

A Ghost 171

Chapter 171

“W-What is the meaning of this?! Master!”

Partner suddenly woke me up from my sleep as I saw her angrily staring at me and Catarina at my side.

“Shut your trap!” Roared Catarina, grabbing a pillow and throwing it at Partner’s face.

POOF!

“Gehh... ugh! Meanie!” Said Partner angrily.

“Uwawah... P-Partner, wait! Don’t start a fight so early in the morning. Catarina is sleeping at my side because I invited her, and she got rather... Erm... Well... I can’t really explain it, but it’s nothing like what you’re imagining!”

Partner looked down at me and Catarina, who was still resting over the bed while ignoring us.

“*Sigh*... Master, you’re way too nice sometimes,” She sighed.

“And I told you not to call me Master the other day, right? You keep calling me Master....” I sighed.

“Ah! W-Well, I really like to!” She said.

“You’re a hopeless girl,” I sighed as I gave her a morning’s hug and a kiss on her cheek.

“Hmm... Master’s morning love is the best! I like this routine, hehe....” She giggled for a bit, and all her jealousy washed away.

"You're such a cute girl, don't get angry over stupid things that don't make sense. I already told you that you're special to me...." I said while holding her hand.

"M-Master..." She muttered while looking into my eyes.

She blushed a bit.

Partner had really evolved into a big beauty over all this time... It was hard to believe she used to be a metallic skeleton. Actually, the bones underneath her skin and flesh are still metallic, which gives her an abnormal physical defense even without wearing armor.

She's like wolverine in a way, but without the metallic claws- wait, no, she can actually make metallic claws too, through one of her Skills named Bone Claw.

"Uwah! Master! You're so lovely with me! It makes me so happy, hehee...! Heheh... Mooch! Mooch!"

Partner suddenly hugged me when I was charmingly holding her hand and acting as if I were a prince charming. Her powerful metallic bones were crushing me even if I was a ghost, and she was kissing me all over my face while giggling like a little girl.

"Ugh, will you two go do your lewd stuff elsewhere?" Sighed Catarina, as she finally woke up and sat down over the bed while looking at the both of us.

"L-Lewd stuff? We are merely expressing love with one another in a non-sexual way!" I said.

"And it is completely okay," Said Partner while nodding.

"I don't really care...." Sighed Catarina.

"Alright, you're coming with us to eat breakfast now that you're awake... I want you to get along with the rest, okay?" I asked.

Catarina looked at me angrily but then sighed. Her eyebrows stopped furrowing themselves as she blushed a bit and averted her gaze from me.

"You're really a pain in the ass... Okay..." She sighed.

"Hehe, good girl, thank you, Catarina. I am glad you're trying," I said as I petted her head and hugged her.

"W-Why are you hugging me?!" She cried out while blushing even more.

"You're kind of cute when you act nice," I said.

"Y-You're just a pervert, aren't you? Just yesterday, you called me a snack!"

"Well, you're looking like a snack right now, too," I said.

"E-Eeeh?!" Catarina cried as she grew even redder, and steam came out of her pointy ears.

"Master, don't get so close with her so suddenly!" Partner stopped me from getting ahead of myself and grabbed me outside forcefully.

"Nooo! But I want to hug the tomboy!" I cried.

"Enough is enough! And Catarina, go out already," Said Partner as she dragged me outside.

Catarina sighed as she washed her face with water and then walked outside the carriage while still blushing a bit.

“What is this idiot... thinking about? She acts so cute and adorable... Sh-She thinks I will fall for her or something? D-Dumbass...” She murmured to herself.

It seems that she was the type of person who spoke everything they thought because I could easily hear her thoughts.

Hehe, I made her question her sexuality.

When I moved outside, I met with Lucifer, Emeraldine, and the rest. As usual, Emeraldine hugged me and embraced me with her enormous breasts, which I slightly envied.

“Maria-sama, why don’t you sleep in my bed next time?” She asked boldly.

“W-What? Then you’re also sleeping on mine after!” Said Lucifer.

“And mine first, of course,” Said Partner.

“Huh?! Wait, hold on a second....” I sighed.

In the end, to not make everyone pull each other’s eyes, I agreed to sleep with someone at my side each night. They’ll take turns.

Partner, Lucifer, Emeraldine, that’s the order.

I don’t know where Catarina will come, but she didn’t seem to barge into the conversation, so she wasn’t interested as the other three dorks.

They’re my beloved friends and also something more... so I was happy to agree with it. Anyways, I’d love to cuddle with them. Maybe I could even get all of them with me.

Silvio and Francesco didn't seem to want to get involved either, mostly because they feared the glares of the trio... Well, they're happy serving as fire for the camp, thankfully, as the areas we are slowly approaching are getting colder and colder as we advance.

I hope everything can go smoothly...

"Auntie!"

A little goblin girl, so adorable she melted my heart right away, came to me.

"Ah, my little princess Gofumin-chan! How are you today? It's cold outside, isn't it? I am glad you're wearing comfortable and warm clothes," I said.

Gofumin was wearing a big coat made of fluffy leather and also had socks and boots, alongside warm pants and even a small hat made of wool.

"Hehe, it is all thanks to you. You gave it to us the other day, Auntie," She said.

"Oh, really? I don't remember...!" I said while acting humble.

"Hehe, don't act as if you don't remember!" She said cutely as she hugged my legs.

I held the four-year-old girl in my arms and sat her down on my lap.

Chapter 172

Gofumin was enjoying a big sandwich with slices of grilled meat, tomato, and cabbage, alongside some homemade mayonnaise I made myself. Mayo is not hard to make, just eggs and oil.

She also was enjoying a warm cup of cow milk that Julia had sold to me. I remember she said that it would go stale in a few days, so it wasn't convenient to bring milk on long travels, but I told her it was okay.

Of course! Inside of my Inventory, time stops, so I can just store all these things.

People don't know about such a great cheat, so my Inventory is really pretty amazing. I can store all sorts of food without them going stale. This could revolutionize everything because I could carry stuff and make meat, milk, eggs, vegetables, fruits, and more never go bad.

I am literally a walking refrigerator.

Wait, that's weird to say...

"Nom... Nom..." Gofumin stuffed her cheeks with the delicious meal adorably as she happily drank the warm milk.

"How is it, dear?" I asked.

"Guud!" She exclaimed.

