

D. of Pride 851

Chapter 851- Fiend Inheritance (2)

A sword was plunged into his chest forming a pool of blood underneath him. As he gasped for breath, his life waned with each passing moment.

Compared to him, Blake who was bathed in the blood of his enemy that formed a crimson mist that swirled around him like a shroud of death, looked extremely forlorn and solitary.

And although his body was equally battered and bruised, his armour rent asunder by Marshall Cavalier's powerful attacks he stood standing with laboured breaths. His figure which stood straight as a sword refused to budge down even at this moment.

The observing allies and enemies alike felt a sense of dread and fear as they watched him slowly finish off his opponent. His eyes which burned with a fierce intensity, reflecting the pure ruthlessness of his soul as he cut down his enemy without mercy thus carving his name into the annals of history of the kingdom.

Nobody dared to utter a peep, or stand against him. Blake's power was undeniable, his skill in battle unmatched. The power he had shown caused the enemy to think twice before challenging him again.

"Blake are you alright?"

Frida and his other allies carefully walked towards him. Their eyes which looked at him carried concern and a foreign emotion as if they were looking at a familiar yet unfamiliar person.

Thanks to getting completely caught up in the heat of the battle, Blake's features seemed to have merged with the blood mist surrounding him. This kind of transformation was new even for his teammates who had been with him and seen him fight numerous battles.

"Yeah, I am alright. Sorry, I have made you all worry"

When Blake turned to face them, the ruthless and savage aura quickly disappeared along with his transformation, causing him to revert back to his original self.

"You idiot, why do you have to always take on the most troublesome opponent yourself" Frida berated, her figure flashed and she quickly dug herself into his embrace.

"Haha" he laughed winching in pain from all the injuries he suffered. The next second, his eyes scanned over the battlefield and took in everything that was going around.

With Marshall Cavalier gone, there were only a few people left in the opposing army who were actually a threat. That said, the kingdom's army should be able to secure a victory without abnormal existences like the marshal and former knight captain as opponents.

"Even though I won against the Marshall, don't let your guard down everyone. The enemy is still there" Blake cautioned.

Even though he had just snatched victory from the hands of an incredibly tough opponent, he did not revel in the moment of triumph. He knew that the battle was far from over. There were still enemies to be vanquished, and challenges yet to be faced.

The biggest of all was the General who was the commander in chief of Blakthorn's forces and the highest level person present on the battlefield.

At this current moment, the princess was facing him; however, from the look of the situation up there, things didn't seem as positive as when they were sieging Castledor.

The general was not like the Duke of Montford. Not only did the latter possess many unconventional attacks and skills, like the greyish black energy for example, but they were also extremely high level individual.

The General's level was far higher than even the strongest man of the kingdom, Benny Beckerman. Needless to say, the battle with such an opponent won't be easy.

What's more, as long as he stood standing, it did not matter if he took down the Marshall or the guard commanders' group defeated the former Knight captain. As long as the General still stood, all of their efforts would have been for nothing.

On the battlefield, a single powerful opponent can dictate the tide of the entire battlefield. That is to say, as long as the general wasn't defeated, there was no meaning to their victory.

Although I can't defeat the general for you, I can still hold down the other enemies and reduce the casualties on our side.

Thinking so in his head, Blake ordered his teammates "I'm sure you guys haven't had your fill right? Let's go and cull down some enemies".

Seeing the person still talking about fighting after the scare he just gave them, Wyot and the others smiled bitterly; nonetheless, they still nodded their heads. A heated expression on their face; no matter what one says, a battlefield was the perfect opportunity for one to level up.

With so many opponents here, it was practically the perfect place to grind levels other than the dungeon.

With a steely determination, Blake followed behind his teammates. It wouldn't be long before victory and defeat would be decided for once and for all.

If the general won, the kingdom of Ellesmere would forever disappear from the maps of Althaea and its people would be subdued and ruled under a new king. If Cynthia won, then her name would be passed into the stuff of legend.

She would become the first female ruler of this land and the kingdom of Ellesmere would usher into a new era. The fate of the kingdom hung on that delicate shoulder of hers.

