothing but grateful to her. "Anyway, thanks for the assistance. I might've been in big trouble if you didn't show up."

"No need to thank me! It's always a pleasure to save a damsel in distress!"

'What the...' That, however, instantly forced a scowl over Virus' face. Still, he couldn't really get angry at the person who had helped him just now, therefore, ignoring that unpleasant part, he insisted, "No matter, you have my thanks, so thank you."

"No problem!"

"Miss! Wait for me!" Suddenly, someone's shout could be heard at some distance away.

Bam!

And a few seconds later, like thunder that strikes the ground out of nowhere, someone promptly reached them while panting, "Huff, miss, why did you start running that fast all of a sudden! You left me all alone there!"

"Hehehe, sorry, sorry, sister Henna, this weak man needed saving, so I couldn't wait for you." She chuckled while patting Henna's back and pointing at Virus.

Albeit, that answer instantly made Virus' countenance very dark. Now he was only speechless about encountering this weird woman. 'She's crazy!'

"Ah, him?" Studying Virus, the woman called Henna whispered with a suspicious tone.

Patting Henna's head this time, the veiled woman confirmed, "No need to act like that, really just some barbarians bullying a weak-man-in-need kind of situation."

"Is that so?" Finally, it appeared Henna was convinced. "Alright, whatever, if you're done saving him, shall we go, miss?"

"Huh? But they might attack him again though... I mean look at that face, I bet deep inside you want to kidnap him too, hehe." She presumed while wearing a knowing smirk that screamed 'I know what you're thinking, you nasty girl!' beneath that veil of hers.

"Miss!" Frustrated, Henna's cheeks became red. In fact, she was starting to get embarrassed at her vulgar claims in front of a stranger.

Woefully, that reaction only made the veiled female even more cheeky, "What? Did I hit the nail on the head? Why are you so disturbed? Why so shy? Is it getting hot down there?"

Beside them, Virus had long become dumbfounded as he questioned himself, 'What the fuck is happening right now? How the fuck did I end up in this situation?'

Forcefully calming her nerves, Henna took a deep breath before getting back to the main issue. "Phew... what do you want to do then? You know we can't guard him forever, right?"

"We can't?"

"No! Unless you want to marry him!"

"M-marry him?" At the mention of marrying Virus, however, the unknown woman began to stutter oddly while her expression behind the veil could not be perceived, "I mean... n-not that I would mind marrying that face..."

"Miss!" Gripping both her fists, Henna almost felt suicidal at this point.

"I'm not marrying anyone! So don't marry me off on your own!" No longer able to tolerate where she was going with this, Virus yelled.

"Alright, alright. Calm down you both! How about this, he will just follow us to that place. He'll be safe by our side."

That solution, however, immediately riled Henna up as her countenance became unnaturally dark as she reminded her, "You can't be thinking of giving him a spot, right? We only have two badges, one for each of us!" Fully aware of just how unpredictable she could behave sometimes, Henna didn't think that outcome would be entirely implausible.

"Hehehe, of course not. Don't worry, I won't ask you to give up your spot for him. How could I possibly do that to my dear sister Henna? He will stay outside."

Meanwhile, Virus felt somewhat dumbfounded how this woman wasn't even asking for his opinion and instead just decided everything for him.

Thus, at last, determining it was enough, he was just about to reject her one-sided invitation, when he caught them mentioning 'that place'. Now he was curious.

Thus, he threw the question right at them. "Um, what are you guys even talking about? What is 'that place'?"

"Mind your own business, w-" Apparently, Henna didn't want to reveal their destination. But before Henna could even end her sentence, she noticed the veiled woman had already started the process of revealing everything, "Ah, by 'that place', we are referring to the 'Invisible Ancient Fortress World' that shows up every thousand years."

"MISS!"

Suddenly, her tone became somewhat serious. "Come on, all the elite powers know about this anyway, so what's one more?"

"Can I enter it too?" Now Virus was even more intrigued.

"No way!" Henna refused at once.

"Uh, unfortunately, no. There are only a select few badges and all of them are in the hands of the most elite superpowers over the land. Oh, right, unless you can cross the 'Bridge to Heaven'. There is a myth that claims if you can pass the 'Bridge to Heaven', your existence itself will become the badge and you'd be able to enter all the floors with no badge whatsoever." The veiled woman elaborated on a whim.

"Hahaha, him? Crossing the Bridge to Heaven? Miss, you really have a good sense of humor sometimes! Hahaha..." Henna ridiculed and laughed at even the possibility of Virus crossing the bridge.

"Hehehe, right? Anyhow, let's go!"

'Hmm, Bridge to Heaven? Well, let's tag along, for now, I smell something interesting.' With that, Virus didn't need to think twice and was resolved to accompany them willingly.

However, before that, remembering he still didn't know who he was talking to, Virus inquired casually, "Before we go, how should I address you? I mean what's your name?"

"Argh, you're right! Where is my manner! What's your name?" She mouthed, reflecting the question at him.

"I'm Vee, and again, what's your name?" Virus introduced himself in the most polite tone he could muster right now.

"Ooh, Vee, huh? That's such a cool name, just like your face! Alright, enough introductions. Let's get going then!" With no further ado, she turned away and began sprinting in a specific direction.

"..." Feeling too tired to ask again, Virus no longer felt like even knowing her name.

Following that, until the next day, the trio ran through specific paths of the jungle while avoiding certain parts of it. According to the cheeky veiled woman, the map she had with her would guide them through the safest route while avoiding all possible dangers.

Based on her claims, without the map, it would be impossible for them to travel to where they were headed to.

And at long last, after an entire weary day of running, they reached their target. However, to Virus, it wasn't the running itself that had exhausted him, rather, it was the impudent lady that just couldn't stop being cheeky!

Luckily, Virus forgot all the fatigue the moment he laid his eyes upon the scene before him.

Currently, right before him, there was a titanic castle that pierced into the sky itself!

'Hmm, it's easily as big as Burj Khalifa in mere height.' Virus concluded.

"See this? You couldn't see it before we got this close, right?" The veiled woman mentioned.

"Hmm, indeed, how could we not see something this big until we came right in front of it?" Puzzled at the mechanics behind the fortress, Virus questioned casually.

Showing that sage-like shimmer within her eyes, the veiled woman shook her head. "Well, I don't know either. I just know that it's the special feature of this wonderful fortress. You can only see it if you are at least this close to it. Furthermore, you can only see and enter it for a little while later, and then it will vanish for an entire thousand years with no way of perceiving, touching, sensing, or entering it again during that period!"

"Anyhow, welcome to the Invisible Ancient Fortress World!" She announced proudly like it was her own house.

Chapter 445 - Bridge To Heaven

Some distance in front of them, at what appeared to be the entrance of the Invisible Ancient Fortress World, four separate parties of cultivators had already gathered. Apparently, they were waiting for something.

One group mainly consisted of only cloaked people. No one could see their visage hidden behind those black cloaks. In fact, they were just standing in a corner quietly while no one even attempted to talk or disturb them.

The second class was comprised of individuals who looked oddly well-educated. That was mostly due to their consistent school uniforms that emphasized their academic air. Moreover, their every movement and pronunciation radiated grace and class.

The third gathering shockingly consisted of mostly monstrous beasts of various kinds. But as Virus' sight was skimming through the faces of the two that were in the lead, he paused.

He at first paused because, strangely, one of the two in the lead was a human female and a human being mingled with monstrous beasts was indeed a peculiar scene to witness.

However, the moment he took a glance at the countenance of his target, much to his bewilderment, Virus realized she was someone familiar!

Hadelia!

Hadelia was one of the participants at the Martial Contest the last time Virus was on the Cultivation Earth running an errand. She was someone who had left quite a deep impression on Virus.

Virus remembered her as someone who only sought a heated battle, a proud girl that wanted to test her limits and enjoy a great fight!

Furthermore, evidently, Hadelia was from a strong clan called the Burning Sparrow, which automatically made her the most famous person in the Silver Sky Sect at the time.

One more aspect of their meeting that Virus paid special attention to was the strange ability, treasure, or technique of Hadelia in being able to suppress and hide her true level of cultivation.

'I thought I forced her to use every last bit of her strength last time... could it be I was wrong? Or did she just progress that much during the time I was gone? Otherwise, how could she qualify to be here today?' Through that contemplation alone, Virus noticed that Hadelia might not have lost to him that day if he had not knocked her unconscious fast!

"Ah, but what's she doing there mixing up with monstrous beasts?" Virus murmured in an almost inaudible volume.

Unfortunately, it looked like the cheeky woman had still caught it as she explained while directly pointing at Hadelia with her finger, "Hmm, that woman, right? Well, their clan's guardian beast is the Animal Kingdom's well-known Burning Sparrow, a very strong monstrous beast. So that's probably why she's mingling with them since she's most likely a representative of the Burning Sparrow itself."

"I see, but please stop pointing at her." Although Virus really wanted to approach Hadelia and ask her questions like "what happened at the Silver Sky Sect for it to be totally annihilated?" and "what happened to Astes and the Pagoda Master specifically? Are they still alive?", regrettably, he still decided against doing that.

Because for one, currently, Virus was in his true face and not the one he had used in order to infiltrate the Silver Sky Sect. Thus, it was guaranteed that Hadelia would not recognize him.

