

A Ghost 811

Chapter 811 Healing The Forest

With the help of Emeraldine, Root, and Ash, and well, Jonathan for more purifying stuff, alongside my near endlessly regenerating Mana, we got to work.

First of all, we helped Ash manipulate his Mana, and to "feel" the soul within him. He slowly began to imbue this soul's powers into the contaminated soil, purifying it easily.

With Emeraldine and Jonathan's aid, the soil was purified rapidly as long as I gave them Mana, and after just a single hour, the entire contaminated area was completely purified.

The dead trees remained dead though, they were completely soulless, the souls were probably sucked away by the evil god fragment, so there wasn't anything we could do about those.

I dedicated to cut down the trees with everyone else, and take them out of the soil completely, as I stored them inside my Inventory so they wouldn't bother anybody, they ended being named "Death Miasmic Wood" and were a pretty good-looking material, so I kept it. Might come in handy in the future.

After that, Root helped by setting up the "pillar" for the new forest, using his own roots and creating mini spirit tree clones of himself, which Emeraldine using her Yggdrasil magic, helped to grow and multiply even more.

She was already able to create lesser Yggdrasil wood with her Yggdrasil Spirit Magic anyways, so this time we made sure the entire forest was made out of spirit trees!

Doing that with everyone else's help took roughly almost the entire day, we took a break to eat and continued until the night came.

The rest of the villagers eventually joined us, as they glanced the forest grow and develop. Grass and flowers grew around, and the trees, despite being newborn, reached almost the same size as the ones from before the incident.

However, even with all of this, we still needed the forest's core. Root had offered himself to become the forest's core. After all, his entire body had grown tremendously big.

And we agreed, because the soul of the lesser Yggdrasil inside of Ash didn't seem to want to leave him, Root absorbed Ash's powers, which he imbued into him, alongside Emeraldine's spirit magic, and my Mana.

FLAAASH!

And a huge "clone" of Root, connected to the roots beneath the ground that connected to our city, emerged, growing as tall as the older tree.

"I'll make sure to take care of this place too, gyuh! Leave it to me- Ah, now it feels like I have two minds gyuh? How weird gyuh... Well, whatever!" Root said carefreely.

"Well, even if his connection with his main body is cut, the one from here won't die, there'll be... two Roots I guess?" I wondered. "Though this one will be much weaker. Nonetheless, he'll protect the place if its ever attacked again."

"That's a relief..." August sighed.

"I feel like I've made a strange bond... The crystal in my chest... It feels like it is imbuing its strength in there." Said Ash in surprise.

"Most likely." Emeraldine nodded. "The Ancient Spirit Tree's Soul wants to remain with you, but at the same time, it created a special Spirit Bond with the Root here, to imbue more and more of his former strength into him. Looks like you've become his successor, Root."

"Gyuh? Thank you, Ancient Spirit Tree!" Said Root politely.

"What... will happen to me now? Where should I go?" Ash wondered. "Mom's dead... Should I go back to Goldsand?"

"Well..." August wondered. "If you want to, you could stay here. How about it?"

"B-But... after everything I've done?" Ash asked. "Doesn't everyone in the village hate me?"

"Nah, it's fine."

"We heard what happened from August and Emeraldine."

"And after seeing you help them regrow the forest into this state, we can't really blame you anymore."

"You've redeemed yourself quite well, boy."

"Stay with us and keep proving us that you're a good kid."

All the villagers seemed to agree. Nobody seemed to mind that he could stay there. I didn't wanted to bring him back to Goldsand, it looked to be a dangerous place. It is better if he stayed here, in the safety we've created.

"E-Everyone..." Ash continued crying. "I'm sorry... and thanks... I'll keep working hard... to redeem myself, even if a little bit... every day."

"Hahaha, okay, no need to cry any more tears, kid." August laughed. "How about we have a communal dinner with the rest of the village? Some hunters ended hunting a big giant wild boar, so there's a lot of meat!"

"Oh, the hunters already went to hunt?!" Emeraldine was surprised.

"Of course, once they felt revitalized they said they wanted meat, and went out of their way to catch the first thing they could find in the outer forest that wasn't affected by the miasma, hahaha!" August laughed. "We elves are a resilient and hard-working bunch!"

"That much is clear." I laughed. "Anyways, let's get going then. Root, wanna join?"

"Gyuh!"

POOF!

One of Root's many clones turned into his small, adorable egg-shaped spirit embodiment form, and floated at our side.

"Meat! Meat! I like meat gyuh!" Root started singing.

"A tree that likes meat?" Wondered August. "Our new Tree Guardian is sure a peculiar one, hahaha!" The rest of the villagers laughed along.

We spent the rest of the night celebrating, eating, and laughing. We let bygones be bygones, and we looked forward to a brighter future together.

And once the next morning came, we departed, above Lucifer's large back, saying our goodbyes.

"Thank you for your hospitality and everything else!" I said, waving my hands. "We'll come back once we're done with what we want to do!"

"Goodbye uncle! Please take care of Ash! And yourself too, obviously!" Emeraldine said.

"We'll do! Don't worry!" August said. "Safe travels, everyone! I'll be praying to the Yggdrasil Tree for you to find Maria's missing brother!"

"Thank you so much!" I smiled.

Without further ado, we left. We arrived when everything was dark, desolated, and contaminated. But once we left, everything was bright, green, and lively.

And I hope it stays like that forever...

Chapter 812 Into The Goldsand Confederation

Within an underground area in the Emerald Fountain City of the Goldsand Confederation, a man wearing a mask in the shape of a black fox with glowing red eyes heard the reports of a servant walking to his side...

"Milord, the Miasmic Tree that was producing our monster troops has been exterminated... We've received reports from our magic devices saying the Evil God's Fragment has completely disappeared too- No, rather, it has been... absorbed."

"..." The masked man remained in silence while thinking about the situation. "So it must be them, who else has enough power to do this within the South of Midgard anyways? The Undead Dragon King, that Vampire traitor, the elf woman blessed by spirits, and... the ghost witch, Maria Belle."

"Precisely." Nodded the man. "That's what we believe..."

"This is not looking good, hahaha." Laughed the masked man. "Why would she get in this situation anyways? We never provoked her, nor we've ever tried to attack her people either, unlike the others... We're here doing our own business, why go so far? Why bother?"

"We speculate the elf that accompanies her had family in that area..." Sighed the servant.

"Dammit..." Sighed the masked man. "Well, another good project thrown to the trash... Hopefully, that woman stop harassing us. I don't want anything to do with her, we must continue preparing our troops to destroy the Empire of Light and the church. The Final Day is coming closer."

"Some think that... she might be on her way here. After all, Ash was someone from Goldsand, what if she wants revenge on his behalf? She's a righteous woman..." Sighed the servant.

"Tch, don't give her ideas now! If that were to ever happen... I would have to intervene myself; I can't let her destroy all we've built in this place." The masked man sighed. "Well, if push comes to shove..." He glanced at a black colored blade encapsulated on Demonite. "I'll have to use our secret weapon. Ugh, it costs so much Mana though."