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Up in the sky, Cynthia took a deep breath and suppressed the exhaustion that welled up inside her body. Sustaining the Beast Inheritance skills not to mention using so many high ranking Lost Ancient tier skills was mentally and physically extremely straining.

If not for the fact that Leo was aiding her, her body would have already collapsed from using the Beast Inheritance skill a long time ago.

That said, even though she could feel her body screaming for rest and muscles tearing, she did not turn off the Beast Inheritance. The reason for that was simple, and that was her opponent was still standing.

As long as he wasn't defeated, she couldn't remove her beast inheritance state.

"Haha, I can see that you are already at your limit. Why don't you give up already, it would be easier for you? You can't defeat me"

The General mocked, a berserk amount of mana carrying along a greyish black miasma formed into a gigantic fist as it slammed into Cynthia.

The latter materialised five elements which revolved in an anticlockwise manner before hurling it towards the oncoming fist. Right before the two attacks collided, the five orbs emitted intense light and formed a distinct array in the sky.

BOOOM... a powerful shockwave enough to distort the space and cause all kinds of unnatural phenomena, erupted from their clash.

After cancelling out the General's attack, Cynthia sneered in response "What are you talking about? I am still perfectly fine. On the contrary, you are the one who looks quite haggard. That peculiar energy I am sure there is a huge drawback for utilising such strength"

"How long can you keep it up? And besides, how can I give up now when we are this close to winning this war?".

It was just as she said, the tide of the battle was totally in control of the kingdom's army now. With the threat of Marshall and former Knight Captain gone, the soldier's morale soared and they started fighting back fiercely.

The adventurers from the tower town took on the difficult task of handling the powerful adversaries in the enemy ranks as such, all the soldiers had to do was fight the ordinary Tainted Knights and the Hellfire Artillery Mages.

"You!!"

The General's expression distorted in rage when he saw the cheeky smile on her face. The death of Marshall Cavalier and the Perfect Tainted Commander was a sore spot for him. He wanted to help them; however, the woman before him proved to be far more difficult to handle than he thought.

What's more, the beast she got the inheritance from, was quite powerful as the attacks she used were quite tricky and difficult to avoid. Even he who was using the Gift that 'lord' bestowed on him, was having a tough time against her.

If not for that, he wouldn't have allowed them to defeat the two. The loss of Marshall Cavalier and a Perfect Tainted Commander was a hard one to account for. What's more, they died under his watch.

Even if he turned the situation around and won the war by himself, the loss they suffered was too big to write off. When he returns back to Blackthorn he won't be able to face his Majesty.

"Dammit, it's all because of that damn remnant consciousness. If not for him, how would it be possible for your soldiers to be a match for our forces?"

The general grunted feeling extremely vexed. Just right before his death, the man who was the knight captain of this kingdom before becoming a perfect tainted commander, utilised his last bit of strength to stop the tainted energy from flowing into the bodies of the Tainted knights and tainted commanders.

Thus causing their power which had strengthened unnaturally, to return to its previous level.

This move of the knight captain hurt the forces of the Blackthorn very much as the tide of the battle completely shifted after this. If not for that, the kingdom's army wouldn't have been able to suppress the Blackthorn forces the way they did now.

"Hmmm... I don't understand it very well but it looks like the knight captain, even at this deathbed did a favour for our kingdom" Cynthia smiled.

"Hmph, don't think you have won just because you all took out Marshall Cavalier and a Perfect Tainted Commander. I am still here and I can assure you that you will find me very different from those useless piece of trash"

ROARR...

Chapter 852- Ancient Beast Soul

ROARR...

[Fiend Inheritance]

The general gave a loud war cry and roused his aura even further. Greyish black miasma which was far denser than before, released out of his body and covered the sky.

A faint pressure that gave one a revolting and stifling feeling, descended onto the place. The sky became dark and an ominous chill spread through the surroundings. Anyone who was exposed to this chill that generated from their very instinct of life, made them feel very uncomfortable.

In the air, dense greyish black energy released out of the general as they wiggled and twisted in the air. Then in the next second with a swift motion, they agglomerated together becoming weird grey markings and tunnelled into the skin of the general.

If one looked at him right now, they would be able to see that his skin had turned grey with peculiar markings all around his body. His hair turned white and his clothing quickly became bleak losing all colour.