And second, to be honest, Virus felt uneasy thinking about the terrible news he may receive while not being able to do a single damn thing about it. Thus, he decided to focus on what he could do for now, which is to get stronger as fast as possible!

Until the day he was powerful enough that is!

Nonetheless, returning to the previous matter, Virus gazed at the fourth group that he had yet to check. But the second he did, an unexpected frown irked him!

The fourth batch of men was made up of Barbarians!

Moreover, it was a party of barbarians that he was quite familiar with. They were the same group that had tried to kidnap him out of nowhere.

Meanwhile, seeing what had garnered Virus' focus, the veiled woman started elaborating with a scornful harrumph.

"Hmph, so those barbarians were that bastard's followers? No wonder!" Then pointing at a particular barbarian, she continued, "See that arrogant looking giant? He's the true leader of that group! He's called Ra and he is in fact the third prince of the Barbarian Kingdom! I never liked him to be honest!"

"Anyway, the other person beside him is that barbarian that was acting as the boss of the group in our encounter, he's an underling of Ra named Knightgruella, I heard the third prince really trusts and cherishes him. If I knew it was him before, I would've beaten that bastard to death! Damn it!"

Meanwhile, as the veiled woman was clarifying the situation in annoyance, Knightgruella was also gritting his teeth in rage while doing the same as he explained everything to the expressionless Ra!

After expounding on the matter, blood seemed to have suddenly left the veiled woman's skin as she realized an essential fact, "Oh shit! This is bad."

"What is bad, miss?" By her side, Henna queried.

"All the leaders and their most trusted aide will be entering the invisible castle, but the followers will wait outside... which means Vee will be in danger when we go inside!" Turning toward Virus with an apologetic face, she muttered next, "What should we do? It looks like rather than saving you, I put you in more danger by bringing you..."

As a matter of fact, she was sincerely feeling remorseful and sorry now.

Afterward, she was just about to open her lips, when the trio noticed Ra and Knightgruella were striding in their direction.

"Is this the little man you're blabbering about?" Stopping right in front of Virus, Ra lowered his head as he looked down deep into his eyes. It was clear he was trying to humiliate and intimidate Virus by standing extremely close to him and showing him how small he was compared to him, just like an ant!

"Woah, would you back off a little bit, man? I'm not gay." Unluckily for the true barbarian boss, Virus only enjoyed situations like these as he always acted the exact opposite of how his opponent wanted him to act.

"Hehehe!" Standing beside them, the veiled woman immediately started laughing hysterically while slapping Virus' back as she exclaimed, "Nice one! Hehehe..."

To that, however, Virus could only let out a helpless sigh as he thought, 'I shouldn't have said that while this woman is around.'

"What did you just call me?" On the other side, bloodthirsty killing intent was radiating off of Ra's entire body as he questioned with a savage light flickering through his red eyes.

"Kill him, boss!" Knightgruella encouraged barbarically, wanting to see nothing but the bastard's cut-off head!

And indeed, just as Ra was about to make his deadly move, the veiled woman suddenly stepped in the middle of the two as she interfered, "Woah, Woah, you're not thinking of killing my friend right in my presence, are you, Ra? I mean he said he's not interested, right? So, would you please go away and find another companion to tickle that hole of yours? Please?"

As always, the cheeky woman was as brazen-faced as it could get at every opportunity she found. However, unexpectedly, her voice promptly went through a complete change in tone as she added frigidly, "Unless... you want us to fight here, outside."

"YOU!" Ra roared, attracting everyone's attention.

"I'm what? I'm beautiful? That I agree! Though you're an ugly giant that's never going to see the beauty hiding behind the veil!" The cheeky female mouthed while touching her dark veil.

By now, Ra was at the absolute limits of his control. However, for some odd reason, he was still successful in controlling himself as he calmed down and replied with a smirk. "HUH?! Did you call me ugly? I heard the most hideous face in all lands is hiding behind that veil of yours, everyone calls you the 'Supreme Ugly', you know that?"

Fortunately, that provocation didn't seem to budge her in the least as she simply let out a harrumph full of contempt, "Hmph, nice try! But you're still never seeing this otherworldly visage, so dream on!"

"Let's go!" Turning around, she prompted Henna and Virus to follow her.

Behind them, Ra declared, "See you in the castle, Supreme Ugly."

After that, in a volume the trio could hear, Ra commanded his lackeys, "And that bastard following her, kill him when we're all gone inside."

...

After Virus and the two ladies left to another corner, in a concerned tone, biting her lips beneath the veil, the cheeky lady spoke, "Should I just skip the invisible castle and stay outside?"

Of course, the reason why she was even mentioning this wasn't that she was afraid of encountering Ra or anything like that, but rather because she was even more troubled and anxious about Virus' fate if she did indeed leave him all alone by himself, that was especially the case after hearing Ra's previous threat.

"Miss, you can't!" Knowing exactly how valuable and vital this trial was for the veiled lady, Henna denied it at once.

"But-"

Before she could utter any more, Virus interrupted, "You cheeky woman, just go on ahead and enter the castle... especially since I'll also be trying my luck with the Bridge to Heaven."

"What? You are going to try that? But you will still be killed when you fail and come out, what then?" There wasn't even an ounce of confidence in her voice about the possibility of Virus succeeding. She didn't even consider it, she was only put ill at ease about the time he was cast out of the bridge.

Catching that lack of confidence, Virus wasn't in the mood to reassure her any further as he just declared, "If it's too hard, I'll just advance a few steps and remain there till you guys come out, would that be alright?"

"Ah! An excellent idea! You can definitely do that! Alright! But you're below thirty, right?" Squinting a bit, she expressed her doubt.

"Huh? No, I'm not thirty yet, why does that matter though?" Befuddled, he inquired.

Touching her veil in thought, she started elaborating composedly, "Well, there are two requirements for everyone who wants to enter the Invisible Ancient Fortress World. One, the participant must not have reached thirty years of age. Two, the minimum stage of cultivation set is the Qi Circulation! These two rules are absolute and unbreakable."

"About the first one, all these representative cultivators you see are below thirty years of age, and about the second one, well, let's not talk about Qi Circulation, I bet at least a few of them are at the Sublimity Emergence stage. They're all geniuses."

"Hmm, is that so?" Virus sunk into deliberation after hearing about the rules and how strong the participants were going to be. Nevertheless, he wasn't worried about his age since he had not aged a day since the time Immortality Serum has affected his body and DNA.

HOOOOOOO!

Abruptly, a terrifying sound caught everyone's attention.

"That is the sign that it's time for the participants to enter the castle!"

Following shortly, two people from every group began to sprint toward the bridge while holding a certain ancient-looking badge in their fists.

"We need to leave now, we can't fall behind others. You just do what you told me earlier, please stay alive so I can see that hot face of yours again!" With that, the cheeky lady was just about to charge toward the bridge, when Virus stopped her in her tracks, "Wait! Tell me where the Bridge to Heaven is first!"

"Huh? Don't you see where everyone is going? That bridge that connects to the interior of the invisible fortress, that's the Bridge to Heaven! Though the only difference between you and us is that we have the badge so we won't be facing any dangers or trials while crossing it." She clarified in a single breath. "Anyway, we can't delay any longer, see you soon!"

Subsequently, Henna and her charged toward the bridge before disappearing into it with every other participant!

Now, the only people that remained were the groups that had escorted their representatives to this location in Chao Mundi.

"Hahaha! You're dead! Who's going to save you now, huh?" The bald barbarian that had already bandaged his lost arm in his previous battle with Virus screamed. If there was a race of hatred toward Virus between the barbarians, this bald barbarian would definitely be the ultimate winner!

"KILL HIM!" He roared at all the barbarians. He was no longer willing to underestimate Virus by charging alone, so he ordered everyone else to accompany him and attack together!

In the meantime, perceiving the aggressors that would reach him at any second now, Virus knew he couldn't dilly-dally at all. Therefore, pushing his feet ahead, he stepped onto the bridge!

Of course, he didn't forget to leave a sentence behind.

"Wait for me. When you see me again, it'll be the last thing you see!"

Chapter 446 - Invisible Ancient Fortress

Stepping onto the bridge, the first course of action Virus took was to get a detailed look at the so-called bridge.

In fact, what everyone was calling the Bridge to Heaven was not a bridge, rather, it was only an extremely long root of a certain tree that had grown on the other side beside the Invisible Ancient Fortress.

Other than the living root bridge itself, the entire surrounding of the Invisible Ancient Fortress was covered in a deep chasm. A dark chasm, so deep that one could not perceive the end of!

Virus could not even imagine what would be the fate of someone who lost his balance and fell into the abyss of darkness!

Fortunately, cultivators had an extremely well center of gravity. Thus, previously, since the genius cultivators all had their badges and nothing was going to block their paths, they simply maintained their center of gravity and passed the bridge as fast as lightning!

However, the more there were disturbances on the way, the more one would lose their balance and be unable to maintain their center of gravity and thus the danger of falling into the gorge of darkness!

Subsequently, gradually taking his second, third, and fourth stride, Virus advanced even further on the root toward the other side.

By now, whence he came, at the entrance, the group of barbarians was shouting and cursing at Virus, but no matter how much they cursed, apparently, they did not dare to put a single step onto the root itself!