"I am glad...." I muttered.

I don't know how it ended like this but I kind of adopted her... even if she has her father right at my side, a goblin, and the chief of the goblin village.

"G-Gofumin, aren't you going a bit too far? You shouldn't abuse the goodwill of Maria-sama...." Sighed the village chief, and the goblin gave me a pitiful look.

"Ahaha, don't worry about it, chief! I've already adopted your daughter," I said.

“Y-You have?!”

“Ah... Well, that sounds weird, isn't it? I am like her big sis,” I changed my declaration.

“Oh... Well, you're good with all the children, I suppose, but Gofumin had grown very attached to you, Maria-sama... I am glad you're filling the role that... her mother cannot take anymore,” Sighed the chief.

“Mama's coming back one day... So I have to eat a lot and grow strong!” Said the little Gofumin.

The chief sighed once more. His eyes were filled with sorrow and fear. He had a hard time thinking about his wife, the adventurer goblin woman that went off one day and never returned for years...

I suppose she was most likely... well, she's probably not here anymore, I guess. That's what everyone thinks, but Gofumin is always thinking that she'll come back one day and train her to become an Adventurer.

I guess I pity her... I actually just pity everyone! I am such a softie! I need help, please. Where is the instruction manual to become a ruthless badass op main character?!

There's none. I guess I will remain forever flawed.

But it is still what makes me who I am!

“Don't worry about it, dear. I am sure that your mommy would want you to get a head start! So if you want to, I can begin teaching you some moves or even magic? We could even find out what sorts of talents you got,” I said.

“Oohh! Sure! I like to hunt rats! I've hunted 13 whole rats!” Said Gofumin rather proudly.

The little goblin girl puffed her chest and smiled while closing her eyes and furrowing her eyebrows. The air was so cold that a bit of steam came out of her nose, showing her excitement for showing off her prideful feat.

"I see, so you really are an amazing hunter! You already got the knack for it, dear," I said.

"Hehehe, really?" She asked.

"Of course!" I said, petting the girl's silky silvery-white hair as her yellow-gold eyes shone brightly.

Her green skin was rather healthy, mostly because she had been eating three meals a day and washing herself every day, things that they couldn't do properly back then.

"As your father, I cannot really let Maria-sama have all the work, so I gotta teach you the ways too, Gofumin, don't get too ahead of yourself!" Said the chief.

He had evolved into a Hobgoblin, so he wasn't so small anymore and had become around the size of a small person, probably a meter and 45 centimeters?

Also, male Goblins gained hair after becoming Hobgoblins, but the chief was still as bald as an egg.

He still had that sharp nose as well, and he was rather on the uglier side of males, but he was still a nice and strong man.

Honestly speaking, someone so dedicated to his people and so responsible for them that shows such strength is really quite charming.

Eh? No, I didn't mean in that way! I am not attracted to the chief... I don't want to become the LITERAL mother of Gofumin, don't get me wrong.

But I appreciate him.

I petted the chief, and he looked at me with a surprised look.

“H-Huh?”

“You’re a good chief,” I said.

“Th-Thanks... Nobody has... ever said such a thing,” He said.

Suddenly, the chief got all emotional as rivers of tears began to come out of his eyes.

“Damn... A-Are you okay?” I asked.

“Yeah, I am just happy to be recognized by Maria-sama,” He cried.

“Okay, haha... Don’t get too sad,” I sighed.

“Papa, don’t cry!” Shouted Gofumin.

“S-Sorry... I am fine now, dear,” Sighed the chief.

“Big sis, can I sit on your lap later?” Asked Takeshi.

“I wouldn’t mind it either....” Muttered Laura.

“Huh? Do you two want to as well? Well, sure. After all, you’re kids too,” I said with a smile.

The twins’ eyes suddenly shone brightly.

“Th-Then me too! Let me sit on your lap!” Said Emeraldine.

“No, me first!” Said Partner.

“Although it is quite embarrassing, perhaps you could sit on mine,” Said Lucifer.

“Agh, you three had to get involved in this? Only lap-sitting for kids! And no, Lucifer, I am not sitting on your lap. I know what you’re planning,” I sighed.

The trio gave me disappointed looks as if the world by itself was fragmenting before their eyes. They’re seriously pretty good at pretending to be sad, but I am not falling for the same trick twice. I already let them have their way with the bed stuff...

Chapter 173

It has been around a week since then, and we had advanced steadily across the grasslands. At some point, we reached an area without a road, and I guess this is where it ends. From now onwards, we’ll be crossing through the wilderness where we might encounter rocks that could impend our travel...

A certain concern about the wooden wheels getting broken emerged in my head, especially because the carriages carry a lot of people, so they’re extra heavy...

Today was rather misty as well. There was a cold mist all around us, and the sky was mostly cloudy. We stopped right in front of our path, which was a large pine forest. But, I don’t think we can easily get through a forest using carriages... especially such a big group of them like the ones we got.

If possible, we’ll need to go around the forest, but I don’t know how that will end.

Maybe I should put everyone inside my Shadow and rush as fast as possible when the night comes?

No, the space inside my shadow is not that big. It can fit a dozen of people, but all these carriages and hundreds of people? No way...

I could store the carriage inside the Inventory, but the hundreds of people will be all stretchy inside the shadows, and many might even suffer from that, so unless it is an emergency, I don't want to try that option.

Expand my shadow infinitely? That's not possible. There's a limit that I cannot really increase for now, no matter how much Mana I use.

It was around 2 PM, so I decided to hold a little meeting with my trusted ones to talk about it while the rest of the people were cooking with the guidance of some of my little clones that resemble little girls, and Silvio and Francesco's clones made out of their fiery phantom.

These two had become pretty good at cooking and even gained this Skill lately. They also gained a Skill named [Bonfire: Lv1], which allows them to create a bonfire of themselves to warm people more comfortably. It even comes with bonuses to regeneration, better sleep, and more... I never expected this would be their talent!

Anyways, back to the topic.

There was the Goblin Chief, the Goblin Elder, who is his father, Gofumin was, sitting on my lap, the twins Takeshi and Laura, Catarina, Silvio, Francesco, Lucifer, Emeraldine, Partner, and yours truly.

Yeah... this was the "crew," more or less.

Catarina had been growing a bit more open in this week, but it is obvious it's gonna take her a while. For the moment, she ended up accepting to help if possible in this meeting, although she seemed a bit shy, so I made her sit at my side.