It was not just appearance that was affected, even the space around him vaguely took on a grayscale colour. Looking at him, it would seem like he was a person of monochrome who came out of a black and white picture.

His very presence rejected all the colours of the world.

The changes were drastic and swift giving Cynthia no chance to even get shocked.

Clench... The general clenched his hand and gave an excited smile "Next I will show you that you are not the only one who has got an inheritance".

Whoosh... his figure disappeared before his voice was yet to even fade. At the same instant, Cynthia's eyes contracted to their limits and a hurried warning sounded inside her heart.

"Cynthia be careful, this person, he has employed a method that bears resemblance to the Beast Inheritance skill. At his point, his stats and everything have drastically increased".

Hearing Leo's shout, the graveness in her eyes increased even further. Five coloured elemental orbs floated around her body and quickly formed a five coloured shield.

BANG... just as it formed a dull rumbling noise rang out and the general's fist collided with the shield causing intense ripples to appear on it. Although the shield was able to absorb the force, it was unable to stop the invading greyish black miasma as cracks swiftly started appearing on the shield.

"Quickly get out of there, the Five Coloured Sacred Shield won't be able to last for long" Leo cautioned.

Cynthia immediately made haste and dodged the attack before it could breach through her shield. Right afterwards, two violet white claws materialised in the air and her counterattack began.

However, unlike before when the General had to take caution against her attacks, this time he simply ignored her attacks.

With a clench of his fist, he threw a simple punch without any fancy or flashy techniques to it. Though that seemingly insignificant punch contained enough power to disintegrate the claws that Cynthia materialised.

"What is going on? Even if utilised an ancient skill to boost his power, that kind of increase in power is too ridiculous" she spoke uneasiness apparent in her voice.

"It is because his control over that energy has improved. Up until now, he had been using it in a crude and immature manner. However, after he condensed that energy and absorbed it, his control over it has significantly improved. As I thought, that energy he possesses not only bears resemblance to 'them' but is very similar to them. However, how could that be, they should have been all..."

Leo's voice suddenly quietened down at the end of his sentence.

"I'm no match for him at his current state. Leo increase the output of the beast inheritance"...

"What? But if I do that your body won't be able to handle it. It is barely able to hold even ten percent of my power and given your current condition, it is suicidal to think about even trying to handle any further" The beast reasoned.

"Then what do you suggest I should do? If I don't take him out, then with his power he will easily be able to turn the tides of the war and all of our efforts, hardship and casualties up until now, would be for nothing. I have to hold him down here"

Cynthia's voice was resolute. She had already determined herself to incur a bitter cost in return for defeating the general.

Leo wanted to say something; however, when he saw the resolve in the girl's eyes, he could only gulp those words down and sigh.

"Don't tell me that I didn't warn you before. Try to endure for as long as possible, when you can't bear it, tell me. I will quickly remove the beast transformation"

Saying that, he was just about to increase the output of his inheritance when soft glitters of light started emitting out of Cynthia's body. These small glitters of light were like small speckles of liquid as they quickly disappeared inside her body as soon as they touched her.

Her injuries quickly healed, the texture of her skin returned to normal and her exhaustion quickly disappeared. Not only that, as the speckles of light kept on falling onto her body, she could feel that her body was slowly getting stronger and her mana reserves recovering at a rapid speed.

What was going on?

"This is... Spirit Restoration Enchantment"...

"Spirit what?"

Although Cynthia was unable to recognise the skill used, how could Leo an ancient beast not be able to recognise it?

"It is an extremely rare branch of magic that is different from the mystical energy. Only spirits or those who have made contract with spirits are able to use spirit magic" he explained.

"That said, even among the spirit magic, a Spirit Restoration Enchantment is a skill that only higher ranking spirits or above are able to use. For it to appear on your body, do you know someone who has made a contract with a higher ranking spirit in this world and is willing to help you?"...

His question caused confusion to appear on Cynthia's face. This was the first time she was hearing about spirit magic as such even if he asked her if she knew a person who could cast spirit magic there was no way she could answer.

That being said, if spirit magic was extremely rare and a different branch of magic that could even make someone like Leo surprised, a couple of figures did come to her mind.