Since he had not felt a single thing until now, Virus looked back and mocked, "Huh, of course, you bunch of pussies wouldn't dare follow me here! You barbarians are all useless brawns who can do nothing but talk! Anyway, see you soon." With that, Virus no longer bothered to be distracted by their enraged reactions and instead focused all his attention on the path ahead.

On the other side, listening to everything Virus had said, the bald barbarian was grinding his teeth so hard that its noise could be heard by the others beside him.

Squeaky~

As Virus took his tenth step, suddenly, he started to feel slightly dizzy!

'Ah, so it makes you dizzy, easy peasy!'

Afterward, each step Virus took, the worse the sensation of dizziness became. At first, he was totally fine, but the more steps he took ahead, the worse it became!

'Ah... I'm slowly losing my center of gravity... it looks like I need to activate the hyper processing state.' As he concluded that, Virus did not hesitate to go into a rather fast speed of processing and thinking. Of course, it was not fast enough to freeze time itself entirely as it was just enough to perceive the ongoing reality and process the dizziness bit by bit so he would not lose his balance.

But even then, as he took more steps forward, the dizziness continued to get worse, forcing Virus to quicken his processing to an even higher level!

At this point, Virus was confident that no human being would be able to even come close to tolerating this level of dizziness and the only reason he could still endure it and not fall off was that his mind was much more advanced than a mere human being.

Anyhow, he took one step after another while his mind proceeded to break down every 'moment' into tens of thousands while the movement of every single muscle fiber was accounted for.

With each surge in the feeling of wobbliness, Virus continued to put more of his brain capabilities in order to maintain his steadiness on the root.

And at last, when he took his hundredth footstep, all sensation of wooziness was gone all at once, as if it never existed, to begin with.

Looking at the path ahead, one might assume that Virus had reached the end of the bridge, but unfortunately, Virus noticed that he had only trod one-tenth of the root as he still had a long way before arriving at the heaven on the other side!

'Is there more to come?' After a brief deliberation, Virus didn't delay as he moved forward once again.

Brrr~

Yet, with new advances, Virus soon could feel and perceive his entire body getting so cold and blue that at some point, ice began to cover various parts all over his body!

And the more he progressed forward, the more fierce the chilliness and ice became. Therefore, the pain of coldness began to invade and penetrate Virus' body with each step.

By the time he was at his one-hundred-ninetieth step, Virus could barely breathe as his lungs felt as if they had been frozen still.

And yet, although Virus was feeling the pain and cold just as much as anyone else in his position would've felt, he proceeded with his advancement ahead with no stops whatsoever.

Despite feeling all the affliction just like any other person would, there was one tiny difference between Virus and the rest that resulted in him achieving an entirely different outcome! That one distinction was the fact that Virus' level of tolerance was higher to a terrifying extent!

So, gritting his teeth, even if he could not breathe, Virus endured and endured quietly until finally, all sensation of coldness and ice vanished just at the snap of a finger!

PHEEWWW~

Taking a deep breath, Virus paused momentarily, wanting to regain his peak condition and prepare himself for what's to come next.

In the meantime, to see how much he had progressed, he threw a quick glance to the back.

However, the moment he turned his head around, he could see some barbarians had just stepped onto the entrance of the living root bridge.

On the other side, seeing Virus' advances, the bald barbarian gritted his teeth as he commanded, "Let's go! If he can do it, so can we!"

Soon, they were already on their twentieth step as they still successfully maintained their balance.

"Hahaha, see! We can do it t-" Woefully, before he could even finish, two of the barbarian lackeys dropped to the chasm, never to be seen again.

"..."

Seeing that scene, the morale that had been building up within the heart of the barbarians faded away just like a spark that had been killed. Now they only wanted to return to the waiting area.

"We will not go back! Persist through!" Unluckily for the lackeys though, it seemed the bald barbarian's hatred for Virus was too deep as he did not allow anyone to back off!

Subsequently, the lackeys persisted forward, but by the time they had advanced ten more steps, three more had fallen deep into the chasm. The loss of five lackeys instantly hit the bald barbarian hard as he now felt terrified of what he was going to say to Knightgruella when he came back!

"Return! Return! We're going back! We'll just watch the bastard give up the trial of Bridge to Heaven and wait for him at the entrance! There is simply no way could succeed!" Roaring that command, the bald barbarian rushed everyone back.

'I'll fucking turn that motherfucker into a mincemeat when he's back!'

Meanwhile, watching everything that had occurred in amusement, Virus couldn't help but chuckle. "Hahaha, those idiots."

No longer paying them any heed afterward, Virus took another step toward the incoming test!

Fwish!

This time, slowly but surely, tongues of flames began to cover all over Virus's body, burning his entire body just like a barbecue!

"Argh..." At first, Virus was surprised to see his whole physique on fire. Even though some might assume the trial to be an illusion or fake, Virus knew that was not the case.

Each trial was as real as it could get!

When his body was covered in ice, his internal organs, skin, flesh, etc. all were truly damaged as he went through a near-death experience. The only good aspect was that when the trials ended, a strange type of energy would enter his body from the root which would magically heal all the damage!

All one had to do was to persist and live through the trials, when one reached the ending point, it will be as if the damage was never there, despite that not being the case.

This time, however, the trial was even more horrifying since the sensation of your whole skin and flesh burning while the smell of your meat spread everywhere was something else!

On top of everything, Virus could not make any abrupt movements or struggle around trying to put the fire off. All he could do was maintain his balance and move forward in a tranquil state!

As he came close to the finishing line, Virus' skin was no more as the flame intensified to an unimaginable degree!

Virus was certain that if it was anyone else in his place, someone that had not achieved the True Sixth Level of Corporeal Tempering, that person would be long dead!

The only reason why Virus could live to this point was that in addition to gathering his internal energy all around his pathways and body, his Ethereal Metamorphosis state was also aiding him in enduring and being harder to burn to death!

While gritting his teeth, Virus took one more step forward when abruptly, all the flames were put out as the odd energy invaded from his legs to throughout his body, quickly healing all the burned flesh and skin to its original state.

"Phew..." releasing a sigh of relief, even Virus had to be thankful that the agony was at last over!

Moving forward, there were many other trials such as the trial of swords where swords were darted into his body from all directions which he resisted somewhat by activating the dark scales of his ring, or the trial of pain where a curse of pain and affliction was put on his physique!

At this point, Virus could guarantee that unless it was an ancient and old monster that had lived through ages going through every kind of agony, affliction, and trials in life, or someone like him, it would be absolutely impossible to cross this unimaginable bridge!

Nonetheless, as he stepped to the last part of the root, all the trials were over!

In the meantime, at the entrance of the Bridge to Heaven, the eyeballs of nearly everyone was about to pop out of their skulls!

"H-he really succeeded!" The bald barbarian uttered in absolute disbelief.

Now, not only had Virus caught the attention of the barbarians but even the other groups were looking at Virus' figure at the far distance in amazement!

The cloaked people, the monstrous beasts, the barbarians, and academicians, it didn't matter who, all of them were gaping at the sight in front of them as they believed some kind of implausible record had just been achieved by someone!

Someone totally unknown at that!

"Yes!" Exclaiming in happiness, Virus was just about to get off the damned root when abruptly, that strange energy once again traveled from the root to his legs as it quickly rushed to his seventh and eighth single pathways as it began to fuse the separated pair of pathways into a single unity at a startling pace!

20%... 56%... 89%

This time, as if it was the most natural occurrence in the world, the root energy was swiftly healing his fourth pair of broken pathways, mending and connecting them together in the most natural way they were supposed to be!

In the previous tests, all the energy was concentrated on healing the damage all over his body, but this time, since the final trial was more of a mental one than a physical one, the root seemed to focus it all on his cultivation as it was helping him progress to the next level!

100%!

As the synthesis and the healing process was over, Virus broke through to the next level while Origin also unlocked his sixteenth single pathway!

The Fifth Level of Liberation, achieved!

'Wow, that makes me think, does this mean from the second trial onwards since the odd energy appeared, in case my body had not been damaged, would I have been able to breakthrough by an entire level every time I succeeded one of the trials?' Inadvertently, this notion flickered through Virus' mind as he looked back at the various parts of the root. "I would be at least at the ninth level of Liberation if that had happened, damn."

'But, how strong do your body and mind need to be in order to avoid all harm in the trials?' This thought sent an unconscious shiver down Virus' spine.

Following that, the root once again transmitted an even more peculiar type of energy right into Virus' body. Alas, it wasn't meant to assist him breakthrough this time as it merely trod through his body before finally pausing when it reached the back of his left palm!

Next, the energy began to transform and engrave itself to the back of Virus' palm in the form of a tattoo as it turned itself into the mark or tattoo of a tree!

"HAHAHA!" Out of nowhere, extremely jovial, Virus started laughing like a maniac while gazing at the mark on his hand. Not only had he succeeded in passing the trial of the Bridge to Heaven which had been considered an impossible feat prior to today, but he had also even broken through to the fifth level of Liberation in a single go!

"Now, shall we enter this treasure trove?" Gazing upon the humongous castle before him, Virus declared, looking forward to the journey ahead of him!