"Should we prepare for the worst right away?" His servant wondered.

"There's no helping it. It is better if we are somewhat prepared than not." Sighed the masked man. "And about that kid... Make sure to keep him restrained this time, the powers he possess will be a pivotal part of our future plans, but we can't let him make a riot like before."

"Understood." Nodded the servant, quickly turning into shadows and disappearing.

The masked man sighed, drinking a cup of blood while glancing at the moonless night.

"Maria... You better keep yourself out of this if you don't want me to get serious." He sighed. "I've been evading you all this time because I didn't wanted a confrontation with a monster like you... But if you keep getting in my way, I won't have any other option."

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(Maria's POV)

As we traveled across the skies, we glanced at a map that we got from August. My Auto Mapping can map anything... Where I am, of course, so we can't earn everything completely in detail either. This is why this map come into usage.

"So according to this map, looks like Goldsand's divided into three big territories. And their names represent the biggest mountains there, where the commoners mine resources which feed on the entire confederation's wealth." I said. "The closest area is the Ruby Mountain Territory, then comes the Sapphire Mountain Territory, and lastly, the Emerald Mountain Territory."

"Sounds like quite the pain." Said Partner. "Do we have to look for your brother through all three?! Ugh... And why are the name so lame?!"

"Well there's actual real names for the cities. The Ruby Palace, the Sapphire Temple, and the Emerald Fountain. The Ruby Palace seems to be made up of warmongering merchant descendants, so there's always fights and disputes there. Then the Sapphire Temple is a much more peaceful area, well, "peaceful" for the nobles. The church of light is strong there, but they also have the church of the goddess of water, which is the primary church aside from the one of light... They're all allied churches anyways so it matters little." I explained.

"And what about Emerald Fountain?" Wondered Emeraldine. "It sounds a bit like my name..."

"It says in your uncle's notes that... It is the most protected place as there's the most nobles living there. It's the largest city too... Ash doesn't remember where he came from, and August told us to just quickly check the "underground" of each city, we'll find answers really quickly if we talk with ghosts or souls too!" I said with a smile.

"I see..." Emeraldine sighed. "It will be a hard job to find your brother... But let's do our best." She said. "Spirits, can you help us find him later?"

"Okay~!"

"If Emeraldine says so~"

"Jonathan, do you happen to have something that could have belonged to my brother?" I asked the hero. "A bit of hair or something?"

"No, sorry..." Said Jonathan. "It has been so many years since then..."

"Oh well, whatever." I sighed. "We've been traveling for the empty desert for a while now and the only thing we see are a bunch of cactuses and dunes..."

"Tch, you're just sitting around while I'm burning by the sun! Why are you complaining?" Lucifer said angrily.

"Hahaha, I'm sorry!" I giggled. "Tear, can you cool us down a bit more?"

"Sure." Tear nodded. Through the day and a half we've been traveling, she has become our living cooler, and by using her ice magic, she cool us down from the intense heat of the sun around here.

FLUOOOOSH!

"Hahhh~ Much better." We all sighed in relief.

"I'm glad I can be of some help." Tear laughed. "Honestly, if it wasn't for my magic I wouldn't be able to resist this heat either... We ice giants aren't good with heat this high!"

"I've heard this area of Midgard is so hot because it is the closest to the Muspelheim Continent, a land of flames." I said. "And- Huh?"

Suddenly, the city of Ruby Palace finally made itself clear within the horizon!

"We're getting closer, everyone!" I said with a smile. "And- Eh?!"

However, the first thing that greeted our sight were dozens of gigantic Sandworms surrounding the small city!

Although the Ruby Palace City was known for its strong warriors and powerful nobility, this wasn't the same thing for almost the 99% of the population, who all lived on terrible poverty. While the rich merchants that made up the nobility gobbled up every single resource imaginable and left not even crumbs left for the people, everyone else either had to starve to death or fight monsters to earn a penny.

And well, there were also those in between, that dedicated themselves to do another thing... Crime. From stealing, to robbing, to falsifying trade documents by pretending to be merchants, to even scams, anything went if you wanted to live and eat a piece of bread and drink a cup of goat milk the next day.

"Hahh... Ugh... Ungh!"

And some people would usually go a bit farther than just some bread and milk every day. Some would want more than that, a feast.

"Hey! You damn bitch! Come back right here!"

"Isn't she one of those kids from the underground lab?!"

"Yeah!"

"No wonder she's so fast and has those weird ears..."

"If we catch her we'll get a lot of money from those shady guys if we bring her back!"

Some people would lead to corruption, working for their masters while disguising their malice behind a façade of "duty".

"Ugh... Ungh... Hahhh... Almost there...!"

And a few other people that want more, but don't know how to get it, will end up being manipulated by others into taking many risks, sometimes only because they're naïve enough... Sometimes capable too.

"Uwah! Eh?! Dead end?!"

However, at the end of the day, it is a dog-eat-dog world...

"We got her."

"You shouldn't had ran there, dumbass."

"It is clear she doesn't know the entire place."

"Did you ran away from that lab recently, little lamb?"

Four brown skinned men wearing red clothes and holding sharp black metal spears decorated with red jewels stepped in front of the little girl that was running away from them.

She looked to be at most seven years old, barely wearing some white clothes, ragged, and covered in dust and blood. Her skin was charcoal black, and she had two small goat-like horns, one larger than the second, alongside short white hair, and red eyes.

In her chest, the soldiers noticed a slightly glowing thing, a small red crystal emerging from it like a cancerous growth, a man-made tumor put into her body to transform her into a monster.

And in her hands she held a small, brown colored jewel, imbued with magical and spiritual powers which the little girl had stolen, manipulated by her band of young thieves as a "newcomer trial" to join them and earn herself some food.

"Now, easy there girl. Give that thing back. It's dangerous, you know?"

"Come on, why are you being gentle?! Just drag her here!"

"Shut up bastard, she's a poor little child that doesn't know what she's doing!"

The soldier winked back at the other, as the other three soldiers shut down and nodded, agreeing with him.

"Y-Yeah! Sorry if we said those things before, come on, let's get along."

"Give that back and let's get along."

"You don't have to involve yourself with thieves, we'll give you some food. Hey, how about this dried meat for starter? We've got juicy fruits and all the water you want to drink at home."

The men showed her a jerky.

"Sniff, sniff..." The little girl smelled the jerky, beginning to drool. "Y-You won't hurt me?" She asked scared. I think you should take a look at

"Of course not. That item you're holding is what could hurt you!"

"It's very delicate, you shouldn't had stolen it like that."

"Come on dear... Just give it back."

The girl timidly approached the men, giving back the glowing brown jewel, which had on its surface the incrustated shape of what resembled a large worm.

"There you go!" The guard grabbed the jewel and gave the girl a piece of jerky, which she started eating right away.

"Phew, that was dangerous, make sure to don't move this thing around too much. It is a Monster Summoning Stone, something the Warlocks of the Underground created."