If it were the people of that man, it was possible. Cynthia looked down, her eyes scanned the battlefield and quickly spotted a figure standing not very far away from her while observing their battle.

Just as she thought, it was the doing of that woman. The woman Cynthia was looking at was none other than Annette.

Leo followed her gaze and quickly understood the situation.

"I see, so it's her. No wonder she was able to cast spirit magic, the fluctuation I felt from her body did indeed feel familiar"...

"What do you mean?"...

Leo did not beat around the bush and directly spoke his suspicions "She is a spirit and not any ordinary spirit but a high ranking spirit at the very least. To be able to summon a being like her, I wonder how that demon achieved it"

"In any case, this is a good thing. With Spirit restoration Enchantment cast on you, I can increase the output of the beast inheritance without worrying about harming you in return. At the current level that your body is, it should be easily be able to handle at least 30% of my power" Leo remarked.

A tyrannical white light mixed with traces of violet surged out of Cynthia's body with an intensity of a tide. It spread out like a hungry lion and quickly bit down at the greyish black energy covering the sky.

The power of the white light caused the previously oppressive greyish black miasma to swiftly retreat as if meeting a predator.

After the white energy scared the other, it covered more than half of the sky, illuminating the battlefield with its sacred glow.

"What is going on?"

The General arched his brows. His attack had just been recoiled by that tyrannical white light as if cowed by its sheer might.

Just until a moment ago, he was completely in control of the battle, overpowering his enemy with each of his attacks. Yet just as his power surged, the opponent also employed some kind of unusual means.

"Hmph, I don't know what you are trying to do but it's useless. In front of the gift of that lord, any tactic or skill you use is useless" he snorted.

The peculiar greyish marking on his body squirmed causing the entire area around him to become greyscale. The rate at which the peculiar greyish black energy was invading the space also increased.

ROARR... However, just as he was preparing for another attack, a profound transformation occurred in the atmosphere above. The white light, having pushed back the greyish black energy, expanded to fill the void left behind, creating a vast expanse of luminous energy.

Within this expanse, faint yet discernible, the outline of an enormous lion materialized, its form pulsating with raw power. Bathed in a resplendent white light that seemed to emanate from its very being it emanated unparalleled grandeur.

Its massive form pulsed with a divine vitality, exuding an aura of sacredness and awe-inspiring power.

The ethereal lion was adorned with intricate patterns of violet stripes that seemed to dance and shift with every movement. Its mane appeared to ripple and flow like waves on a primordial sea, while its eyes gleamed with a wisdom that transcended mortal understanding.

Chapter 853- Seven Kings Assemble

Despite its intangible nature, the lion exuded a palpable aura of authority, commanding reverence from all who beheld it.

As it gazed out upon the battlefield with eyes that gleamed like molten gold, there was a sense of ancient wisdom that permeated the place. It gave others a feeling that those eyes had borne witness to eons of time.

With the appearance of the massive ethereal lion, the battlefield turned completely silent. A sense of reverence and awe welled up in the hearts of those who witnessed the being.

For the soldiers entrenched in the midst of battle with chaos and carnage surrounding them, the sight was nothing short of miraculous. Some could scarcely believe their eyes, their initial shock giving way to a profound sense of awe.

Others fell to their knees, their hearts swelling with a mixture of fear and wonder as they beheld the spectacle above. And some stared in stunned silence, their minds struggling to comprehend the spectacle in front of them.

The sheer scale of white light was so vast that it covered half of the sky of the battlefield dwarfing their concerns and reminding them how insignificant their own existence was.

"Cynthia concentrate and converge all that power into the beast image"

On Leo's advice, Cynthia used all of her attention and focus to stir the surging white light into the vacuum of light where the lion was.

ROARR... as all the white light surged inside, the lion gave another world shaking roar and in front of the stunned eyes of many, it extended its claw that could dwarf out the land and everything and slammed it towards the general.

The latter felt a surge of fear that he hadn't felt in a long while, well up in his heart. The intangible pressure from the attack had already locked onto him causing him unable to dodge.

His senses screamed and perspiration dripped down his body. The power of the attack that the princess threw at him was at a whole other level where even he could sense a whiff of death from it.