Chapter 447 - Invisible Ancient Fortress World

Walking to the open gate of the fortress, Virus looked at the ancient engravings carved on it.

Although he had a lot of knowledge about the Cultivation Multiverse of Qi, all that knowledge was from nearly one and a half million years in the future!

In that long of a time, many civilizations would fall and be replaced by new ones, therefore, nearly everything was different from that time in the future.

And gazing upon the ancient engravings, Virus could find no information regarding this type of language anywhere in his database, he could not even locate a single mention.

Even though he could stay here and attempt to decipher these engravings, Virus was aware that was going to take a rather long time even for him, the kind of time he did not have right now.

Thus, shaking his head, Virus decided to move on. 'I'll just memorize them and decrypt them later.'

Then, no longer paying them any heed, Virus started ambling into the gate. However, just as he had made a few strides, he suddenly stopped.

'What? Why can't I remember the engravings?' Stupefied, Virus' eyebrows were raised as he gazed back in a rush.

After that, with a simple experiment of locking his eyes with the engravings and then looking away, much to his shock, Virus noticed that he could only recall and analyze them only when he was directly looking at the ancient engravings!

The second he looked away, it was as if some peculiar laws were extracting the knowledge right from within Virus' brain.

It was as if the world itself was forbidding him from learning and memorizing them!

"So strange..."

Mumbling that, not wanting to lose a second more, Virus moved into the castle despite how much amazed and confused he was feeling due to this strange phenomenon.

Subsequently, the instant he strolled inside, he was once again greatly disturbed!

Currently, in front of his eyes, Virus was witnessing a meadow of grass and flowers as far as his eyes could spot. Mountains of titanic sizes were also perceivable at the far background of the grassland.

The mountains were so gigantic that the biggest mountain on Earth was like child's play compared to it!

'Huh? There is a world inside the ancient fortress?' As this impression hit him, Virus realized something. "So that's why they call it the Invisible Ancient Fortress 'World', huh? Makes sense."

"Welcome to the first floor of the Invisible Ancient Fortress World, trial taker number eleven!" As if the world itself was suddenly talking, an archaic voice reverberated everywhere!

That promptly shook Virus' heart as he searched around trying to determine the source of the sound. Unfortunately, that could not be done as the archaic voice was transmitting from everywhere and all directions!

Not waiting for Virus to get a grip, the archaic voice continued, "Your final prize and rewards will be calculated according to how distinct, bold, and colorful your mark of the Invisible Ancient Fortress World becomes!"

'Hmm? Mark of the Invisible Ancient Fortress World?' Throwing a glance at the back of his left hand toward the tree tattoo, Virus doubted, 'Is it referring to this?'

However, while he was busy questioning himself, suddenly, he sensed a burning sensation at the back of his right palm.

SSsss~

Quickly bringing his right hand in front of his face, Virus looked at it in surprise only to notice barely perceivable blurry lines there.

'Ah, so it's another mark.' Virus determined at once. 'But I wonder how I should be making it more distinct and b-'

Before he could even finish, the ancient sound spoke again, "At each floor, you are to continue persisting until you're no longer able to. When you reach your absolute limits, all you need to say is 'I concede' and you shall be sent to the next floor. Remember that the trial in this floor is adjusted according to the cultivation level of the trial taker and the rewards too shall be based on it."

Listening to the elaboration, Virus became aware that it did not matter if the participants were at the Liberation or Sublimity Emergence, they all were going to face trials that were adjusted according to their relevant cultivation base, and probably the more they exceeded their limits, the higher the rewards were going to be!

Shortly after that, while various notions were passing through Virus' brain, astonishingly, a cat monstrous beast at the peak of the First Order took shape and existence in front of Virus before it directly charged at him. Strangely, the cat's body was somewhat ghost-like but it did indeed exist.

"Huh? What's this?" Casually punching the new assaulter, Virus straight away sent it to death!

Promptly, the carcass seemed to evaporate as it turned into some kind of smoke which immediately rushed to the back of Virus' right palm.

Meanwhile, watching and studying his palm, Virus realized that the mark was slightly more distinct now, almost to an unnoticeable degree.

"So that's how you make it clearer!" Grinning from ear to ear, excitement began to boil within Virus' blood while two more monstrous beasts, this time at the early phase of the Second Order, appeared in front of him as he charged at them with no delay.

BAM! BAM!

The two were dead at once while their smoke entered Virus' mark, making the tattoo more heightened.

ROAAAR~ Roar!

Following that, four beasts at the middle phase of the Second Order were crushed to kingdom come before eight at the higher phase of the Second Order replaced them.

Swish! Swish! Swish~...

Activating his longsword, Virus sliced through all eight monsters, making them silent forever. However, it was what happened next that made Virus' eyes shine like two burning suns!

Right after killing the eight monsters, Virus perceived that the fusion rate of his next pair of pathways had increased by an extremely meager amount as Origin sucked their energy and concentrated them all on his pathways synthesis procedure before the carcasses turned into smoke!

'Damn, so Origin can even suck the energy out of these ghost-like beasts as well! That changes everything!' Virus thought in zeal.

Now that he was already at the Fifth Level of Liberation, even those monsters at the higher phase of the Second Order barely assisted him in increasing the fusion rate between his ninth and tenth pathways.

"Hell yeah!" Gripping both his fists, Virus shouted in anticipation since now he could progress as long as more beasts continued to appear.

Before, he was only killing the monstrous beasts in order to make his mark more distinct while he wasn't even sure whether that would eventually result in a worthwhile reward or not.

However, now that Virus had noticed Origin extracting energy from these weird smoke creatures, creatures that he wouldn't really call 'true' monstrous beasts, he was looking forward to the process with passion.

Soon, the next round of monsters was naturally summoned. Their cultivation this time was at the very peak of Second Order and they totaled sixteen!

Despite being in the fifth level of Liberation with four synthesized passages liberated, Virus knew facing sixteen monsters at the peak of Second-Order all at once would still be rather hard for him!

Thus, with his longsword already in his grip, he began to ran in the open meadow while the monsters rushed at him from behind.

Virus' purpose from doing this was to implement a hit-and-run strategy on the monsters. He was going to run around and face them one by one!

Swish!

Lowering his pace slightly, Virus slashed the fastest and closest monster before picking up his speed once more!

The constant battle continued as Virus massacred the odd creatures while running and slowing down at certain times when he found the opportunity to catch and strike them alone! And just like that, all sixteen were finally gone!

"Phew...!" Taking a deep breath, Virus began to wonder whether the subsequent beasts to appear were going to be at the early phase of the Third Order which was equivalent to cultivators at the Sublimity Emergence stage!

'Don't tell me the trial is also going to double down the numbers again and force me to battle thirty-two monstrous beasts at the early phase of the Third Order?'

Virus was aware if that indeed happened, he would have no other choice but to concede since his current level of cultivation was simply not enough to go against that many strong opponents that were definitely faster than him!

No, not talking about that many monsters, Virus doubted whether he could defeat a single one at the early Third Order!

Fortunately, much to his relief, the trial proved him wrong by sending a single monster at the early Third Order. With that, even though Virus wasn't totally confident, he felt like he might stand a chance of defeating it if he used all his cards right.

ROAAAR!

After catching a brief glimpse of the features of the hideous gorilla with two heads and four arms covered with fists of metal, Virus stormed toward it while the gorilla also accelerated in his direction.

BANG!

Virus brandished the longsword and the gorilla also punched using two fists at the incoming weapon, creating a loud bang as a result!

Next, Virus' body was sent flying back helplessly. The two-headed gorilla had clearly won in the direct contest of strength. Moreover, since its fists seemed to be naturally made of some kind of metal, Virus' sharp longsword could not even leave a dent on it!

Nonetheless, with no intentions of giving up, Virus charged at the smirking gorilla and attacked once more!

'Twisting Tempest Thrust – First Form!'

The sharp end of the longsword was thrust at the creature who easily blocked it with its metal punch, pushing Virus back due to the rebound.

However, without stopping at all, Virus pounced toward the creature again as a sharp glint of focus exuded from his eyes.

'Twisting Tempest Thrust – Second Form!'

Chaotic turbulence gathered at the very ending point of the weapon as Virus unleashed it toward the grinning gorilla.

Woefully, just as the weapon was about to make direct contact with the opponent, the gorilla suddenly stepped aside and dodged it rather effortlessly before launching a punch at Virus' stomach by the shortest route!

BAM!

"PFFT!" Similar to a rocket that had been just launched away, Virus' physique flew away hundreds of meters into the far distance.

Just as Virus' suffering figure was about to descend like a puppet with its strings broken, it became apparent the gorilla had no intentions of letting him off the hook just yet as it materialized above him and sent an even heavier punch downwardly while combining the might of all four of his fists!

KABOOM!

As Virus' broken figure was redirected toward the ground, like a meteorite falling, the force pushed behind his frame created a deep crater at the surface of the meadow!

Cough!

Coughing once, Virus tasted blood in his mouth. It was clear he was now suffering from some type of internal injury!

'Shit... the difference between Liberation and Sublimity Emergence is like that of an ant to an elephant! It'll be too difficult to defeat it at this rate.' Despite being aware of the fact that killing the monster would be too hard, Virus was not willing to concede and admit defeat just yet!