"Wow, you look strong, nee-chan!" Said Gofumin, looking at Catarina's abs.

"Yeah, she has some nice abs," I said.

“W-What?” Exclaimed Catarina while blushing again.

“Anyways! I made a meeting with all of you guys because I wanted to discuss... What do we do now?! I am really... I don’t know. I am a dummy. I’m only good at fighting and being cunning. This type of stuff is not my forte,” I sighed, feeling pathetic.

“You’re no dummy,” Sighed the Goblin Chief.

“Yeah, don’t say that of you, Maria,” Said Lucifer.

“Yeah! You’re super intelligent, Maria-sama,” Said Emeraldine with a radiant smile.

“Don’t say that of you!” Said Partner.

“Uwah... Everyone...” I cried.

“Actually I think you’re a dumbass ninety percent of the time,” Said Catarina.

“Geh... That was harsh. And instantly negated everyone’s praises,” I sighed.

Ugh, why are our minds like this? We get praised everywhere, but whenever we get a harsh comment, we get depressed no matter what all these other people had said about us before... Truly, even as a ghost, I am still quite a human.

Anyways, after everyone ended up reprimanding Catarina and I stopped her from starting another fight, we finally got into the conversation.

I put the map over the table, and everyone looked at it.

I had marked it with a pencil.

"This X is where we are currently. This big forest covers a large amount of space, and it is also said to be filled with monsters... They name it the Dark Pine Forest... And there's even a Dungeon on it. But nobody goes there due to the danger level of B," I said.

"Looks like a dangerous place to go with so many people..." Said the Goblin Chief.

"I agree, we should really just go around the forest. Entering it would be like poking a wasp nest... I-I know that Maria-sama and her companions are very strong and can survive without issues, but... All of us might easily die there, and even if you could protect us, it would be taxing to do it for several days continuously, right?" Asked the Goblin Elder.

"Although I would like to charge ahead and beat some monsters to gain EXP, I guess the old man's right," Said Catarina.

"I agree... I think I could bring some people with me while flying around. We could scout the forest a bit before going around it," Said Lucifer.

"Oh, you're right about that, Lucifer. Perhaps we should do that, Maria-sama," Said Emeraldine.

"Yeah, let's go around but after scouting the forest through the sky... It is big, so it might take some time," Said Partner.

"Oh, alright then! I and the ghosts can fly, Partner and Lucifer too can fly naturally, but the rest cannot. I guess Lucifer can carry a few of you guys over his back, or I can carry some in my shadow," I said.

Everyone agreed to it, and we decided to scout the forest's surroundings before continuing.

Our goal was right after passing through this large forest, around a dozen more kilometers past it... there's another smaller forest there, and then, the ruins of the Demon Kingdom, our ultimate destination...

After we finally arrive there, we'll be able to build our own village! That's going to be a LOT of work...

Chapter 174

I looked at the sky in front of me, there were vast clouds, clouds wherever I looked, the sun was completely covered by them, and the icy and cold wind was quite freezing and bad to the bones... good thing I don't have bones to begin with.

Lucifer, Partner, and I decided to come here while Silvio and Francesco stayed with the rest of the people.

Only the three of us decided to come and scout- ah, Emeraldine was here with us, being carried by- no, not Lucifer, me.

"Uwah, hehe..."

She began to giggle playfully.

I don't know why she wanted me to carry her, but fine, I guess.

Though we were way above the forest canopy, if I drop her from here... she'll surely die.

And that's certainly not something I would want to see... so I had to be extra careful, and I wrapped around her some of my shadows as if they were ropes for extra security.

She has a holy aura that could easily burn my shadows and make them disappear, though, but at the very least, I know I can trust her that she won't do such a thing to me! I hope...

We quickly flew up into the skies and flew around the forest. It was so vast I knew it was going to take a while even if we flew quickly.

Hey system, is there some way to learn a Skill for mental mapping? I just remembered you said I could use Proficiency Points or Experience Points accumulated to buy Skills.

Are any Skills useful for now?

Those sound very expensive... Wait, can there be a Skill that lets me create an internal space and store everyone there to solve this problem?

Ugh, okay, I guess that one is some end-game stuff...

What do you recommend?

[Mental Mapping: Lv1] is the best for what you need, it will help you map anything inside your mind, and you can also summon the map as a holographic window made of shadows through Darkness Magic.

Is it costly?

Ugh... Is there not some OP Skill I cannot afford after buying this one that will help me in a pinch later on?

I see, so I can mostly just buy utility stuff, alright, buy Mental Mapping.

Ding!

[You've exchanged 60k Skill Proficiency Points. Skill Proficiency Points Left: 126k]

[You've learned the [Mental Mapping: Lv1] Skill]

[You learned the [Opportunistic Buyer: Lv1] Title Skill!]

Hm?! I got a Title Skill

Let's see them...

...

[Mental Mapping: Lv1]

Grants the ability to register all environment within the user's perception and map it inside of their head as if it were a true map item. Living beings can be discerned as if they were red dots, and even obstacles can be seen in wide detail, alongside areas that might be special places, such as Dungeons, Cities, and more. Special Icons can be displayed. Each level increases its accuracy.

...

[Opportunistic Buyer: Lv1]

A Title given to the first buyer of the Skill Points Shop; a powerful Trait only available for powerful beings whose souls clearly surpass that of mortals.

Grants a 5% discount on all Skills that can be purchased with each level. To increase the level of the Title, buy more!

Don't stop buying, dear guest!

...

I see! The Mental Mapping Skill seems pretty straightforward. I suppose I can make a whole game-like map with it inside of my mind. That's pretty useful. The level increases as I map more stuff, I guess?

And then there's the Title. It says that I get a 5% discount on buying stuff because I was the first one to discover this wonderful Shop! How useful, isn't it? The more I buy, the higher the level will increase, and the more discount I can get... Wait, what if I hit Level 10? Will I get a 50% discount?! Well, that would be half the price of Skills... wouldn't that be nice...

I guess it is time to activate the Skill.

Mental Mapping!

FLASH!

"Oho! Here we go- GYAH!"

Suddenly, I felt a sudden pain all throughout my head.

My soul, in fact! It felt as if my mind was about to explode!

My mind suddenly felt as if it was everywhere I could look.