"How can this be? No, there is no way I can lose. I am the General of the second army of His Majesty. Now that I have even used the gift of that lord, there is no way I am going to lose"

Summoning every ounce of courage and determination within him, the general braced himself for the impending impact, his muscles tensed and his senses heightened to their fullest extent.

He gave a loud warcry as a final bit of defiance and roused the greyish black energy around him. The greyish tattoos on his body spasmed before actually flying out his skin and agglomerating into his attack.

In a final gambit to defy his fate, the general unleashed a torrent of energy that surged forth like a raging tempest, colliding with the lion's claw in a spectacular clash of titanic forces.

BOOOOOOOOOM...

For a brief moment, everything on the battlefield was consumed in blinding light. Then came the loud to the extreme, overpowering deafening noise, wild enough to drown out all the other noise in the surrounding.

In the epic clash, clouds for dozens of miles were blown back causing the entire sky to reflect the clear view of the night sky.

The ground beneath them trembled violently as the two opposing energies clashed with unimaginable force, sending shockwaves rippling through the air and shattering the surrounding landscape.

What's more, the clash between the two attacks was so powerful that it seemed to tear at the very fabric of space itself.

As the shockwaves rippled through the air, fissures appeared in the space around where the eyes of the two attacks met, as if the very fabric of existence was straining to contain their overwhelming power.

Yet, despite the immense strain, the fabric of space held firm, swiftly healing any damage inflicted upon it. From this display of raw power, it was clear to all who witnessed it that the general and the princess had reached a realm that they could not even begin to imagine.

Their attacks had reached a level of potency that defied comprehension, threatening to reshape the very world around them with their titanic clash.

In that moment, the entire attention of the battlefield was stolen by them, the clash of this unimaginable power would decide the fate of this nation.

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While the capital of the kingdom of Ellesmere had been turned into a battlefield, back inside the Ghastly Winding Forest.

Easter Region, Tower Town, Dungeon Laplace.

Inside one of the floors...

"So this is the dungeon of that Demon of the East huh? It's not bad. If we can conquer such a territory, we can unite the entire Ghastly Winding Forest and make this place our base"

Muttered a figure feeling the dense mystical energy which was viscous enough to actually be felt in the air.

The figure was quite tall, standing well above six feet. He had long crimson hair that had been kept unkemptly, wore clothes made of high quality monster pelt and carried two large cleaver on his back.

He had a humanoid figure and one would even mistake him for one if not for the indigo horn that was protruding from the one side of his forehead.

"Quick go and tell Chief that I found the shortcut that leads to that dungeon. I don't know which floor this is, but I reckon that it definitely is quite deep given the level of monsters here"

He spoke. An aura of pure brutality and violence radiated from him. At this moment, there was a mountain of corpses underneath him, the number of which would easily reach the hundred.

The corpses were badly mangled and it was hard to even distinguish their forms. Nevertheless given their claws and tails one could tell that they were monsters. What's more, they weren't just any ordinary monsters, but infernal hounds, monsters that were C rank and above.

Among the mountain of corpses, one could even see some large size monsters there. Clearly, they were the pack leaders of the infernal hounds and were even more powerful.

Yet in front of that number and power which could even give a team of adventurers well above level 500 a tough time, lay defeated under him in a show of absolute strength and savagery.

"Understood lord Gish-Bor, we shall inform the chief immediately. He will definitely be extremely happy. The Dungeon of the East has been a growing concern for us for quite a while. If we can use this passageway, we can attack the dungeon without needing to go through all those floors"

"I'm sure it would come as quite a surprise for that demon. If we can take this concern out early and place him under our command. Our race of Black ogres will rule the Ghastly Winding Forest"

Another figure spoke. Although unlike the first one, his form resembled more of an ogre than a human.

Two crimson horns protruded from his head, indicating his identity.

"Hmph" Hearing the crimson horn's words, the indigo horn or otherwise referred to as Gish-Bor, simply snorted.

"Your ambitions are too small Giz-Wogo. If we conquer this dungeon and place that demon as our subordinate, then using the resources that can only be grown inside the dungeon, we rule a region far greater than just the Ghastly Winding forest. At that moment, we will become one of the legendary races recognised by the entire world".