"Alright boss, I'll keep it safe." The man wrapped the stone around some clothing.

"Will you give me more food? I-I'm hungry..." The little girl said, approaching the soldiers.

BAAAM!

However, the only thing she received was a kick in the face, as she hit the floor, her little nose bleeding terribly.

"Auuuggh...! Sniff... Uwaaahhh...!"

The little girl started crying in pain, as the soldier that kicked her grabbed her by her short hair and lifted her off the ground as she cried.

"Did you think we would let a thief get away with it, you fucking slut?!"

"B-But you said...! Sniff.. Aauuuh! Let me go! Sniff... Uwaaah!"

BAAAM! BAAAM!

Before she could continue crying, the bastards punched her face twice and threw her down into the floor.

"Sniff... Uwaah... My face! Sniff... Mama... Mamaaaa!"

"Your mom is fucking dead, she was a useless slut like you most likely!"

"Fucking little bitch, you aren't getting away with this!"

"We'll screw you up before giving you back, they won't mind a few bruises... Nor your chastity taken either..."

One of the gross men started sipping down his pants, while the others grabbed the little girl, lifting off her clothes...

"Noo! Let me go! Uwaaaah!"

"I'm going to teach you that you shouldn't steal, you fucking slut! Now-"

SLAAAASH!

"H-Huh?"

Before the bastard could realize it, however, a scarlet slash sliced through his entire body, his two halves suddenly beginning to fall apart, as his consciousness faded away before he could even scream in agony.

SPLAAT!

His body splattered into the floor, both halves cut perfectly, guts and blood gushing out of them... The scene shocked everyone, the girl included, as they suddenly sensed a powerful presence emerge, standing above the building's ceiling right behind the dead end of the alley.

A woman with pale white skin, and many stitch-like scars across her body, long red hair, and sharp red eyes, alongside a huge, muscular body equal to the mightiest Mountain Giants, and at her side, there was a menacing, huge black wolf.

"I'm going to enjoy killing you bastards..." She smiled, blood beginning to emerge out of the bastard's corpse and flying into her hands, spiraling magically...

Chapter 814 Chaos

"W-What...?!"

"W-Who's she?!"

"R-Run! Brat, run with the jewel!!!"

The man holding the jewel ran away, as fast as possible. However, the woman standing in the ceiling jumped down into the floor, standing in front of the little girl.

At the same time, the blood spiraling in her hands transformed into threads, wrapping around the man's legs and pushing him down. The jewel suddenly bounced into the sand, but did not activate, thankfully.

"You're not going anywhere..." She said.

"Y-YOU BITCH!"

The three surviving soldiers pointed their spears at the woman, as their red jewels suddenly light up and generated scarlet flames.

"Hahaha! Did you thought we were defenseless against monsters like you?! These are super expensive Magic Spears! With these we kill even D Rank monsters!"

"Ain't no way a bitch like you can be stronger than that, hah!"

"KILL HER!"

All three men pointed the spears towards her, as she stood there silently, the spears hit her abs, chest, and neck, and then engulfed her in flames...

CRASH! CRASH! CRASH!

FLUOSH!

"Hahahaha! Burn! Burn you bitch!"

"Yeah! Take that!"

"She was probably some sort of Giant, right? There's no way a woman gets this buff- GEGH?!"

However, a large hand suddenly grasped one of the soldier's neck, and then made the flames spread over his body, slowly burning him.

"Ggyyaeegh...!"

"This buff?" She asked, while burning. "Nah, I just exercised a lot when I was alive. I guess bastards like you can't recognize a woman for her strength until you're about to die against it?"

CRACK!

His neck was quickly crushed before he died by burning, his lifeless body fell into the floor, as the woman's red eyes glared at the rest, her mouth opened and inhaled, the flames were swallowed.

"Compare to the flames of those two guys, yours only gave me tickles." She laughed.

"W-Wha...?"

"M-Monster... monster!"

Giving up on fighting her after realizing not even their spears pierced her mightily hard skin, the two men quickly attempted to run away for their lives, only to be dragged back by the woman's blood threads.

"Hehehe, you're not going anywhere, fucking bastards." She laughed, smiling maliciously. The little goat-horned girl behind her glanced in awe as this big, strong woman crushed these horrible men's masculinity. "How about this before departing, huh? So you learn to never touch a girl!"

CRAAASSH! CRAAASSH!

Mercilessly, she crushed the two men's genitals, making sure they were crushed and shredded into pieces.

"Gryyyaaaaaeergghh...!"

"Uuaaaaagghh...!"

Their screams echoed into the rest of the city, as the woman couldn't give more of a fuck. She smiled, and then grabbed the two men, using her threads, she slowly started peeling off their skin.

"Girl." She spoke, as the men screamed in agony.

"Y-Yes?" The little lamb spoke.

"Take this." The woman gave her a small knife.

"A-A knife?!" She cried.

"Kill them both, you'll earn a nice amount of Experience Points like that." The woman said.

"W-What? W-Who are you!?" The little girl asked desperately.

"Name's Catarina. I'm a bounty hunter, mercenary, assassin, part time bandit of nobles, you name it." The woman smiled.

"C-Catarina..." The little girl suddenly remembered the other kids from the group she belonged, who spoke about the "Legendary Bandit Catarina" who had already made herself a legend in the arid and harsh lands of Goldsand.

Wherever there was injustice, she would appear and crush all the bad guys. She traveled anywhere, and constantly was seen killing anybody that tried to abuse commoners.

She was known as the commoner's hero of the entirety of Goldsand...

"T-There's no way, it's you! Legendary Bandit Catarina!" The little girl gasped.

"Hahaha, am I famous?" Laughed Catarina. "Anyways, you need to grow stronger to survive in this world, dear." She gave the girl a head pat. "Come on, you must get used to take the lives of bastards as soon as possible, the sooner, the easier it will become later."

"Gulp..." The girl doubted.

"Didn't they tried to rape you? Didn't they insulted your mother? Didn't they tricked you?" Asked Catarina. "Girl, there's good people out there, and then... there's trash you should never forgive."

"..." The girl glanced at the knife, feeling angered the more she was reminded of it...

Without hesitating, she pointed her knife into the bastard's necks, and pierced them clumsily and roughly, only making it even more agonizing.

Their arms and legs were cut down by Catarina, as she slowly drank the blood while nodding as the girl killed the two of them.

"Graarggh...!"

"Gryyeeegghh..."

Their pitiful screams were music for their ears!

[You have killed [Ruby Palace Soldier: Lv33]

[You have killed [Ruby Palace Soldier: Lv29]

[You earned 2000 EXP]

[LEVEL UP!]

[LEVEL UP!]

[LEVEL UP!]

[LEVEL UP!]

"Uwaah..." The little lamb was surprised as she saw her levels rising like crazy.

This was the world of Yggdrasil, a world where people could kill monsters and... others, to earn experience points and level up, and it was a power everybody had within them.