Instead, utilizing all of his thinking and processing speed, he compelled the time to freeze in his own unique perception.

'First, let's learn the third form!' As this line flickered through his head, Virus immediately started comprehending the third form.

The third form of Twisting Tempest Thrust mainly concentrated on the word 'Twisting', denoting that Virus needed to add a twirling quality to his own internal energy just like the threads of a screw which would in return gather on the very tip of the longsword, increasing the damage and deadliness of the attack to a terrifying extent.

Normally it would've taken a long time to master, however, considering who Virus was, the following instant, he already had access to the third form of the Twisting Tempest Thrust.

However, with no pause whatsoever, Virus initiated the process of learning the fourth or final form!

'The final form focuses on combining all three previous forms together, creating the true Twisting Tempest Thrust!' Concluding that, Virus promptly began experimenting and analyzing countless pieces of information in order to quickly grasp the fourth level.

What he did first was to send his consciousness to his mindscape as he wielded an imaginary longsword on his hand before doing the thrusting attack with it!

Next, he had to add and fuse the 'Tempest' feature of the technique while maintaining all of its 'Thrust' aspects!

In the outside world, although not a single second had passed by, in Virus' mindscape, he felt as if several days had already gone by as he trained with his imaginary sword tens of hundreds of thousands of times!

Finally, long after he had stopped counting, he felt enlightened about the essence of fusing 'Tempest' with 'Thrust'.

What he needed to do next was to also add the 'Twisting' characteristic of the longsword to the completed Tempest Thrust!

Luckily for him though, he was very familiar with the process of fusing the characteristics of this particular technique very well now. Therefore, it only took him around a hundred imaginary swings before he was done with his intensive training!

Meanwhile, in the outside world, ignoring the sharp pain that was transmitting from all over his physique, Virus jumped to his feet before casting his strike!

In the meantime, the gorilla was still mid-air while it was in the process of falling toward the meadow surface. Stupefyingly, however, the pigheaded gorilla was still stretching its fists backward, intent on dealing a fatal strike on Virus.

It was obvious the monster's aim was to punch him after gathering and concentrating all the force behind its descent in order to finish off Virus once and for all!

'Twisting Tempest Thrust – Ultimate Form!' On the opposite side below, Virus' internal energy also began to leave from all four of his already liberated pathways before they gathered on the sharp end of the longsword quickly!

Then, imitating the propelling quality of the 'Thrust' motion, the energy also became chaotic as turbulence and heaviness of the wind were added to it as well.

Still not finished, the wind began to twist and turn just like a screw's threads as the ultimate form of the attack was ready at last!

BOOOM!

Chapter 448 - Only One More!

BOOOM!

An ear-numbing sound wave resonated in all directions as a fist and a technique collided with one another, sending dust and wind everywhere!

The wind and the impact between the two attacks were so heavy that the current condition of Virus could not be perceived inside the scattered dirt!

However, what could be discerned was the gorilla's sorry figure darting above again as it was literally sent flying high into the sky.

"Hee... haa... hee...!" As the cloud of dust eventually cleared away, Virus' panting figure could be seen while his two feet were sunk deep into the ground. Apparently, although he was successful in pushing back the gorilla in terms of attack and might, he had also experienced a strong recoil as a sharp force had pushed him right into the ground itself!

DROP!

Feeling unusually weak and devoid of energy, Virus gazed at the creature that had just fallen into the ground several meters away.

GRRRR!

Standing up, the beast looked at Virus in rage. However, as Virus examined its chest area from his standing position, a triumphant grin crept over his face as he muttered, "It's over."

Indeed, currently, there was a gaping hole in the gorilla's chest while instead of blood, smoke was dissipating into thin air right from the penetrated section.

A few seconds passed and just as expected, despite how unwilling it was, the beast fell on the ground and drew its final breath begrudgingly!

'I barely made it.' Virus judged after analyzing everything that had occurred previously. The only reason why he had been capable of defeating the gorilla was in fact because the gorilla had been in mid-air at the time and thus had no control over its torso and overall positioning.

Previously, just as the two were about to clash, Virus adjusted his footing and aim in a way so his longsword would only make contact with a single fist of the gorilla before breaking through it straightly into its heart!

Virus was certain that if the gorilla had been on the floor with its balance and movements under its total control, it would've immediately readjusted all his four fists to shield against his attack, therefore, avoiding any kind of mortal injury.

In the meantime, Virus sensed the Origin go into motion as all of the gorilla's energy was completely sucked into him before the corpse became smoke that strengthened the mark!

After going through the previous hordes of monsters, Virus' percentage of fusion in the fifth level of Liberation had already reached sixty-nine percent. But as the rushing tsunami of energy invaded his pathways, it took a trifling second for him to progress right into the Sixth Level of Liberation as his fifteenth locked single pathway was also disentangled completely.

'Only one more!' Indeed, there was only one final disentangled pathway remaining that needed to be unlocked and opened. The second he synthesizes his eleventh and twelfth pathways, his eighteenth pathway would be untangled and Virus would achieve the mythical eighteen single passages of Energy Disentanglement!

And afterward, he would proceed to ultimately accomplish the legendary Ninth Level of Liberation that was long unheard of in Virus' previous world of the future!

Anyhow, as Virus broke through to the following level, nearly all his vigor and energy were restored as he was once more prepared to battle more enemies. Alas, the only drawback was the discomfort he was still experiencing due to the internal injury he had been dealt with.

'Hmm?' Raising his right palm, Virus threw a short glance at the mark attached there. By now, he could easily make out the image of an ancient fortress that flickered in and out as he rotated his wrist. 'It vanishes and reappears as I rotate my hand, the Invisible Ancient Fortress World mark, huh?'

Fshsh! Fshh!

Just as Virus was studying the strange tattoo of the invisible fortress, two new gorillas materialized as they each cupped their four hands and beat their own chests. They were trying to terrorize Virus before the combat began.

Roar! GRRRR!

Wielding his longsword, Virus quickly entered his battle pose while the dark scales of the ring were already covering his limbs.

He felt a little worried at first since if the trial proceeded like before, after defeating one monstrous beast at the early Third Order, the next monsters to appear should naturally be at the middle Third Order.

However, much to Virus' satisfaction and relief, he soon realized the two new monsters were still at the early Third Order. That instantly revived a flame of hope and anticipation as Virus was now determined to continue the trial without conceding defeat.

"COME!" Releasing a warrior howl, Virus charged wildly while the battle frenzy affected him.

ROAAAR!

The two beasts too ran at him, desiring nothing but their foe's death!

'Twisting Tempest Thrust – Ultimate Form!'

The energy began to fill the very tip of the longsword as it transformed into its combined state while Virus shoved it toward his opponent!

Regrettably, Virus watched as the gorillas both easily evaded the attack before smashing with their hands toward Virus.

Raising both his scale-covered arms, Virus victoriously covered his head and barred the attack's path. Still, the strength put behind the attacks was so fierce that Virus' feet could only drill into the earth.

Meanwhile, Virus could clearly see that he was still lacking in terms of speed compared to those at the early Third Order. Therefore, freezing time once again, he referred to the best movement-type techniques that could be used by the current him with five liberated passages. He limited his options to the top three.

「Tiger Beetle Charge」 :

[Description: I charge once, I kill once! One of the three strongest Human class movement-type techniques that have been preserved from ancient times. The first form requires 'five' pathways as it introduces the basic straight charge of a special type of insect called the Tiger Beetle. The second form requires 'six' liberated pathways as the movement is upgraded to an intermediate level. The third form needs 'seven' liberated energy paths as the movements are elevated to an advanced level. The fourth form needs 'eight' liberated pathways and one becomes a master of Tiger Beetle charge! There's been no record of anyone ever achieving the fourth form of this technique. Requirements: Healthy legs and arms, minimum of five pathways liberated for the first form.]

...

「Jiggling Drunken Dance」 :

[Description: Make me drunk I want to dance, baby! This technique is considered the strongest technique for those who have liberated 'five' of their passages! It only has one form and that is the ultimate dance! Requirements: Healthy legs and arms, Five pathways liberated.]

...

「The Ancient Cheetah, My Disciple!」 :

[Description: I, your father, the master of the ancient cheetah! One of the three strongest Human class movement-type techniques that have been preserved and passed on from ancient times. The first form requires 'five' pathways as it introduces the basic anatomy maneuvering of an ancient cheetah which is claimed to be one of the fastest animals on land! The second form requires 'six' liberated pathways as the

movement is upgraded to an intermediate level. The third form needs 'seven' liberated energy paths as the movements are elevated to an advanced level. The fourth form requires 'eight' liberated pathways and one becomes a master of the ancient cheetah! There's been one record of someone ever achieving the fourth form of this technique, that person became unrivaled in speed in the Liberation stage amongst those who trained in other common movement techniques. Requirements: Healthy legs and arms, minimum of five pathways liberated for the first form.]

After checking the techniques one by one, furrowing his brows in the mindscape, Virus searched to see if there was any Peak-Human class movement technique that he had missed.

Unfortunately, apparently, there was no Peak-Human class technique, to begin with.

By Peak-Human class technique, it meant that all 'nine' fused and liberated pathways of the body would be utilized in order to achieve the most optimum state of maneuver and speed.