And because I didn't have eyes, I could see anywhere around me through my ghostly senses, which made it, so a massive area all around me was instantly mapped inside my head.

It almost made me freeze like a computer being loaded with a lot of info at once.

The pain was terrible! I had never felt this much pain before...

Ugh...

“M-Maria?!”

Emeraldine suddenly slipped off my grasp as she fell off!

“Ah, shit!”

I quickly flew to catch her, but I realized the shadows I left hanging around her managed to stop her from falling.

Her face was completely confused, and her expression seemed filled with nausea. She seemed to be about to throw up.

“Ugeehh...” She groaned.

“S-Sorry... Are you okay?” I sighed as I held her in my arms again.

“What happened?!” Asked Lucifer.

“Master? You cried in pain out of nowhere....” Said Partner.

“Erm... Haha, nothing, really! It was just a little thing... I learned a new Skill, that’s all. I think it can help us map easily inside of my head,” I said.

“Oh, well, that’s useful,” Said Lucifer.

“Then let’s map the surroundings. This forest seems way too big!” Said Partner.

“Alright!” I said.

“Uugh... My stomach is all mixed up... Agh....” Muttered Emeraldine.

“Hang on there, Emeraldine... Use your healing magic!” I said.

“R-Right!” she said as she began to use healing magic on herself, which created a bright light that began to burn my shadows.

The arms holding her and the other rope-shaped shadows were turned into nothingness in an instant.

“Eh?”

“Huh- GYAAAAH!”

And she fell off again...

Chapter 175

I flew down to catch Emeraldine so fast that my entire body became a black blur!

FLAAAAASH!

“Uwaaahh- Ah?”

I extended my body like a parachute, grabbed her belly, and slowly descended into the middle of the forest with her.

“Phew, that was close... Emeraldine, dear, are you okay?” I asked.

“Y-Yeah... Thank you...” She said.

I suddenly found myself right over her body while she was looking into my eyes.

“Oh, my bad....” I said.

I quickly thought of it as a rather awkward situation and jumped away to not make her feel uncomfortable.

“N-No, it’s fine....” She said with a smile.

It’s not really fine! I keep getting myself into these weird anime situations. This is already the... I don’t know how many! I lost the count.

Now what? Will I land over Partner and “accidentally” grab her boobs now? Ah, I better not think about it, or it will become true...

“So, where are we?” Wondered Emeraldine.

“According to my mental map... Right in the middle of the forest....” I said.

“Ah, there you are!”

“Master, Emeraldine, are you okay?”

Lucifer and Partner flew next to us for a bit.

“Yeah, we are doing okay... but the entire forest is covered in a rather thick mist... I wonder where we can go from here. I suppose we should just fly upwards again...” I said.

“Yeah, I agree. Let’s just go back up,” Said Emeraldine.

“Hm, let’s go-” Said Lucifer, as he was suddenly interrupted by Partner.

“Wait, look!” Said Partner, as she pointed her finger at something.

Partner pointed out two tiny rabbit-like ears popping out of the nearby bush.

They twitched the moment she pointed her finger at them, and it suddenly tried to hide.

Was that just a rabbit monster? Maybe a horned rabbit?

“I am getting thirsty, so a little snack won’t do bad....” Said Partner, quickly rushing towards the bush.

Since she became a Lesser Vampire, she had begun to need to ingest a lot more blood daily than before. It says that she also needs to drink human or demi-human blood... but the blood I had accumulated from all the people I had killed (and accumulated their corpses) has been running low, so she had been mixing it with wild monsters or animal’s blood.

The stronger the monster, the more satiation the blood gives to her. However, she had stated that monsters have very bitter blood because they have miasma inside themselves, but wild animals like rabbits or the monster horned rabbit have very delicious blood, so she goes hunting rabbits daily.

I guess it was justified for her to hunt it if she wanted and was hungry, so we let her do it and saw it as something normal.

“Hehe, there you are, little rabbit....” Said Partner, pushing her hand down into the bush and grasping a pair of long, brown-colored rabbit ears.

“GYYYAAH! No! Stop! Don’t eat me!”

However, the voice of a little girl screaming resonated around the forest.

“Huh? A person?” Asked Partner.

“That’s... a Beast-kin! Stop! Don’t be rough with her!” Said Emeraldine.

“A rabbit-kin? I have not seen them in ages... Well, the map did state that there were a few wild tribes of beast-kin around... I guess some inhabit this place?” Muttered Lucifer.

I had only seen a few beast-kin myself. Within our entire population of former slaves, there are only around four beast-kin in total, which are three wolf-kin and one cat-kin, so they’re very rare.

In the duchies I’ve visited, I have barely seen a few going around, so the ones that had joined society are very rare and sometimes looked more like halflings than pure-blooded ones, so they might even be the children of slaves.

Yeah... Beast-kin are the most popular “slave race” around. Due to their wild nature and how so many don’t like society, they’re often considered more like animals than people, the same way they consider Majin just monsters rather than people.

And this girl was super cute too! She had bright emerald eyes, fluffy brown hair, long rabbit ears, and chocolate-colored skin with fluffy brown hair around her legs and hands, and of course, she had a cute rabbit tail behind her, like a puffy pompom.

I think she wore some tribal-like clothes made of wolf leather wrapped around her like a cute dress, and the one that made the dress seem rather skilled.

She was also barefoot, but she seemed to not mind the cold.

“P-Please don’t eat me! I don’t taste good!” She said while almost crying out of fear.

“Okay, calm down... We are not eating you,” I said.

However... I felt an eerie presence behind me. Partner was looking at her while drooling...

“Rabbit... and people... combined? I can already imagine... how tasty that blood would be....” She said.

Her favorite blood, aside from that of people, was rabbit blood... so I guess she’s like a combination of the best.

Wait, why am I taking it so casually?

I slapped Partner back into consciousness as she snapped back.

“Ah! M-Master? What’s going on?” She wondered.

The instincts of a Vampire are strong in this one... She’s going to have to practice some more self-control. If we weren’t there, she might have drank her blood and converted her into some sort of Vampire Rabbit or something... if she was even left alive, that’s it.

“Ah, you’ve snapped back! Those Vampire instincts are a real danger, you know? You almost ate this adorable little rabbit girl,” I said.

“Huh? Ah... Sorry...” Said Partner.

“Th-There’s... no problem... Hahaha... Ugh...”