Some abused it, others ignored it, but only those that made use of it would thrive in this land of destruction and desperation.

"Your level has risen well, good girl." Catarina smiled. "What's your name?"

"Name's... I don't have one..." She sighed.

"Woof!" The huge black wolf walked in.

"Then how about I name you?" Asked Catarina. "Silva, like your silver hair."

"S-Silva..." The little girl felt amazed the legendary bandit gave her a name.

"T-THERE SHE IS!"

"THE JEWEL IS ON THE FLOOR!"

"GRAB IT!"

"Oh? More bastards. Alright Silva, let's first take them all down!" Laughed Catarina.

"E-Eh? I have to fight too?!" Silva cried.

Suddenly, interrupting them, a bunch of soldiers rushed into the scene, they all swarmed Catarina, but she used her powers and strength to punch them or cut them into pieces one after another!

CRASH! BOOM! SLASH! CRASH!

However, in between the battle and the screams, one of the soldiers managed to grab the crystal, only to be crushed by another that was sent flying by Catarina, cut down to pieces.

BAAAM!

"A-Aggh! T-The crystal!" The soldier cried as the crystal fell into the floor...

Crack... crack...

CRAAASH!

And it shattered into pieces.

TRUUUMMM...!

A shockwave of pure magic power spread around the entire city, and then, dozens of magic circles emerged surrounding the entire Ruby Palace City.

And huge Sandworms emerged out of them.

"GRUOOOOHHHHH!!!"

Chapter 815 Sandworm Invasion!

A cataclysm suddenly befell Ruby Palace as Catarina was saving the life of a child. The jewel which she had mostly ignored ended being a rather dangerous weapon of mass destruction! Why did the nobles even wanted such a thing? Actually, maybe it would be clever to ask why they wouldn't.

TRUUUMMM...!

Dozens of huge, brown colored magic circles emerged out of thin air, surrounding the entire city. This was a special Monster Summoning Crystal that worked by summoning monsters sealed inside by powerful magicians, the "Warlocks of the Underworld", a mysterious organization tied to the bastards that held Silva captive before.

"GRUOOOOHHHHH!"

"SHAAAAAAHHH!"

"GROOOOAARRRR!"

The dozens of Sandworms, each one as strong as a B Rank monster, rushed into the city without even questioning why they were there now. Perhaps too angered of having been sealed to escape, deciding to just attack the nearest thing within their vicinity!

"W-What is that?!"

"S-Sandworms?!"

"So many!"

"Why are they here? I thought this was safe from them!"

"R-Run... HIDE!"

"They're too many! Uuaaaggh!"

The citizens of the Ruby Palace city quickly panicked, running away from the scene as the huge Sandworms demolished the city walls, throwing away countless soldiers, some swallowed them up, and the ones that ran away were quickly picked up by the rest.

"Dammit, what the heck did you do, you fucking idiot?!" The soldier that ended letting the jewel break was reprimanded by his many seniors.

"I-I'm sorry-"

"[Blood Edge]"

SLASH! SLASH! SLASH! SLASH! SLASH!

Suddenly, countless blades made of blood cut down every single soldier in front of Catarina before they could do any more stupid things, their shredded bodies painting the sand red.

"We have to quickly get out of here!" Catarina said. "Silva, you stay in here for now... No, actually, come with me, it would be dangerous if you stay in this blood-covered place. They might frame you for this massacre."

Catarina swiftly grabbed Silva and jumped over her big wolf, who suddenly was shrouded in shadows, rushing across the shadows of the buildings and into the outside of the city.

"Silva, I'll leave you around here-"

"I-I want to fight too!"

"You want to fight those?! You can't!"

"I-I can't... But I can do this!"

Silva suddenly touched Catarina's back, imbuing her with a dark, powerful aura that suddenly started enhancing her strength.

FLAAAASH!

[Silva] has conjured the power of her [Miasmic Boost] Skill.]

[As a compatible Undead type being, you receive its full benefits.]

[All of your Stats have increased by +100%, HP and MP Recovery Speed has increased by +200%.]

[As long as the conjurer is close by, Miasmic Boost will stay indefinitely.]

"Amazing..." Said Catarina. "You kind of remind me of an old friend named Maria." She laughed.

"I-It worked!" Silva was surprised. "I remember those bad guys saying I had the power to boost the strength of red eyed people..."

"I guess it worked on me, dear." Giggled Catarina. "Alright. [Blood Thread]!"

She quickly wrapped Silva around her back with many threads, and then materializing the threads into a huge armor, protecting her from damage like this.

"If you want to join so badly, so be it!" Laughed Catarina. "Just stay put while I take these down... Or we die trying."

"D-Die?!" Silva panicked.

"Blackie, follow me!" Catarina roared. "[Blood Bat Wings]!" She summoned two pairs of bat-like wings made of her blood aura, jumping into the skies.

"Woof!" The big shadow wolf undead barked, conjuring shadows.

"GRUOOOOHHHH!"

Catarina, Blackie, and the little Silva immediately faced a gigantic Sandworm that noticed them, the moment they all jumped into the skies, the gigantic beast opened its massive maws, attempting to devour them all with a single bite!

"That's not going to work!" Catarina roared, her fists suddenly overflowing with her Blood Battle Aura, as she punched the Sandworm's face several times! "[Crimson Fist Battle Arts]: [Blood Asura's Barrage]!"

CLASH! CLASH! CLASH! CLASH! CLASH! CRAAAASSH!!!

Unleashing the mighty strength she has been developing since she "left the nest", Catarina completely overwhelmed the Sandworm, a beast at B+++ Rank at almost equally as strong as A Rank monsters and threw it down into the ground!

BAAAAAAMMM!!!

"SHYAAAAGGHH...!"

The Sandworm quickly attacked her back after hitting the floor, using its huge body to slam her with everything it had!

CRAAAASSH!!!

However, Catarina resisted the blows and then disappeared into shadows, as Blackie helped her travel around, landing over the Sandworm's huge head and then gathering all her might into her powerful fists.

Her Blood Battle Aura surged once more, shaping itself into the form of a muscular, gigantic woman made of blood, resembling a demon queen, her fists merged with those of hers, as they unleashed a large barrage of blows!

CLASH! CLASH! CLASH! CLASH! CLASH! CRAAAASSH!!!

"GRYYYYEEEEEGGHHH...!"

The huge Sandworm gave out a last scream, its head splattering into pieces, covering Catarina's entire body with green blood and guts, as the rest of the worm's body fell lifelessly into the ground, to never move again.

"Phew, we did it-"

"GRUOOHHH!"

"SHAAAAAH!"

"ROOOOAARR!"

However, five more Sandworms surrounded her. Using Sand Magic and their powerful tails to attack her, Catarina constantly evaded their devastating blows while hitting them back, however, the fight was way too slow!

While she struggled fighting all these monsters, the other half of the huge Sandworms started trashing the entire city! There was some trash in there for sure, but also a lot of hard-working people, innocents that didn't deserve to die so horribly.