However, due to the lack of cultivators with nine synthesized pathways one and a half million years in the future, no one could or felt the need to develop such a technique.

Moreover, even if that type of technique had existed prior to the era of the invasion of the Multiverse of Technology, by the time they were there, all such techniques were already ruined and lost forever!

Inspecting and scrutinizing deeper, Virus discovered another major issue, 'Hmm, even when it comes to the absolute strongest High-Human class movement-type techniques that need eight liberated passages, there are only three remaining since even cultivators with eight fused pathways were a once in a blue moon type of treasure at that time.'

'I'm not content.' In the mindscape, over Virus' face, a frustrated squint was exhibiting itself as it just wouldn't go away. He could not feel satisfied with only training a movement-type technique that was incapable of reaching the apex through utilizing all nine liberated pathways!

Furthermore, it wasn't just the movement-type techniques! Even the other types of techniques that required 'nine' released passages had all gone extinct in the future world of Virus.

"What to do?" As his utterance reverberated within the interior of his mindscape, Virus caressed his chin as he began to contemplate.

Virus' first option was to cultivate one of the High-Human class techniques available to him for now and just do a little research later on in order to discover any traces or signs

that might be pointing at the existence and possible location of a Peak-Human class technique.

Unfortunately, the more he considered that first choice, the more he disliked the idea of being stuck and obsessed over a mere Peak-Human class technique that was eventually going to be useless when he breaks through to Sublimity Emergence.

'Guess that means I will pick the second one then!'

The second course of action Virus came up with was something only people or beings with a nigh endless level of intelligence could accomplish. And luckily, Virus was a being of such caliber!

What he was going to do next was to decrypt and break down lots of Low-, Mid-, and High-Human class techniques before extracting the most advantageous and beneficial segments of all of them and then according to his own attained understanding, he was going to put together and create the most powerful Peak-Human class technique!

'Let's see...' Immediately, tens of thousands of techniques began to fly around, open, and decrypt themselves while Virus analyzed and investigated them in the most careful manner he could.

'Hmm, too slow. Even with my terrifying speed of world perception freeze, it would at least take several days before I can decrypt and compile the strongest Peak-Human class movement technique.'

Not pausing at all, Virus continued, 'But as luck would have it, I don't need the full version of the technique right now since I've liberated only five passages anyway. I just need to compile the first form that requires five released pathways, beyond that is pointless to my current self!'

After a brief recalculation, Virus predicted the time that was required before completing the first form. 'It's only going to take one minute in real life while my time perception is frozen still.'

'But that is going to be a long one minute.' He pondered in mirth.

Reaching the end of his deliberation, while most of Virus' focus remained concentrated within his mindscape, the other part began to engage in a battle with the two gorillas.

However, to Virus, that quickly became the most boring fight of his entire life!

That was because when the gorillas threw a punch in his direction, it would take an eternity before the punch actually reached him!

But that also meant that Virus had that much time to think, analyze, and study every movement and muscle of his adversaries and react to them using the most optimum of responses.

Thus, a strange scene of two gorillas could be discerned as they kept trying to hit their opponent only to be met with the strangest forms of maneuvers that actually worked!

As two fists flew near his face, a distant look could be perceived within Virus' eyes as he calmly analyzed every movement before dodging casually in a robotic way.

ROAAAR~

'Hmm, that one's wide-open and unguarded right there.'

'Twisting Tempest Thrust – Ultimate Form!'

Suddenly spotting an undefended part showing up by chance on one of the gorillas for a split second Virus quickly unleashed his current strongest technique to see how it goes.

While his thrust was successfully launched in the direction of the vulnerable spot of the gorilla, Virus could only wait patiently till his attack eventually reaches the enemy at last.

During the journey of his longsword assault toward its destination, Virus contemplated many matters in life before he even moved his little bit of remaining consciousness that had been left outside into his mindscape as he joined it to the other major part of his mind which was currently busy deciphering and compiling the first form of his new Peak-Human class movement technique!

Chapter 449 - Energy Of Liberation

While decrypting the Human class Techniques, Virus came to naturally understand a lot about the internal energy that cultivators possessed in the Liberation stage.

As a matter of fact, the more techniques he deciphered and broke down, the more fascinated he became regarding the uniqueness of internal energy of the Liberation stage cultivators!

He understood that the internal energy at this stage was somewhat malleable, denoting that in case enough measures were taken and enlightenment followed, one would be able to influence the energy in a certain manner desired!

For instance, while Virus was comprehending and grasping the Twisting Tempest Thrust, at each form, he had grasped a specific attribute such as weak wind or the act of twirling the energy in a specific manner that resembled a drill which multiplied the damage by several times.

He concluded that when genius cultivators create a Human-class technique, the creators are usually enlightened by luck or were somewhat successful in grasping an attribute that exists in the world around them as they add that characteristic and feature to the internal energy, forcing it to be influenced and result in the close imitation of those certain characteristics and attributes.

Vibrations, wind, heat, cold, hardness, softness, push, pull, wave, sound, various types of movements and attacks, and other certain properties and attributes. Virus could easily think of many of such attributes since the science world was more advanced in these fields compared to the cultivation world and that was even more true if he referred to his knowledge from the 1.49 million years into the future where such basic attributes were considered basic knowledge.

Of course, even in the cultivation world, the cultivators had their own methods of achieving and understanding some of these attributes through techniques or enlightenments, however, unlike the scientific world, they did not focus on them per se and did not develop an orderly curriculum of books, resources, and contents which taught you from the most basic concepts to the most advanced terms.

Therefore, in the cultivation world, to learn an advanced attribute, one mostly had to rely on himself as it was merely a means to an end of power while in the scientific world it was the end itself as they focused on a step by step process through which everyone could learn them as long as they put their efforts into it.

'Now, the main point is which attribute do I want to pick for the first form of my Peak-Human class movement technique.' Touching his chin casually in his mindscape, Virus deliberated while his own ideas and thoughts materialized all around him.

In fact, Virus knew since he wanted to create a movement-type technique, some of the attributes might not be compatible unless they were used in a very innovative way.

However, as Virus tried to come up with an attribute, his mind was automatically drawn to the outside world where his hand and weapon were basically still in the process of unleashing its attack toward the undefended segment of his enemy's frame.

'Too slow.' That was the only opinion Virus had every time he checked the outside world. The difference between his mind and body was so exaggeratedly wide and distant that while his mind was like an omnipresent god watching from the heavens above, his physical frame was like a mortal struggling to move an inch in cement!

It was that frustrating difference and the possible attributes that might perhaps lower that terrifying imbalance even by a little bit that brought some ideas into Virus' head.

'No, not that one... not that one as well... that one, no, not yet... that one, yes, that's it!' As he went through several concepts, Virus finally made up his mind.

What he had chosen to use in order to influence his internal energy was something simple which everyone dealt with regularly on a daily basis as a modern twenty-first-century citizen.

It was... electricity.

However, the way he was going to utilize it was rather different compared to how it's usually employed in the Cultivation Multiverse.

Rather than that, the way Virus was going to apply it was more dependent on the knowledge of a particular field that the Technological Multiverse pursued.

To be more accurate, what Virus wanted to achieve was to use electrical pulses to mimic the action of signals coming from neurons. Taking advantage of mild to strong electrical currents, Virus wanted to target both nerves and muscles to make them contract and move faster than was possible.

The goal was to improve reaction times and the overall speed of the body by pushing it beyond its limit momentarily by pulses of electricity.

What he wanted to accomplish was something similar but beyond what today's modern world of Earth called Electrical Muscle Stimulation.

In Virus' current Earth, Electrical Muscle Stimulation, also known as neuromuscular electrical stimulation, was a protocol that elicited a muscle contraction using electrical impulses that directly stimulated one's motor neurons. Nonetheless, Virus considered what the current Earth had achieved in the field very basic and aimed for something much more advanced.

However, in order to achieve such a movement technique, one needed to have a very thorough understanding of how the human anatomy functioned while even a more accurate and precise control was required since even a slight error was going to ruin the entire process.

Furthermore, the pulses of electricity required were a certain type which was considered ultra-modern compared to the basic pulses utilized today.

Luckily, being an error-free Artificial Intelligence with high-infinite knowledge of an extremely futuristic civilization, Virus didn't have to be concerned about any of the issues and requirements above.

All he needed to achieve was to be enlightened about that certain unique electricity pulse he required and successfully influence his internal energy to pinpoint imitate that certain type of pulse he was aiming for.

'That's it! That'll be my first form.'

As Virus made up his mind, just as his consciousness was about to begin designing, comprehending, processing, compiling, and applying the intended form, he noticed that his attack was just about to hit his enemy at last, therefore, separating a very meager amount of his focus, he sent it outside.

Jab!

As the longsword pierced into the gorilla's flesh, Virus could feel the current special attributes of his internal energy attack, the drilling and the fluctuating turbulence, wreaking havoc inside the beast as its internal organs were messed up at once!

'He's dead.' Although the longsword was still inside the gorilla's torso, Virus was confident that such a wound was going to kill it briefly after his weapon was out as the fatal bleeding started.

...

Seconds began to pass as Virus' distant eyes continued to battle the other remaining gorilla. After watching its comrade die, it looked like the other beast became much more vigilant as it did not dare to lower its guard at all!