The girl suddenly fell unconscious.

I rapidly held her in my arms, as I thought she might have passed out of fear against Partner’s aura, but no, I just noticed that her body was way too slender, and her ribs were easily visible.

She looked pale too and seemed sickly, with a strong fever. Her forehead was practically boiling.

“W-What’s going on? Did I do this?! Sorry!” Partner apologized.

“No, dear, it wasn’t you... I think she’s sick....” I said.

Chapter 176

A sickly rabbit girl showed up in front of us, and I couldn’t help but grow worried, especially because it broke my heart to see a little and cute girl being so sickly all of a sudden.

Ugh, it reminded me of Takeshi and Laura when we first picked them up. Those poor little kids were so terribly handled... But now they’re so healthy and radiant. They illuminate your day.

“Hahh... Hahhh...”

The rabbit girl began to breathe heavily while her sweat came out of her forehead and neck.

“Does she have a fever?” Asked Lucifer.

“Yeah... We have to quickly bring her back to the camp!” I said.

“I think I can use some magic to make her feel better, but I don’t know if magic can cure a fever... There’s certainly some disease causing this...” Said Emeraldine.

“Okay, less talk, more action. Let’s bring her there, so give her to me,” Said Lucifer.

He quickly held the girl in his arms and flew with his wings alongside us.

After around five minutes, we were back at camp, with a new girl we found on the way.

“How did it go?” Asked Catarina, who was guarding the place.

There was a two-meter big black spider on the floor, dead, of course.

“Huh? What’s that?” I asked.

“Ah, a giant spider suddenly came out of the forest... Just some random monster,” She said.

“O-Oh, that thing is C Rank, though....” I said.

“Yeah, nothing too much. Anyways what’s with the kid? Is that dinner?” Asked Catarina.

She was not so different than Partner. As a Zombie Vampire, she had a strong liking for raw flesh and blood.

“She’s certainly not dinner!” Said Emeraldine.

“We just found her out in the forest... She passed out before we could even talk to her. She got a fever,” Said Lucifer.

“A fever? Why are you just picking random kids? Just let her die. If she’s so weak, that’s just how nature wanted it to be,” Said Catarina.

“Agh, shut up, I am not like that. If I see someone struggling on the floor to breathe, I am going to help them out, obviously! Maybe I didn’t have the strength to help anyone before, but now that I got it, why wouldn’t I? It is better than simply feeling guilty later on,” I said.

"You're way too sensitive. I was just joking..." Sighed Catarina.

"Maria-sama! Huh, a child!" Exclaimed Silvio.

"Maria-sama, is she okay?" Asked Francesco.

"Not really... Can you guys go make some tea using the medicinal herbs that I got from Julia? They're in the carriage where I left some vegetables," I said.

"V-Very well!" Said Silvio.

"But which ones?" Asked Francesco.

"Well, try them all for now!" I said.

The two nodded and flew away. And yes, fire ghosts can choose not to burn anything with their fire if they want to. After all, their flames are not normal flames but made out of their soul, so if they choose to, the flames won't burn anyone.

"Now, what do we have here?" Asked Catarina as we left the little rabbit girl over a bed with cushions.

She was sweating a lot, so we decided to take out the dress and leave some clothes over her chest and over her hips instead.

After that, Partner brought some water and a towel, and I began to wash her sweat-covered body slightly while using it. The water was very cold, so it slowly calmed down the heat spreading around her body incessantly.

Meanwhile, Emeraldine was using her magic while trying to heal her. Healing Magic was better at dealing with direct wounds and healing them rather than with actual diseases, which seemed to be what this girl had.

In terms of diseases, there was medicine in alchemy. Making potions that healed certain diseases or forced the body to form certain antibodies like vaccines was not so common but existed. I had never done any research regarding that, though.

“Antidote! Antidote! Recovery...! Hahh...”

Emeraldine gasped for air while sighing. The spells were healing her a bit, but at least her malnourished body looked a bit healthier now, and the pain she was feeling dissipated after a bit.

The Antidote Spell was a spell that often healed status conditions, such as Poison, Paralysis, Forced Sleep, and so on, but this spell healed Status Conditions, not actual diseases, which were different and not so game-like.

However, it seemed to work. It was probably making her antibodies fight harder against the disease. After around ten minutes, the rabbit girl seemed to have calmed down, as her fever had lessened, and she seemed to be breathing better.

“Phew... She’s... she looks better now... I am glad....” Sighed Emeraldine.

It is said that people are shaped based on their magic, jobs, and even skills and titles. Those who possess healing magic and skills, jobs, or titles related to being a priest, healer, and so on, often have a predisposition to heal the sick or wounded more than others who don’t have such skills or titles.

I guess it is the same for me always having that desire to steal whatever I see... or how bloodthirsty I get when I am pissed off... sometimes I don’t even recognize myself when I go nuts.

“Sorry for the delay... We made a super herbal tea made of healing herbs. These heal fevers, stomachaches, and one of these can even heal some common diseases if drank quickly, like a common cold,” Said Silvio.

“Thank you. You guys are so nice....” I sighed as I quickly decided to slowly wake up the girl.

“Dear... wake up... Are you okay?” I asked as she slowly opened her eyes.

The little girl looked in my eyes while being rather sleepy.

“Uwah... Wha...? Where am I?” She muttered.

“I brought you to my carriage because you just passed out... Here,” I sighed.

“Hm?”

“Drink this. This is a tea made out of herbs, it might be bitter, but it could make you feel better,” I said.

“Ahh...” She muttered while drinking it slowly.

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I looked at the rabbit girl as she slowly drank her medicine. She seemed to be recovering just fine, as the drink was healing her up quite well, and things were going forward in the right direction. I hope she can heal.

“Hahh... it is bitter... but I drank it all...” She sighed as she rested once more.

I caressed her hair as she slowly fell asleep again.

“Well, that was that... The night’s coming, so I guess we are not moving, for now, right?” Asked Catarina.

“Yeah, we’ll stay until she wakes up and can tell us a bit more about her tribe. I am worried,” I sighed.

"You're really too good sometimes...." Sighed Lucifer.

"Well, you should have expected me to do this if I just rescued over a hundred slaves, right? I even saved an entire goblin village. If you've gotten this far with me, expect me to do this!" I shouted.

"I know! I wasn't complaining... I would have done the same," Said Lucifer.