"Dammit!" Catarina roared, clashing against the Sandworms as she was being constantly hit everywhere. "I can handle this much but... It will take time...! Fuck! Argh!!!"

CRAAAASSH!

Suddenly, three Sandworm Tails at once threw Catarina into the ground, trashing her horribly!

"Auntie Catarina!" Silva cried, as her miasmic powers suddenly reacted to her emotions, wrapping Catarina around silver colored sheep-like wool, and making her fall not that painful!

BAAAAMM!

"Ungh... Silva, you saved me there." Catarina muttered, only to find herself surrounded by the vicious Sandworms. "Dammit... Do I have to run away after all?!" She gritted her teeth.

"[Selene's Palm]"

TRUUUUMMM...!

However, before she could even react, a huge palm made of moonlight energy descended from the skies, crushing three Sandworms at once!

CRAAAAAAASSSHHH...!

"W-Wha...?! That voice!"

Catarina knew exactly where that attack came from...

Chapter 816 Arrival

Catarina had really thought she would have to escape and forget about the entire city; however, help came right after that thought, almost as if the gods themselves intervened in her problematic life for once...

However, this time, it was a different kind of "goddess".

"[Selene's Palm]"

TRUUUMMM...!

Before she could even react, a huge palm made of moonlight energy descended from the skies, crushing three Sandworms at once! The beasts died in an instant, splattered over the floor.

CRAAASSHH...!

What followed after were the same attack crushing a fourth, then a fifth, and then a sixth Sandworm, each one was being crushed as if a Legendary Titan had suddenly showed up out of nowhere.

"W-Wha...?! That voice!" Catarina knew exactly where those attacks came from, as she heard her voice and saw her figure.

She had changed a bit since the last time she saw her. Her appearance had grown more "divine" she looked more bright, her hair had now become slightly purple, with deep black and silvery-white strands, she still had horns, but her dress was much different, looking as if it had been made of pure moonlight.

Anybody wouldn't believe her if she told them the woman floating right there was actually a ghost and not... a Majin of the highest order. Ghosts were often thought to be measly monsters, purified, and exorcised before they could become actual threats.

"Who is she, Lady Catarina?!" Asked Silva, climbing over the muscular woman's back to look out.

"T-That's... Well, I'm sure now, that's Maria. The woman that gave me a second chance." Said Catarina.

"A second chance?" Silva was confused.

"Hey! Are you guys alright?!" Maria quickly flew back to where they were, gasping in shock as she realized who was there. "Catarina?! It's you!"

"H-Hey..." Catarina muttered while feeling a bit embarrassed. "I didn't thought you'll save my ass again... What a way to meet up again, Maria."

"I never thought we would find you here!" Maria hugged her tightly. "And who's this little blessing over here? Hi!"

"H-Hi..." Silva muttered, feeling a bit overwhelmed by Maria's powerful presence, which by merely existing sent a strong pressure.

"A lot has happened but we have to get rid of these damn Sandworms, never thought a damn stone could summon so many!" Catarina sighed.

"Nah, don't worry about that, we got this." Maria nodded, as she pointed at Lucifer, Partner, Emeraldine, Nyx, the twins, Tear, and Jonathan fighting the Sandworms and eliminating them easily one after another.

In just a couple of seconds, the entire swarm of huge monsters were completely eliminated. Maria smiled as she felt a bit of EXP flow to her, but not near as enough for her to Evolve at all.

"B Rank Monsters are piss easy, don't cha worry." She smiled. "Anyways, we should pick them up, so wait up here!" Maria flew around the city, storing every Sandworm Monster corpse inside her Inventory for future materials, in the way, with Emeraldine's help, they repaired the broken walls with roots and golems made out of sand, mud, and souls, leaving the walls pristine.

"W-What happened?"

"Weren't we being attacked by sandworms?"

"They're all gone..."

"D-Did you see that?! A few people flying around!"

"I saw a huge dragon killing the sandworms!"

"Maybe another monster hunted them down... I hope they don't get us though."

The citizens were naturally shaken, the nobles in the noble district glanced through their windows, the panic in their hearts gone as many sighed in relief. Though, this wasn't thanks to any of their pathetic guards.

In the largest building within the noble district, a fat man covered on gold accessories and ornaments, long red painted nails, and an angry expression glanced at the scene in utter disbelief. His face filled with frustration at what could had been his beautiful pets turned into worm paste.

"My worms! Why are they gone?! Where did they go?! Why were they summoned ahead of time?!" He cried angrily. "They cost a fortune to get here!"

"Honestly speaking, Lord Sanctus, why did you even wanted them?" Sighed a red-eyed woman at his side, with brown skin and long black hair. "I mean, the Warlocks still made it but-"

"Because they could help me fend off any bastards that tried to get here! Maybe I could even use them to conquer the other cities... Sandworms are the strongest monsters in the desert after all! Hahaha!" Cried Sanctus. "But now these bastards that should had brought it here are probably all dead... And I hear a damn kid was the one that stole it?! You damn blood suckers know really well that I am the one keeping you all so comfortable in this place without the church getting their noses into your hideouts! Find the bastards that stole my worms and bring them to me!"

"Sigh..." The beautiful Vampiress sighed, nodding. "(If it wasn't for this stupid fat ass' position I would had already drained all the blood out of his bloated body) Very well, my lord."

"Fufufu! And do it quick! Okay? I also need a refund from you, that crystal cost a lot and it's all your fault it was lost. After all, you said it my city would be safe from bandits and thieves!" Sanctus said. "Quickly! Go!"

"Yes..." The woman sighed, stopping herself from giving him a deadly glare as she turned into sand and disappeared.

As she flew away, the man glanced through the window of his huge temple-like house, specially built after the ancient inhabitants of the Goldsand Desert, long gone.

"Was that really a dragon, here?" He wondered. "And who were those people flying around? Ugh... My peaceful utopia is now filled with bandits and whatever those were! Can't even get a good night's sleep now! Hey, you three, what are you waiting for? Dance! Move your bodies! I'm bored!" He groaned, throwing a cup of wine to three young girls sitting in the end of the room wearing revealing dancer clothes.

The girls weakly started to dance, their faces filled with fear, as their necks and legs were shackled with golden chains...

"Yes! Yes! Move your body, you little whores! Tonight I'll be having a lot of fun breaking you all..." The disgusting bastard licked his lips.

Little did he know of the beings that had arrived on his "utopia".

Chapter 817 Exploring The City

(Maria's POV)

Once we arrived in the city, the first thing we did was beat a bunch of Giant Sandworms that were trying to destroy the whole place. We were honestly shocked when we saw that happening literally out of

nowhere, as if someone had summoned them. For a few seconds, it made me think there could have been some baddie attacking this place.

However, after encountering with nobody else than miss Catarina, who had now become a legend in the sand lands and a little girl that looked an awful lot like Ash and the twins, we moved to a much more peaceful and darker area of the city, walking through the alleyways by Silva's guidance while hiding our identities with black and brown robes wrapped around our bodies.