'Hmm, finally! Only one second remains and the first form will be completed!'

As it was the final second, Virus finished the first form as a load of enlightenment was already occupying his brain.

'Done!' Immediately stopping his time-freeze perception, Virus heaved a sigh of relief at the thought of freedom of his physique and being able to enjoy the battle rather than falling asleep in the middle of the fight and returning to the continuation of battle after a good night of rest filled with dreams.

As the terrifyingly slow-motion movements ended, Virus hacked with his longsword at the gorilla, unfortunately, the gorilla easily parried the weapon before sending a punch toward Virus' countenance.

Thus, determining now to be the best opportunity, Virus quickly activated the first form which required the utilization of all of his five liberated passages!

'Unnamed Virus Technique, First Form – Impulse!'

Promptly, Virus' internal energy went into turmoil and agitation while on the very surface of his body, occasionally, arcs of electricity would flicker in and out.

However, the main transformations were taking place within the physique as his nerves and muscles entered a hyperactive state.

'Ahhh, so comfortable. It's like one of the countless chains that have been holding me back was unlocked!' Going into his stance, Virus suddenly vanished before appearing behind the gorilla.

Crackle~ Swish! Plomp!

Afterward, a brief noise of thunderclap was heard before the gorilla froze in its standing position until finally, its head dropped and rolled on the floor!

"Hahaha..." Roaring in laughter, Virus enjoyed the final look of shock and stupefaction still exhibiting itself in the gorilla's eyes. "Now, that's what I'm talking about."

A few seconds later, not giving him any time to breathe and recuperate, four gorillas replaced the defeated enemies! Luckily, Virus didn't need a single second to recuperate and restore his lost energy since the Origin was pumping him up with all the necessary energy every time he defeated an opponent.

'Unnamed Virus Technique, First Form – Impulse!'

Crackle~ Swish! Swish! Swish! Swish!

With no delay, Virus disappeared before four heads were chopped off!

As a matter of a fact, Virus was now aware that his first form was unambiguously too overpowered!

Of course, that was only the case because the person utilizing it was Virus himself since in case it was another cultivator with five liberated pathways, that person's mind naturally would not be capable of keeping up with their body at that stage. Therefore, 'Impulse' was only possible because its user was Virus himself.

By now, Virus felt the fusion rate between his eleventh and twelfth passages had reached around seventy-five percent!

'Only twenty-five percent more and my last entangled pathway shall be free at last!' He was only a little far from finishing the level and breaking through to the Seventh Level of Liberation.

FSHH! FWSHH~...

Subsequently, while Virus was looking forward to his incoming battle, eight gorillas showed up and Virus was just about to charge and chop some heads off when abruptly, he paused.

'Mid Third Order!' This line had just flashed through his head when all eight gorillas vanished!

'Impulse!'

"I CONCEDE!" Virus roared in hurry after utilizing his movement technique's first form.

Meanwhile, in Virus' slow-motion perception, with his eyes wide open, he was currently watching several iron fists approaching his face at an even faster speed than his impulse!

Following that, the fists were just around ten centimeters away when Virus' figure faded away and disappeared from the first floor of the Invisible Ancient Fortress World.

"Phew!" As he materialized in another location, without even bothering to study his surroundings, Virus first released a sigh of relief while wiping off the droplets of cold sweat on his forehead.

He was quite sure in case he did not have the 'Impulse' just now to assist his articulation speed, he would've died already!

"Trial taker number eleven, due to fighting and defeating opponents many levels stronger than your cultivation, you have set a new record for the first floor, thus, as a reward, your mark of the Invisible Ancient Fortress World shall be made even more distinct." Suddenly, Virus heard the archaic voice resounding in all directions. Then, it was followed by a large cloud of smoke which appeared out of nowhere and entered his tattoo in the back of his right palm, making it even more clear and colorful.

Nonetheless, not caring about the tattoo on the back of his palm, Virus examined his surroundings, trying to figure out where he was exactly at the moment.

"Hmm?" No matter how hard he looked around, however, Virus noticed that nearly everywhere was covered in absolute darkness, and the only place that had some light shining and brightening was a lonely cottage in the middle of all the darkness.

"Welcome to the second floor, the seal of Emissary Flesh!" The archaic sound announced before declaring the purpose of the trial.

"This trial has been developed in order to gauge the endurance of the trial takers. Remember, the longer you endure, the more valuable the reward shall be!" With that, silence and gloom descended upon the terrifying darkness surrounding the cottage.

'Damn, this scene is one hell of fear-inducing one, it's like I was thrown into a horror movie!' Grinning from ear to ear, Virus ambled toward the cottage. Even though he was thinking that line, truthfully, the view couldn't even affect his heartbeat at all as he casually strolled toward the huge cottage and did not even hesitate to push its door open.

CREAAAAAK~

"This door needs some lubrication, hahaha." Falling into a peal of laughter, Virus entered the cottage and even shut the door close behind himself.

The instant Virus entered, however, he laid his eyes upon an enormous piece of meat laid loose on the ground motionless.

'Hmm, am I supposed to fight this dead thing?' Wondering that, Virus strolled before the meat and kicked it several times as hard as he could.

Bam!

BAM!

BANG~

Since it was just meat with no bones whatsoever, it could easily absorb all the shock and force behind his kick as it merely quivered back and forth like jelly.

Soon, a disappointed expression crept over Virus' face as he sighed, "Huh, why is it still not reacting? Could this thing really be dead? Wait, could it be by the trial of endurance, they meant how much I can tolerate being left alone in a dark place with a piece of meat to stare at? Ahhh, if that's the case, I would rather give up already, let's leave the cottage then."

After murmuring these few sentences, Virus decided to leave the cottage. Therefore, turning around, he took one step after another toward the door.

Meanwhile, behind him, the big piece of useless meat started to tremble as it quickly took the shape of a giant monster made out of pure flesh. It had several legs and many arms, all of which looked like they were about to melt away. Moreover, its torso was like that of a huge meatball.

FWISH!

As the monster of flesh raised one of its arms, the arm began to expand and grow muscles on its own as they shot toward the leaving silhouette of Virus.

"Just kidding! There's no way I would leave this interesting place!" Displaying a dark grin, already wielding his longsword, Virus spun around sharply as he cut off the incoming muscle flesh attack in a single slash!

"Huh, so you're Emissary Flesh! Nice to 'meat' you!"

Chapter 450 - Emissary Flesh

Meanwhile, in an unknown location, someone was sitting crossed-legged inside a luxurious cave when someone announced his arrival before entering it with permission.

"Senior Adept Falcon, I heard you've summoned me." A mature man wearing a golden robe walked into the cave and began talking to the brawny old cultivator he called Adept Falcon.

If Virus was currently here, a chilly expression would have covered his face at once while gazing upon the countenance of the so-called Adept Falcon.

That was because, at the time of his departure from the Cultivation Earth last time, it was exactly this man that had attacked him and nearly led to Virus' demise!

It had been only because of the golden beauty's sacrifice that he had survived that day. And in fact, the main reason behind his hell-freezing expression would mostly be due to this man harming the golden beauty at that time!

"Hmm, welcome, how does it feel to be the genius of your island kingdom, prince Elijah?" Adept Falcon asked the golden-robed man.

Bowing respectfully, prince Elijah responded, "It's all thanks to your guidance, senior."

"Hahaha, you exaggerate, prince Elijah. It was all thanks to your own exemplary talent. All I did was provide you with better techniques and resources. You did the rest yourself." Shaking his hand, Adept Falcon acted like rejecting the compliment, but Elijah knew that wasn't the case.

Not wanting to linger on the subject any longer, Elijah inquired, "So why did you summon me, senior? I was occupied before so I could not come immediately, but I rushed as soon as my business was over."

"Hmm, no worries, prince. All is well." Pausing shortly, Adept Falcon continued, "The reason why I summoned you was because I have a 'favor' to ask of you."

The moment he said 'favor', Elijah's countenance turned serious as he recalled how at the time Adept Falcon had decided to pass over some of his valuable techniques in the past, the only condition he set down in return for his assistance was some 'favours' he might request of him sometime in the future. Thus, Elijah instantly realized that Adept Falcon was asking for payback.

"I'm all ears, senior." Bowing a bit, Elijah listened carefully, being a man of his words, Elijah wasn't one to back out of a promise.

"So do you recall how I got seriously injured a few years ago? My wounds were so fatal that even now I've barely healed around half of the damage and that's all thanks to the

precious pills I ate over the years." Adept Falcon muttered in rage, recalling that night when he was nearly crushed to death by 'that' bastard's strange methods.

"How could I forget, senior. Please go ahead."

"Alright, so, you see, that day, the reason why I was mortally wounded had to do with a young man who slipped past my fingers then. And of course, since experiencing that tragedy, I've hired people to look everywhere for that young man, however, until now, no one could find a single trace of him." Grinding his teeth, Adept Falcon elaborated.

Although initially, Adept Falcon only wanted to rob Virus of his special ring at the time, now that Virus had nearly killed him, Adept Falcon's hatred had become completely personal, therefore, he desired nothing less than his foe's gruesome death!

"Which to be quite frank does not surprise me." Caressing his beard, Adept Falcon admitted that he had anticipated the outcome of no one being able to find Virus.