His words caused a heated expression to appear on Giz-Wogo and the other crimson horns.

"Wouldn't the other seven kings get on our way? I heard that the queen of the harpies had already betrayed us. Their entire territory is empty" the latter spoke.

They had brought their army to demand an explanation from the queen of the harpies as well as search for their missing comrade, the indigo horn Gish Bolg.

However, when they invaded the territory of the Harpies which were said to be extremely treacherous and filled with dangers and powerful aerial beasts, they found it completely empty.

When they came here other than a few aerial beasts, they found nothing. Forget about a single harpy they couldn't find their shadows here. It was as if they had mysteriously disappeared.

What they found instead was this cave which led to one of the floors of the dungeon of the east. A shortcut that no one knew existed.

"What about the Seven Kings? Can't you see how great of a treasure this dungeon is? Once we conquer this dungeon and use its resources to grow ourselves, they will have no choice but to bow their heads and submit to our race if they want to survive in the end"

"As for the Harpies, it's obvious that their queen has formed an alliance with the demon and has fled inside the dungeon with all her clansmen"

Contrary to the war mongering nature of the ogres and their short temperedness, Gish-Bor analysed the situation with a calm demeanour.

It was just as he said, ever since they entered the dungeon, they were surprised by everything that they saw inside.

From the dense amount of mystical energy that pervaded the air which was double no quadruple times greater than even their homeland, natural treasures that grew like grass here to powerful monsters that guarded the realm and peculiar objects that they had never seen before.

The place was full of it.

As a race with sharp senses and a keen eye for treasures, they instantly knew which was such when they saw one.

Chapter 854- Seven Kings Assemble (2)

The dungeon they were currently in, was definitely something that went well and beyond that category to be able to nurture such treasures.

Giz-Wogo and the other crimson horns nodded their head. That's right, with the support of the dungeon, what did the Seven Kings even amount to? Once they grew stronger naturally the others would have to submit to them.

The blood of the ogres boiled as they pictured a wonderful future in their heads.

"You all, don't get too ahead of yourselves" Naturally, Gish-Bor knew what they were thinking "Taking over the dungeon won't be an easy task. It was already difficult enough to defeat the demon in his lair; however, with the addition of the harpies now, the threat that the dungeon represented grew exponentially".

That was right, since the territory of the harpies was empty, there was only one other place they could have gone to. And the evidence lay right next to them.

If the queen of the harpies and the Demon of the East had joined hands, then the subject of the matter changed completely.

"Of course, it could also be that the Queen of the harpies is controlling the demon. Given that woman's Evil Eyes and peculiar methods, I wouldn't think it past me for something like that to be the actual case".

The race of black ogres fell silent. Now that they had found the shocking news of the relocation of the harpies, the situation had changed completely.

"Hmph, what are you guys making that expression for? Even if the Demon of the East has now the aid of one of the Seven Kings, so do we. With the two kings together, taking over the dungeon won't be a big deal"

"And besides, if the dungeon has gotten stronger, then so did we. We now possess a secret weapon that none of the seven kings know" Gish-Bor commented flashing his sharp fangs.

"Glory to the Black Ogres!!"...

"Glory to the Black Ogres!!" the ogres shouted.

"Dial it down you all. Do you want the demon of this dungeon to know about us?".

The crimson horns and the other black ogres instantly shut their mouths.

"Station a few ogres to watch over the place. Giz-Wogo, you will be left in charge. Do not let anyone come in or out of this cave. The rest will come with me to report the events back to lord Gil-Garna"

Gish-Bor handed out orders. With him on the lead, the ogres exited the place, leaving only utter destruction and chaos in their wake.

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Up in the sky, or rather the ceiling that spanned for hundreds of meters up, a couple of figures with their presence completely hidden, could be seen staring down at the ground.

In the middle was a tall handsome man with pitch black hair and crimson horns protruding from his head, adorning him like a crown. He wore regal golden red clothes, and possessed heterochromatic eyes.

His pale skin compared with the fangs that intermittently flashed whenever he smiled, gave him quite a fierce and domineering look.

Who could the figure be other than Simon?