Ding!

[You and your Party have defeated [Giant Sandworm: Lv90 (B+ Rank)] x18 [Giant Sandworm King (A Rank)] x3!]

[You earned 12.000.000 EXP]

[EXP]: [27.000.000/90.000.000]

Hmm, still not enough! Where can I find more of these wormy bastards to kill? They gave some mighty EXP! 500k each and the kings were 1 million each! Hot damn.

"Anyways, is it alright what we did? We didn't even talk with the guards about this..." Emeraldine wondered. "They must be confused."

"The guards? Don't worry about them, they're all corrupt bastards. They tried to rape and kill this little girl." Catarina said.

"E-Eh? So... I see." Emeraldine sighed, feeling a bit detached. "Then I shouldn't really care." She crossed her arms; her change of attitude was surprisingly fast.

"So what exactly happened? And why are you here?" Lucifer wondered, questioning Catarina.

"I can't be here now? I'm free to go anywhere. The desert was just calling me, the golden sands... The people in trouble, this is a place goodie two shoes like you guys never visit is filled with so much suffering. To redeem myself a bit for what I used to do when I was alive, I wanted to help out the people in need."

"How nice and benevolent of you." Laughed Partner. "Did you get the "Hero" Title or something now?"

"I don't think that's something you can get so easily, Partner, actually-" Jonathan was going to explain how to get the hero blessing but was quickly interrupted by the sound of a door below the sand opening, as the little Silva invited everyone inside.

"Here! It's in here!" Said Silva. "This is where my friends live..."

"Oh, I see! Sounds cool!" Nyx said. "Like a secret lair!"

lightsNovel ?om "You do get it!" Silva nodded, quickly making friends with my daughter. "Let's go inside, Nyx!"

"Okay! Do you have meat down there?" Nyx wondered, following Silva, and getting inside the dark depths without a care of the world.

"Dare to explain me what's up with that little girl?" Wondered Catarina.

"Let's catch up when we're down there." I said. "There's a lot to talk about, hahaha... So do you know this place?"

"Nope, first time being here too- I mean, I've wandered through this city a few times, mostly hunting down rotten people, helping poor people, the usual." Catarina shrugged.

"I don't know her but she's already sounding kind of awesome." Said Tear, giggling.

"I guess she was always quite the badass Vampire girl herself." I laughed, as we made our way into the dark underground.

We were greeted by what seemed to be the ruins of an ancient underground temple, now completely drowned in the sand, there was... sand everywhere, pretty much. Some spiderwebs over here and there, and it was dark and dry, my type of place.

The architecture was made out of black stone, which seemed to be a material named "Onyx Stone" and had quite the good durability, further information using my Analysis told me this place was called "Abandoned Ruins of the Ancient Gerophyteles".

And it was a Dungeon?!

Well, a D Rank Dungeon, so it wasn't much of a threat, but a dungeon below the city? That still sounds a bit dangerous... And these kids are using this place as their hideout? Damn, they're pretty cool, not gonna lie.

As we followed Silva and Nyx walking downstairs, we were greeted with many presences at the end of the stairs.

"Silva's back!" A kid screamed.

"She's back?!"

"Did she brought the stone?"

"What was that commotion?"

"Eep! She brought another girl?!"

"Aw come on! Another mouth to feed?!"

Several kids gathered around Silva and Nyx, quickly noticing Silva didn't brought any crystal, and then got really angry at her.

"You didn't brought the crystal!"

"Where is it? You never stole it?"

"Without that we won't have any money! You failed your entrance test."

"Hey, don't be rude with her!" Nyx said, stepping forwards. "Silva's hungry, do you have any food?"

"And who are you, scaled brat?"

"Fuck off!"

The slightly older kids tried to push Nyx away, someone tried to actually drag her hair down, but I didn't had to worry. Nyx was so durable nobody could ever move her. It probably felt like trying to push a wall.

"W-Wha...?"

"She's really tough..."

"Oi! Is the boss here already- Uwaaaah?!"

It took them a little while to realize we were all just walking downstairs, almost a dozen people at that! The kids started running away like little bugs when you lift a huge rock.

"Hahaha! Don't be intimidated, kids, we're not here to hurt anybody. We're in your side." I said. "...I think."

"You're on our side?! Silva, who the fuck did you brought here?!" Suddenly, a kid around his fifteen years, probably the oldest here, with brown skin and black hair stepped in. "They all look suspicious! I bet we're going to get sent to the damn labs again! Fuck! I'm going to fucking kill you, you stupid brat!" The guy quickly ran towards Silva.

"Wait, please wait a bit." I sighed, using my shadows to wrap around his body. His eyes suddenly became red, as he tried to fight back using some sort of miasmic powers.

"Nah, that won't work." I laughed. "Anyways, calm down, I said we're in your side. Now tell me more about these "labs"..."

Chapter 818 The Lost Children

After a lot of explanations, clarifications, and giving the kids a lot of tasty food, we got a bit more of their trust. It also helped Catarina had become some sort of legend in the desert, and with her reputation, the oldest kid of this group, named Fabian, ended trusting us much better.

"I formed this band because we had nowhere to go, and we always had to hide." Sighed Fabian. "Sorry... if I got too violent, it is hard to control my emotions... sometimes. For a moment I thought Silva betrayed us."

"Sorry Fabian... T-The guards tricked me and gave me food, and I couldn't resist because I was very hungry... And then they took away the stone a-and they almost... they almost..."

Silva recalled those memories and started weeping. My little Nyx sat next to her and hugger her shoulders, trying to comfort her even if a little bit. My daughter was certainly a little angel.

"Hahh... Don't worry about that, sorry, Silva. I shouldn't had jumped on you." Sighed Fabian. "It just that... It reminded me of the time it actually happened when a friend sold us out... And half of the group was captured."

"It's fine, we can all be friends now!" Nyx smiled. "Let's beat down the baddies!"

"Hahaha, you're sure cheerful but you don't look any older than Silva." Fabian laughed. "Actually you look much tinier, are you a baby?"

"No baby!" Nyx said angrily. In fact, she was indeed a baby. "I'm strong... I beat baddies."

"Really? Have you beaten baddies?" Silva asked innocently.

"Yesh! I beat the worms, did you not see? I can bring phantom dragon frens to fight, we combine, and go boom! Kaboom! Destruction!" Said Nyx with a huge smile while eating a meat sandwich.

"I didn't see anything..." Silva said, a bit disappointed.

"I-I'll show you!" Nyx said while nodding. "Whenever baddies show up..."

.com "Well, see? My little girl got your back!" I smiled proudly. "Anyways, now that you all have your bellies full, it seems your minds are much clearer. First of all, is this dungeon active?"

"It is." Said Fabian. "We've been living in this dungeon for a while... As long as I remember. Any of us that had tried braving the sands was found dead later on by guards or caravans. We're stuck here, even when the labs where we were being experimented at are so close by."