"Partner, what do you think?" I asked.

"I think it's fine to wait," Said Partner.

"Yeah, let's wait for now. I am also worried... What if her entire tribe got infected with this disease? I don't know what we would do... Can we even cure everyone?" Sighed Emeraldine.

"We would first need to discern which disease is affecting them and where it originated from... If some sort of monster causes it, there could be some cure if we use the monster's internal organs. After all, if they're able to carry the disease, there might be a chance that they have also developed their own antibodies for it," I said.

"You're right! I am quite decent at Alchemy... I could make some potions, but we need a lot to learn first," Sighed Emeraldine.

"Hm, for now...." I said.

"Hey, there is this big spider... Should we eat it?" Asked Catarina.

"Oh right... the spider..." I said.

I quickly moved outside with everyone and looked at the giant thing. I had never seen such a big spider in my entire life. It really looked quite creepy, to be honest.

I decided to disinfect it like we usually do with what we hunt, using the Life Spell “Clean” that Emeraldine has. Every beast we hunt is first cleansed with this spell until no weird germs and stuff are over it.

Of course, she can’t use it to heal the girl. This just cleans surface bacteria or viruses that might be stuck to the corpse’s surface.

“Should we eat it?” Asked Partner.

“I-I don’t know. For now, I am going to just store it inside my Inventory,” I said.

After saving the spider in my Inventory, we moved to make dinner for everyone, and after the night came, we dozed off until the next day.

...

“Ugh... Aaahh... Mama... Papa!”

Suddenly, I woke up to the little rabbit girl.

She was talking while sleeping... Was she having a nightmare?

I touched her while she was talking while sleeping as my phantasmal body suddenly made a connection with her soul, and I managed to see what she saw slightly...

A swarm of grotesque beasts crawling all around the forest. The laughter of something eerie in the background and countless crimson-red eyes glaring down on her.

The girl suddenly found herself running away, leaving everything behind as her parents screamed to her to run, run as fast as possible, and never look back...

I quickly pulled out my hand out of her shoulder as I gasped for air, even though I didn't have lungs. That was quite shocking and confusing.

But was her tribe... was attacked by things? They were like big... creepy crawlers.

With many black legs, and eight crimson-red eyes- ah, spiders.

Wait, is the spider Catarina caught...?

"Maria-sama!"

Suddenly, I was startled by the scream of Emeraldine. I was sleeping in my carriage with the rabbit girl at my side in order to take care of her.

"Emeraldine? What's wrong?" I asked.

"Th-This is bad. There's a swarm of spiders coming here! In fact, a few dozens are already fighting against our group!" She said.

"Shit! So these damn spiders are targeting us now?!" I shouted in surprise, rushing outside, then I quickly began to expand my Shadow Domain into a gigantic sea of darkness, and put all the people hiding away from the spiders inside of it, rescuing most in seconds, including the rabbit girl.

"GRYYYSSSHHAAA!"

Suddenly, a large, three-meter-big black spider reached up to me, hissing loudly. Its hissing was so loud that even my ears felt pain.

I quickly directed my hand at it as I generated a large spear of darkness and materialized it as hard as metal, and fired it directly into the middle of its eyes!

CLAAAASH!

The spear pierced right through its eight eyes while reaching deep into its abdomen, piercing most of its body and almost slicing it in half!

“GRRYYEGH...”

The arachnid gave a pitiful groan as it stopped its charge abruptly, falling over the floor and struggling to move but ultimately dying.

“There are more coming!” Shouted Emeraldine, pointing her bow at two other spiders rushing towards us from behind me.

Her arrows were suddenly encompassed in a bright, green light, the light of nature. She then fired the arrow, and it exploded right in front of the face of the closest arachnid to her.

BOOM!!!

The arrow was incrusting into the beast’s head and then exploded into many roots, trapping it and the second one in them.

She quickly finished off the second one by firing a stronger arrow into its head while I rushed to my left, where I found that another three of these were trying to destroy the carriages. Although I had emptied them of people, it wouldn’t be good if they got destroyed!

“Where do you think you’re going?” I roared, shaping my shadows as countless snakes rushed towards them, coiling around their bodies.

The spiders began to hiss and struggle against my attacks, but it was useless...

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We were being swarmed by spiders! Without much hope, I quickly gathered my Mana from all around, absorbing the Mana from nearby plants, little animals, and the spiders themselves.

After that, I gathered it and infused it into my shadows, generating several snakes out of it, creating a swarm of giant snake-shaped shadows! Yes, no more tentacles. That's outdated. What's cool nowadays are snakes!

Later on I might change it to something else... but for now, I am fine with this! Each snake is like a clone of mine, and as they spread around, each clone begins to move independently. They quickly attack the spiders rushing towards me from the other side and catch them in their own bodies, coiling around their legs and abdomens. They cannot fight back, as the spiders' bites just get pass through their phantasmal bodies without affecting them.

Your poison is ineffective against me, a ghost! You're goners now!

I flew towards the caught spiders as I took out my Demon Blade and a giant ax, courtesy of Leon, and I began to dual wield them, slashing the spiders I had captured using my snakes!

S L A S H !

S L A S H !

S L A S H !

Wow, the ax is heavy, it will be hard to get used to this monster of a weapon, but I can see why burly guys love it. If you're strong enough to wield this thing, the weight alone can easily kill a person. Anyways, I just have to swing it, and its enormous blade will easily slash through the spider's entire body, slicing it in half.

And my Demon Blade is lighter. Using my Skills related to Blades and Swords, I can easily wield them with more precision and speed. A few slashes using it is more than enough to cover a spider with enormous wounds, killing it out of bleeding and spilling its guts out of its body.

I glanced as Lucifer was using his dragon form to fight. He was completely demolishing his own group of spiders, covering an entire area by himself. His enormous claws were easily piercing through the spider's exoskeletons, making it an easy task for him to kill them.

Additionally, his movements, such as punches and kicks, had become pretty good for a dragon who just relied on claws and breath attacks. While being with us, he had learned how to use all of his body in a fight and had become way more formidable.

His breath attack was explosively destructive, and his aura of dark and phantasmal power covered his body and strengthened it. His movements were then supplemented with the power of his magic, too, as he fired dark spears, fireballs, thunderbolts, and more.

He was massacring spiders rather well. I was proud of my Lucy-chan.