"Why is that, senior?" Befuddled, Elijah questioned.

"Well, mainly because I had already used an extremely precious and even extinct treasure of mine called the Ten Thousand Tracking Ancient Scroll on him that night prior to our battle, just in case anything went wrong and he ran away using one of his unusual methods."

"However, after that night, even my Ten Thousand Tracking Ancient Scroll could not track the bastard down! It was like he melted away into the ground itself! So, how could others possibly detect him?" Adept Falcon confessed in a bewildered manner.

"What you're trying to say is...?" Even though Elijah felt like he understood where Adept Falcon was going with this, he still queried.

"Well, good news! A few days ago, my ancient scroll suddenly started pinpointing a location for me! Which means he's finally making a move and came out of hiding!" Smiling happily in a twisted manner, Adept Falcon notified.

"Uh... so do you want me to kill him?"

"There you go! Not only do I expect you to slaughter him most horrifically, but I also need you to bring me all his belongings plus his head!" Killing intent suddenly surged and covered the entire interior of the cave, even forcing a shiver down Elijah's spine who pondered, 'I've never seen him like this.'

"But... senior, if he was capable enough to mortally injure you like that, he must be a strong cultivator... won't he cut off my head easily with a mere gesture of his sleeve?" Despite desiring to repay the favors as quickly as possible and be finished with it, Elijah also wasn't one to foolishly throw away his life.

"Don't you worry about that, he was just a mortal at the time, so even if we say he started cultivation right afterward, he should be still extremely weak compared to you." Shaking his head, Adept Falcon assured him.

"Uh, but if he was a mere mortal at the time, how did he wound you, sir?" Now, Elijah was feeling even more puzzled. He felt there was something Adept Falcon wasn't divulging.

"Good question! You're a smart one, aren't you? Well, this bastard has some extremely odd weapons and methods of striking you down. But as long as you are careful enough and do not lower your defenses, I promise you, you don't need to be worried. His attacks won't reach you. The only reason why I was wounded that night was that I totally underestimated him and didn't lookout for any possible retaliation, that's why I was caught off-guard." Truly believing that himself, Adept Falcon warned and reassured Elijah at the same time.

Still not finished, patting his back, he also added, "Don't you sweat it! You're already at the peak of Sublimity Emergence, so there's just no way he can come out of this alive."

"So, would you do me this favor, prince Elijah?" A serious glint was flickering within Adept Falcon's eyes while waiting for Elijah's response.

'Not like I have any other choice, right?' As this notion bubbled up in Elijah's mind, he decided. "Yes, I'll do it, please tell me where I can find him."

"Hahaha, good, good, good! Honestly, I would've personally gone there myself, but as you see, I'm still busy trying to heal and recuperate. That's why I need you to end this for me. Anyway, his name is Vee, and although the ancient scroll stopped transmitting his location to me a while ago, that's probably because he's entered a place that even the ancient scroll cannot detect."

"Don't worry though, I already pinned the last spot he was at, so just go there and check the surroundings." Pointing at a particular spot of the Chao Mundi on the map, Adept Falcon confirmed. "Here, take this map with you and go through these specified paths so you can reach there safely."

...

"Huh, so you're Emissary Flesh! Nice to 'meat' you!"

ROAAAR!

Suddenly, several muscles extended from the meatball torso of Emissary Flesh before they transformed into the shape of mouths as it roared savagely!

Looking at the gruesome creature, Virus couldn't sense any type of cultivation whatsoever from it, which was totally weird.

Swish! Swish! Fwish!...

In the meantime, not having any intention of continuing the battle pointlessly, Virus charged at the beast as he quickly slashed it to as many pieces as he could.

Subsequently, several pieces of raw meat fell on the ground while Virus wondered, "Is it dead already? Hmm, well, that was easy..."

However, as if to prove him wrong, all the meat started to tremble and gather as they joined together once more!

"Huh? It can do that too?" Surprised, Virus attacked again and cut it into several pieces.

This time, it joined and healed even faster!

'Hmm? How should I deal with this problem?' Just as this notion had flickered inside his brain, suddenly, several tentacle muscles extended from Emissary Flesh as it tried capturing Virus by wrapping all of the tentacles around him much like a rope.

Dodging the attempt, Virus quickly noticed a difference, 'It's getting faster and stronger!'

"How about exploding you to kingdom come?" Uttering the question, Virus immediately connected to his ring. He wanted to see if exploding it away and burning it instead of cutting it to several pieces was going to be effective.

'Divide Initial Configuration – Handgun!' 'Explosion mode!'

Promptly, his dark longsword disappeared as a futuristic handgun with bright red lines replaced it.

Bang!

Shooting it with no delay, Virus watched as a large chunk of Emissary Flesh exploded to countless tiny parts. Furthermore, the explosion caused flames as it covered its flesh.

Albeit, the explosion, and the flame didn't seem to hinder the beast at all as it swiftly restored itself even faster and bombarded him with even more tentacles at once!

'Alarmingly, it's getting both faster and stronger by every passing second!' To be honest, Virus was now astonished by the strange creature in front of him. He could hardly believe something that had no cultivation whatsoever was getting stronger by the second!

Virus could easily predict that if this process continued, Emissary Flesh would soon get as strong as him before leaving him in the dust.

With that, however, Virus recalled the words of the archaic sound which said the trial was developed in order to gauge the 'endurance' of the trial takers. It did not say to 'defeat', but rather 'endure', meaning, one wasn't supposed to be able to kill this gross life form in front of him as it was evidently considered an impossibility!

So the question wasn't 'how to defeat', but rather 'when to concede'.

Bang! Boom!

Shooting it two more times, Virus watched Emissary Flesh put itself back together while contemplating, 'But is there really no way of defeating it?'

FSHHHH~

Meanwhile, after restoring itself, Emissary Flesh used even more of its rope-like muscles in order to attempt to catch Virus and squeeze him to death. In fact, it was only a matter of time before that happened!

Darting back, Virus was just about to evade the tentacles, when suddenly, their speed doubled midway!

Watching the incoming tentacle muscles in his slow-motion perception, Virus immediately calculated that his body's current pace would not be capable of evading it, therefore, he didn't hesitate to get serious!

'Unnamed Virus Technique, First Form – Impulse!'

Crackle~

Easily avoiding all of the tentacles, Virus pointed the futuristic handgun at the monster as he took three continuous shots as three explosions were heard.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

Deciding to study it to the best of his capabilities before anything else, Virus froze time as he started examining, replaying, and analyzing how it previously exploded into countless segments of flesh in his mindscape!

Virus also inspected and compared each of the detonations to his previous assaults when he had wielded the longsword rather than the handgun.

The scrutinization proceeded for a long period in his hyperactive and super calculative state until finally, Virus noticed something strange!

It was such a small detail that it was impossible to perceive unless one was a super Artificial Intelligence with terrifying processing abilities. The little detail Virus had noticed was that even though Emissary Flesh would regenerate from any type of mutilation, there was a certain period when its regrowing ability seemed to decrease by an almost unnoticeable degree!

Every time he attacked the monster continuously one after another, in the process of his assaults, it looked like the inherent healing skill of Emissary could not keep up and in fact, slowed down by an extremely meager amount!

Virus was aware that had it been anyone else in his place, it would've been impossible to notice such a scant deviation. In fact, If Virus had not tapped into his time-freeze perception, he could bet he would not have caught it easily.

'Shall we do a little experiment to see if continuous and nonstop attacks truly hinder its healing ability?' The instant this fresh idea was raised, Virus connected to the ring and summoned the best weapon that would aid him in his subsequent goal.

'Divide Initial Configuration – Machine Gun!' 'Normal mode!'

By normal mode, Virus meant that only common futuristic bullets would be employed since 'explosion' would detonate the monster into countless pieces which would quickly result in him not having a target to shoot at nonstop. Therefore, he deemed normal futuristic bullets just adequate.

Aiming the machine gun directly at the opponent next, Virus started shooting wearing a grin of anticipation!

Ratatatatatatat~

Not stopping at all, Virus proceeded the process without slowing down or pausing in between.

In the first twenty seconds, Virus could absolutely not spot any difference in his normal perception as Emissary Flesh continued healing and restoring the little bits of damage he was receiving here and there.

However, when the timer hit around two minutes, Virus began noticing the regenerating capabilities of the monster slowing down even with his bare eyes!

"Yes, that's it!" Proving and confirming his theory, Virus was now zealously looking forward to the trial more than ever!

Ratatatatatat~

SCREEEECHHHH!

Suddenly, Emissary Flesh started screaming in affliction before starting to jump around trying to dodge outside the range of Virus' aim and machine gun so it would catch a breather!

"Haha, struggle more! More! More! That only makes this more fun!"

Alas, the poor beast was against a horrifying being called Virus, therefore, it did not take long for the Emissary to realize the futility of his struggles!

Still, it looked like the Emissary still wasn't done revealing every one of its cards since out of nowhere, steam began to rise from all around its physique.

Soon, so much steam had left its frame that the Emissary's size shrank to half its original one as its muscles became much more compact and thinner overall!

'Oh?'

BAM!

Instantaneously, with newfound momentum, Emissary Flesh tightly packed itself into a ball as it started jumping around at lightning speed!