"That's a pity..." Lucifer sighed. "This Dungeon, is it spread across the entire city? And about that lab... Are you all kids from there too? All... experimented?"

"Yeah." Fabian nodded. "Security there is tight, but because they keep giving us crazy powers, sometimes someone make a huge explosion and we escape... Though, all of us survivors are a few among all the ones that had died from the experiments. Every day I remember seeing dozens of corpses, most of the time of kids no older than Silva."

"..." I remained in silence while clenching my fists. "What... do they do with these corpses? And their souls? Since I entered this place that I haven't sensed a single one. There's no way they're not using them for something.

"I-I have no idea..." Fabian sighed. "We just know that... there are unspeakable horrors that we've only heard. Monstrous screams, the sounds of creatures moving... Ugh, my head. Just remember the rotten smell of that place makes me want to puke."

"It's fine, that's enough for now." Emeraldine sighed, embracing Fabian with some revitalizing light. "It is quite obvious what we'll do now, but it would be better if we can secure your safety first, before anything."

"Hmmm, you kids could come along with Maria." Said Catarina. "She got a place, a village to the frozen south, where all kinds of people that she rescues gather. Former slaves, oppressed tribes, and victims like you, and undead, lots of those."

"Undead?!" Fabian asked.

"Yeah, there are Undead." I laughed. "I'm actually a ghost! Wooooh!" I became slightly translucent. Not only Fabian but everyone else in the room panicked.

"S-She's really a ghost, Fabian?!"

"W-What the hell?!"

"A ghost like that girl, Spectra?"

"First time I see someone do that though! I don't remember anybody like her..."

"Amazing, s-so you're a ghost, okay." Fabian sighed. "You... Do you really intend to do what you're talking about though? Our city... this place, since that damn Sanctus became the Lord that it has gone to the shitter these last years. Those red eyed bastards indiscriminately kidnap kids now, and use us as experiments for the monstrosities they make... We don't have anywhere to escape, nor we are strong

enough to fight back against them... Those red eyed bastards, I've seen them kill one of us with a wave of their hands, cut to pieces in a second. No matter how much we level up, we can't face them."

"The Vampires in this place seem especially rotten." Lucifer sighed. "I guess there's little point in feeling pity for them then, even less have mercy." He showed his draconic claws.

"Yeah." I nodded. "We'll do everything we said we'll do, right, Catarina? You're up for it too?"

"Sure." Catarina nodded. "I've been planning to do something, but my strength was never enough, at most I could come here, save some lives, fuck some bastards, and get out before the big shots caught me... It has been such life for a while, I've been trying my best to level up and get stronger on my own, but it is a hard and slow process, especially in this vast desert."

"You've been doing more than enough." Emeraldine smiled. "My view of you has changed a lot, Catarina, you're truly a heroic woman."

"Even I, who was labeled as a hero, would admit defeat before your heroism." Jonathan said, bowing his head.

"I-I well- Just who is this dumbass anyways?" Asked Catarina, looking at the handsome blonde man that seemed so out of place in a team of monsters... Well, except Emeraldine, but even she had wings.

"Hey, don't call my Jonathan a dumbass, he might be a bit silly, but he has such a nice heart." I said, giving him a head pat.

"Hahaha! It's fine, I am quite a stupid person for all the mistakes I've committed through my life." Jonathan sighed. "Such words are only the truth at the end."

"I guess I'll explain..." I sighed.

"W-Wait, I know you!" Fabian said. "Guys, isn't he that... the Hero of Sunlight?! They said he was blonde, with golden eyes, white and gold armor, and that huge sword!"

"The Hero of Sunlight!"

"No way!"

"So you are really a hero!"

"Maybe we'll really be saved?"

I can't believe they started believing us more for Jonathan from all people! Well, I guess he does indeed has a strong Charisma with his words and presence. Can't believe I scored myself such a hot and handsome stud myself.

Anyways, after explaining Catarina about Jonathan's case and then about Tear, things finally became much clearer for her.

"I see... So the Frost Queen was finally defeated, huh? And to top it all, you got yourselves a cute hero that was actually our boyfriend when you were alive!" Catarina said with a giggle. "Well, Lucifer, how does it feels for your girl to have another man?"

"Eh?! He hasn't been accepted yet!" Lucifer said angrily. "And... Well, she can do whatever she wants. I'll always remain loyal to her, but she doesn't necessarily has to."

"Please don't make this more confusing for him." I sighed. "I am still trying to organize everything that has happened, even after a long while since I remembered my memories and everything else. I still lack a good chunk of them, which I might regain when I find my brother, who should be in this desert,

somewhere. And as of Jonathan, he betrayed the church and helped us kill the other heroes that had grown corrupted with power and the powers of the Evil God's Fragments too. Looks like both the church and the vampires have this power as their ace."

"As of now, they probably still think I died." Sighed Jonathan. "However, I do remember there were many new candidates and trainees that had received blessings from the gods... There might be more heroes in the making, even if no Summoner has appeared in a long while, the bloodline of the heroes of ancient times remain within the humans of this continent. Just like I inherited the powers of one of my ancestors, many others could. I'll help in anything I can, after all, I've realized the misgivings and corruption of the church long ago, and like an idiot, I played along, it is my time to repent and help the one I truly love. Even if she does not love me back anymore, I will be happy as long as I can help her."

"Oh my, what a devoted man." Catarina teased me. "You better not waste him, alright? Or I might end up stealing him instead..."

"M-My heart is only for... M-Maria..." Jonathan suddenly blushed a bit. "Sorry..."

"Hahaha! I was just joking! Geez! For being a man over on his early thirties you sure look like a young, embarrassed boy!" Catarina laughed her ass off.

"Alright, enough teasing for now." I sighed, crossing my arms. "For now..."

"How about you plan what to do deeper in the dungeon? We've got a small corner that is our village. There used to be more kids, but we're around forty now..." Fabian suggested.

"You're too many! Why didn't you tell me before?" I sighed. "Alright, let's go! We can plan things out better over there." I nodded.

Like that, Fabian led us deeper into the dungeon. We learned this dungeon spawned a variety of monsters. There were among the weaker F to E Rank monsters, we found Mud Slimes, Big Rats, and Poison Boas, which the kids sometimes hunted.

However, the Rats and Poison Boas had poisonous meat, so they couldn't eat them unless they had someone with purification, but sadly the last kid with it was taken away, the girl they called "Spectra", she was a sweet girl with phantasmal abilities and healing magic.

.com Lastly, the D Rank Monsters were actually Undead! They were Mummies! Actual mummies, dried up zombies! Mostly wore bronze armor and held dusty weapons, they were probably the remains of this ancient civilization. I think you should take a look at lights.com

Fabian said they mostly hide from the mummies, or trick them, they were quite slow and stupid. I tried controlling them, but they couldn't be controlled with my powers, as I constantly got a weird message.

[You cannot control the Dead that is already below the control of another Master of Undead.]

[You cannot control the Dead that is already below the control of another Master of Undead.]