And then there was Kuro, my adorable giant black cat, who was slashing through his enemies with his strong claws, mostly supporting Raven, a giant undead crow who had also evolved a couple of times.

The two large undead beasts were fighting with their great might. I remember having made them with many different materials from monsters I had saved. Kuro had great power using the elemental cores or the shattered elemental cores of slimes, which had some power over the elements. This granted the cat the ability to wield elemental magic and also made his bones sturdy as I used the bones of powerful lizards.

The same went with Raven, although I used other materials from monsters we found along the way, and I gave him a poisonous beak that secretes corrosive venom. His claws also secreted venom, so he was slashing and pecking into the spiders, and they began to slowly get covered with wounds that were melting off their exoskeletons and flesh.

Those are my cute pets! Kuro and Raven have not disappointed me.

Partner was unleashing a barrage of attacks using her trusty spear. The spear she had since the beginning dropped by the Hydra we once fought. It came with poison secretion on its tip, which was as hot as pepper when thrown into the eyes. The spear itself had already reached Level 10 as weapons can level up as they are used or enhanced, and because it was a low-grade spear, it was able to level up quickly by just bathing in the blood of monsters and strong foes.

After it was bathed in the blood of vampires, it reached level 10 and then automatically evolved into a Blood Hydra Empress Spear and gained a new red color, and even several hissing snakes as decorations around the handle. The spear gained several new powers, and its stats skyrocketed. I had never thought certain weapons could evolve by themselves without using forging abilities!

Her powerful and evolved spear had been like her companion since she started her journey with me, so she was wielding it masterfully. Since the day I gave it to her, she had never let go of the spear, and she was now amazing at using it as if it were an extension of her body itself.

“RAAA!”

SLASH! CLAAAASH!

She moved swiftly, and with amazing speed, her spear danced around the battlefield. Its piercing blade easily pierced the heads of the spiders in seconds, leaving their eyes popping out in oozing liquid.

Her spear suddenly activated a special ability as blood energy began coming out of it, shaping as a deadly and gigantic snake of over 5 meters and fighting against two spiders, coiled around them, and then exploding!

BOOM!

This was but only one of the new abilities, as it also was able to directly absorb blood and transfer it to Partner so she could even drain the blood out of corpses with her spear.

Of course, the oozy green blood of spiders was not appetizing to Vampires, and she didn't take them fancy at all, so she just killed them without seeing them as much of an appetizing meal. They were nothing other than annoying plagues...

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The last Spider was punched into the ground and then grilled alive by Silvio and Francesco. The former vampires were good at burning things ruthlessly, and there was a certain sadistic joy that they took at partaking in their job, which they did happily.

The two fire ghosts burned the spider alive and left it burning while on the ground. Catarina sighed while cracking her knuckles, and we were all covered in green blood, just like her.

“Just how many of those critters did we just kill? That was insane,” Said Catarina.

“Yeah, I agree, that was out of this world... we indeed killed a bunch of them....” Sighed Partner.

“We were raided by... perhaps fifty of them? The corpses are covering the entire area where we settled down....” Sighed Lucifer.

“Ugh, phew... I am glad we are done... those accursed beasts were such a pain to kill... Where did they even come from?” Muttered Emeraldine.

“The forest, obviously, didn’t you see them, elf?” Sighed Catarina.

“O-Of course I did! But I just wondered in which part of the forest,” Said Emeraldine.

“Dunno, a spider nest or something?” Replied Catarina.

“A spider nest... of such humongous spiders? I think this might be more dangerous than we think. If that forest is really infested with these monsters... then the rabbit-kin might be in serious danger....” Sighed Lucifer.

“You’re right. There might be something going on in the depths of the forest without us even knowing about it. We have to hurry up and get over there... or something bad might happen. I don’t know... but I just got this bad feeling...” Said Emeraldine.

“We have to first assess things, though; we cannot just rush into the forest... Let’s at the very least store these spiders... Master?” Partner said, waiting for my permission.

“Ah, yes... Wait for a second, dear....” I said.

I was suddenly pestered with many system notifications after the extermination of the invasive spiders was done. The System had become way more detailed this time around, even showing me how much EXP each spider gave to me... I guess I could have gotten way more if it wasn’t because I saved a bit of the EXP to buy skills. Ah well, still, thanks to that method, I got the useful Mental Mapping Skill.

Ding!

[Calculating EXP gained...]

[You have slain [Giant Black Plague Spider Soldiers (C+ Rank) (24000 EXP)] x50]

[You gained 1200000 EXP!]

[Your Level has increased from Level 27 to Level 28!]

[Your Level has increased from Level 28 to Level 29!]

[Your Level has increased from Level 29 to Level 30!]

[Your Level has increased from Level 30 to Level 31!]

[Your Level has increased from Level 31 to Level 32!]

[All your stats have increased]

[The Levels of some Skills have increased]

[You acquired the [Plague Slayer: Lv1] Title Skill!]

Oh, I leveled up five times? Now I am midway through my next evolution, which is at level 60! Hehe... I wonder what insane evolution option I will get next...

Ah, well, I also got a new Title Skill from all of this, so let's check it out...

...

[Plague Slayer: Lv1]

A Title Skill given to someone who has slain a large number of monsters considered plagues, almost completely bringing the plague itself to an end by slaying at least fifty of such monsters simultaneously.

Enhances your damage dealt against Insect-type, Arachnid-type, and anything that is considered a plague species by a large amount of the world's population by +20% with each level.

Slay more plagues to increase the level of this Title Skill and clean the world of these critters!

...

Huh, pretty useful, alright. I wish humans could be included in the "Plagues" of this world because they're really annoying... Ah, maybe they could be considered not a plague as they're only most common in this continent.

After all, this world is named Yggdrasil, and there are continents that represent a Realm... And we are currently in the Realm of Humans, Midgard. I suppose it is fair that human supremacy is very popular around these lands.

I have heard that there are many elves and fairies and other races in Alfheim, then there are ice giants and ice elves in Jotunheim... and then fire giants and other creatures in Muspelheim, and so on...

Nonetheless, this Title will help me deal even more damage to these critters and slap them with ease.

Now that I think about it, I could have risen some more Undead to help, but I had them all protecting the carriages, and they were not fighting much aside from us.

Perhaps I should make these spiders Undead and make an Undead Spider Army to fight against the other Spiders in the forest.

"Maria-sama?"

Emeraldine got closer to me all of a sudden, as she looked at me while I was deep in my own redundant thoughts.

"Ah! Yes, well, let me raise them into Undead. I want to add them to my Army," I said.

"Oh, that also works, I guess. How many Undead can you control?" Asked Lucifer.

"I don't know, unlimited amount? I have never reached the limit so far... Although they're always weaker than originally, unless I make special rituals and generate chimeras using a varied arrangement of materials from many monsters, like you, Kuro, or Raven... I guess Catarina also counts. I added into her bones and internal organs of monsters," I said.

"You did what?!" Shouted Catarina.

“Yeah! Why do you think you feel stronger despite having died? I added a lot of ingredients to you. Even these Black Potions made from the oozy liquid produced by the Fragment of Evil,” I said.

“Eh?! Now I feel dirty... Let me go take a bath....” Sighed Catarina; the harsh truth hit her like a truck.

“Come on. It’s nothing bad....” I sighed.

“Do you plan on making any of these custom zombies?” Asked Partner.

“I don’t know... but making an artificial Arachne does sound appealing to me....” I said.

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An artificial Arachne made up of the spider corpses and the corpse of a female soldier. Well, the soldiers were mostly males amongst the hundreds I had slain back then, but there were also some females within the groups of mercenaries and adventurers, especially of the church guys. There were some girls on them.

I could use them and make my very own Arachne Zombie wife!

But what’s the point? It will have the mind of a toddler.

Although it would be a strong addition to the team, I would have to put some effort into it, so for now, all of you will become just classic Spider Zombies.

“Rise... [Fake Life]!”

FLAAASH!

I spread my phantasmal aura across the entire place as the corpses of the spiders began to slowly move. Some ended up dying pretty ugly, so they were all dismembered apart. This very ax I got in my hand was the one that just cut tons of them in half.

The spiders were still moving while being cut in half but had a hard time unifying both pieces.

Some were even worse, looking like barely moving pieces of flesh and exoskeleton. I had randomly inserted their souls back into their bodies, so they still should know how to hunt and cooperate together as they did before.

But god, they look awful.

“But don’t worry, I got you guys! [Undead Healing]!”

I activated my Level 7 Undead Healing, an excellent Skill that can heal Undead’s HP and even merge back their dismembered pieces as if it were a phantasmal glue.

I began to spread the effect of this Skill around my phantasmal aura, and the spiders began to reattach themselves with one another, being brought back from their death to another death, but now just as zombies this time around.

Crackle... crackle...

“Gryyyhhhh...”

“Grrryeehhhh...”

“Grryyssh...”

The spiders began to walk around with their legs, which released little cracking sounds that made them even more terrifying.

They also released some very eerie sounds from their jaws, as if they were telling me something awful but didn't want me to hear them...

"Okay, you guys... You're around fifty, and that guy is still on flames? Oi, turn off the flames!" I said.

I was pointing at a spider that was still in flames due to Silvio and Francesco. The spider zombie felt no pain, so it was mostly not aware that it was burning, or if it was, it didn't care.

"Grryyyh..."

SPLASH!

Lucifer generated a large water bullet and threw it to the spider. The flames were slightly turned off but continued to flare.

"Huh? This fire... Maybe Silvio and Francesco can turn it off? Perhaps water doesn't work that well against phantasmal fire." Said Lucifer.

"No, wait! I get it! This guy in flames is actually a different species... I just saw his Status... He's named Blazing Spider Demon Zombie?! Wow... So he's a spider zombie that is on flames...." I said.

"That's... very weird. I guess sometimes oddballs like these will come out...." Said Emeraldine.

"Gryeh!"

Suddenly, the spider controlled the fire and made several fireballs, throwing them into the sky and making them explode.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

It had a lot of firepower as well!

“Wow! Okay, I believe you. You like your fire, don’t you? I wonder if you could technically be Silvio and Francesco’s child... Okay, you’re going to be named Pyro,” I said.

“Gryshiiiiii!”

The spider, now named Pyro, seemed more energetic than the others. To be honest, he seemed to be a promising new recruit that came out unexpectedly out of this risen mass batch of undead.

Maybe we should have burned all the spiders before turning them into Undead, and we could have gotten more of these guys... Or well, better not.

“Pyro? Really? That’s the name?” Said Lucifer.

“What? What’s wrong with that name?” I asked.

“Nothing, it’s your decision....” Sighed Lucifer.

This annoying dragon really makes me want to slap that good ass he sometimes got with how cocky he acts in the most unexpected times.

“Gryshiii...!”

The adorable Pyro was in flames, and I suddenly noticed that his carapace turned from black to red, and he gained some fire patterns across it.

He really just became a blazing spider...

“Anyways, now that we are done with this, I’ll pull back the people, and then I’ll store you guys inside my shadows....”

I quickly took out the people as they seemed to be all okay. Gofumin, Takeshi, and Laura ran to my side and hugged me tightly. They appeared to have been scared.

Takeshi and Laura are mildly strong, but they don't stand a chance against a swarm of C+ Rank Beasts yet... They still gotta train a lot before anything like this. So they cannot easily turn overpowered like us so fast without more proper foundation.

And the little Gofumin is just a newbie, so of course, she cannot fight either, but I guess she could hunt little monsters like Horned Rabbits or Demon Rats fairly well.

"Maria, are you all okay? What happened?" Asked Laura.

"Th-There were these HUGE spiders! I think I hit one hard with my Fishing Rod, but it wasn't enough to break its exoskeleton...." Sighed Takeshi.

"Auntie! Are you okay?" Asked Gofumin.

"Yeah, I am doing fine... We slay them for good and look! I just made them all into new friends," I said.

I showed the kids the Spider Zombies, and their eyes opened wide in surprise. The spiders greeted them while hissing and roaring loudly.

The blazing Pyro was leading them all, raising a leg and greeting them cutely.

He was also the most active, too, surprisingly. It seems he developed a personality quite fast.

"W-Wow... Nee-san, your power is really broken...." Said Takeshi.

"W-Well, every Death Mage can do this, right?" Asked Laura.

"Can I keep one as a mount?" Asked Gofumin.

“Mount? I had... not thought about using them that way, but actually, yeah, if you want to....” I said while petting her head.

“I want the blazing one!” Called out Gofumin.

“Erm... I don’t know... that one might... burn you, dear....” I sighed.