[You cannot control the Dead that is already below the control of another Master of Undead.]

At the end we had to kill them as we moved through, and once dead, the souls were instantly sucked somewhere else, so I couldn't even make them into new soldiers! I guess the drops were slightly valuable for normal people like the kids, so they happily looted them.

Fabian mentioned an old tale saying that in the depths of this pyramid-shaped ruins, there's a powerful "Ancient King" sealed, controlling the mummies, and constantly making them spawn.

"So you were also victims of those vampires, but farther in this continent? So nowhere is truly safe from those monsters..." Fabian sighed as he heard Takeshi and Laura's tales.

"It was thanks to mama that we were able to break free and have our revenge." Said Takeshi. "Since then, we've been traveling with her and having adventures! Our powers have developed quite a lot..."

"Well, we're a bit different than you, we were created from the beginning as Homunculus, and our souls naturally surged as our beings became "alive", or something." Laura sighed.

"So you were created, not kidnaped..." Fabian sighed. "It must have been hard."

"Yeah, we were made with the pieces... of others." Sighed Takeshi. "Maybe that's something they're trying to do with all the corpses? Ugh..."

"If they're trying to make Homunculus, we have to stop them. All the failed experiments became monsters, trapping the souls of innocents inside on perpetual agony." Said Laura.

"My friends..." Fabian clenched his fists, perhaps recalling his old comrades. "Well, we're here." He said, opening a mantle blocking the way to a long corridor with small rooms, where many kids showed up, glancing at us as they did their things.

"Huh? Fabian brought a bunch of people?!"

"Are we under attack?!"

"Silva's back!"

"What's going on?"

And they were all kids like Fabian and Silva... Just how many victims have those Vampires created?

Chapter 820 Feeding The Starving Kids

"For now, how about we distribute some food? All of you look like you're starving, honestly." I sighed. "Emeraldine, can you make some-"

"Already doing it!" Emeraldine said, spreading vines of Yggdrasil plants around the floor, as the kids all saw in shock as countless fruits popped out of the vines.

Apples, oranges, bananas, grapes, and small berries popped out of the vines magically. Naturally, the power to summon roots and branches of a legendary tree such as Yggdrasil also allowed her to just as easily summon food, in the shape of fruits and vegetables.

Her Divinity of Life and Nature wasn't going to not allow her to do that! It was surprising how all the kids stood still for a few seconds before instantly grow insane, taking away the fruits and beginning to eat them frantically.

"No need to fight, there's many more where that came from." Emeraldine smiled, happily giving them all more and more fruits, so many that fighting for them was completely pointless.

"So much fruit!"

"Ahh, they're so sweet!"

"W-Who is she?!"

"Are we dreaming? Is this a dream?!"

"I've never filled my belly so much!"

"Wow!" Silva said in surprise, taking out an apple and munching it. "S-So juicy!"

"Auntie Emeraldine is awesome!" Nyx said with a giggle, eating an orange, without even peeling it.

"Just enjoy yourselves, kids." I sighed. "Fabian, is there anybody older than you?"

"There were... Spectra was around 17, but she stayed behind while we ran away last time... Been over a month since then." Fabian sighed. "There was Silvan, Gretta, and Hans, they were all around her ago too... All gone."

"So you're really the last "older kid" here..." I sighed, as he led us to a large room that was where he rested. There was barely anything here other than a few pieces of furniture, nasty clothing sparingly thrown around, and a made-up bed out of a sand-filled pillow.

"Yeah, I've been trying my best to protect everyone. I am the highest level here at Level 40... But that barely amounts to anything against those monsters." Fabian sighed. "I can at most kill some guards, but their magic weapons can get me really badly if I am attacked by many at the same time. My only skills are... using this miasma thing to poison people, and sometimes, shape it like this, a spear. That's it..." He showcased us his strength.

"Well, we won't be employing your strength anyways." I said. "You should stay here for now, seems like the dungeon should be... decently safe, at the very least. If you've been living here for so long."

"Do they know about this place too?" Lucifer wondered.

"No, the dungeon is really big, spreading all below the city. There are many corridors and floors, rooms, and more. There's Wall Mimics that sometimes block passages, there's a huge one that is unknowingly protecting us from being detected from the rest of the passages that interconnect the whole dungeon."

"Wall Mimics, huh." Partner said. "I wonder if they're tasty? Do they have any meat?"

"Huh? I-I don't know..." Fabian muttered in confusion. "They're too strong for us to take down." "I think you should take a look at [lights.com](https://www.lights.com)

"Is that the only thing you can think about?!" Lucifer reprimanded her. "Anyways, Fabian. Does the lab connect to this dungeon?"

"...Yes." Fabian nodded. "Here, this is the map we've got... In here, this is a passage that leads to the lab... It is really far away, to the fourth floor from here. It usually takes three hours of walk. And it is filled with dangerous Monsters, thousands of Mummies are wandering around there. Not a place we can step on once we run away." He showed us a map and indicated everything.

"I can teleport all of you to my village through Shadow Teleportation, though I first need to set up a small magic circle back home. Though, are you willing to leave this place? It could bring you all to instant safety." I said.

"I-I don't know..." Fabian sighed. "I want to stay and fight, even if I am weak. If you're storming the lab, I'm coming! A-And you can't stop me! I need... to find Spectra, and everyone else... I'm worried! Maybe send everyone else, not everyone here can fight either... But I have to stay..." I could tell by his way of talking that he was mustering the courage to say those bold words. It was quite admirable.

"Huh..." I sighed. "Well, what can I do about that? It's your life and it's your choice. I'll protect you with my magic, and we'll find your girlfriend. Might as well help you level up too, later." I giggled.

"A-Are you sure about this?! He's a kid!" Lucifer said.

"And Nyx isn't a kid?" I raised an eyebrow.

"W-Well, she's a dragon kid." Lucifer crossed his arms, looking away.

"Well, if he's really bold enough to do that, then who we are to stop him." Partner laughed slightly teasingly, giving the kid a head pat. "Now! Let's do-"

RUMBLE!

Suddenly, the dungeon started to tremble. My senses became alert as I sensed several masses of large quantities of Mana approaching at high speed, traveling across the dungeon's passages as if they knew exactly where we were this whole time.

Could it be our own presences?! We do have a shit ton of Mana after all!

.com CRAAAASH!

The sound of the Wall Mimic being destroyed and shattered into pieces echoed in the far end of the corridor, as Emeraldine came running here.

"Someone's coming!" She said.

"[Shadow Domain]!" I expanded my shadows, swiftly attempting to save all the children as I flew outside, seconds before seeing a group of Vampires emerge, their claws nearing the closest child that was too shocked to move.

"We've finally found you, lab rats!" Roared one of the Vampires, his claws about to grab the small child, no older than Silva, and about to rip him into pieces.

TRUUUM...!

However, a huge wall made of roots grew faster than I could reach the child, protecting him from the vampire's vicious claws as he hit the wall head-first.

CRAAASH!