Beside him, were two women. One had tanned skin and a mesmerising body with the right amount of toned muscles and curves. She was wearing maid clothes and her peach coloured hair was tied into twin braids. Matching her hair, her peach coloured eyes glossed with an intense light.

The other woman possessed an alluring body with a skimpy dress that was made of feathers. Her beautiful features along with her bountiful curves, evoked one's desires endlessly.

The woman at this moment had her eyes closed as she faced the direction where the ogres disappeared to.

"Was it a wise choice to just let them go, My lord?" she asked.

The two women were none other than Bea and Melinda.

"Are you doubting him? If he says that it's okay to let them go, then it must be okay. It's not your place to question him" The one to answer her was Bea as she glared at the former with clear hostility in her eyes.

"Enough Bea, she is a member of our dungeon now and one of my subordinates. You both are on the same side now so stop quarrelling with each other all the time" Simon interjected feeling a little helpless.

Ever since Melinda and her clan shifted into his dungeon, the two formed a weird rivalry of sorts. At first, he thought that this was a good thing, after all, rivalry would help both the parties to grow stronger.

However, who knew that the relationship between the two would deteriorate to this point? It came to the point where the two women beside him started duking it out with their fists and skills.

What's more, the battle between the two people who were well above level 700 could be imagined. The entire lower floor trembled and the floor itself would have suffered serious damage if not for his timely intervention.

Since then, he kept the two women by his side to keep a close eye on them. However, that too seems to have the reverse effect. Forget about getting along, the hostility in their eyes and voice seems to be growing stronger day by day.

It was so dense that, it was contrarily amazing they displayed it so openly.

"I was talking to your master. Of course, I know it is his plan to let them go. I was just worried on his behalf, not like you would understand anyways" Melinda retorted.

"Huh, what did you say you tramp?" Bea cussed.

"What? You want me to repeat it?" ...

"Sigh, enough you two, this is not the time and place for you two to be quarrelling. The reason why I let them go is because I want to lure their forces here. They might think that it is a shortcut that leads directly to the dungeon. However, in reality, I opened this Phased Floor precisely to lure them in. In this regard, it can indeed be called as a shortcut"

Simon explained his reasoning behind letting the ogre army walk away even though they created such a scene on this floor.

"But master, won't bringing them directly to the 80th floor be dangerous? What if they possess some unique weapons like those adventurers from the past?" Bea raised her concern.

Expecting her to ask something like this Simon simply smiled and answered "Haha, that was a unique case and besides, I have already prepared measures for something like this happening again. Prime is onto it. Believe me, we are ready. This time the enemy won't be able to take the shortcut"

"The other reason why I am bringing them directly to the 80th floor is because I have recognised their strength. Floors 1 to 70 won't be able to stop monsters like the Seven Kings of the forest"

"And besides if they came from the front entrance, it would spell doom for the Tower Town up there. It had only just recovered from a major battle not long ago and most of their high level member had gone with Cynthia to aid her reclaim the capital back. As such there are only a few people up there who could match up to the power of the Black Ogres. And given the latter's nature, they would completely raze the tower town to the ground. It is better to avoid such a scenario".

The tower town was the source of their income and he had bigger plans for this place. As such, he couldn't let the Black ogres destroy it.

Heck, he went through a lot of trouble to free the town from the criminal syndicates. Given all the efforts he put into saving the town, there is no way he was going to let it get destroyed again.

Bea and Melinda nodded their heads finally understanding his reasoning. Although the latter was here for just over a week, she had already seen and experienced the dungeon's various extraordinary aspects.

Thus she knew how important the tower town was for the dungeon. While Bea and Melinda looked at Simon, the latter stepped forward as a wicked grin appeared on his face.

"I hadn't been too long since floors 80-99 had been set up and restructured. Everyone had worked hard to make the floors as challenging as possible. I want to find out how well they do against opponents on the level of the Seven Kings and their subordinates"

"This will be a test bed to find out the effectiveness of the bottom floors of the dungeon. It's just as well, some of the guilds have already reached the 78th Floor. Now that Laplace has become a [B] ranking dungeon, It's about time it changes too and new floors open up"

"New challenges, treasures and opportunities will attract even more adventures to our dungeon. The battle with the Seven Kings and their forces will help us understand the new floors better and which areas they need improvement in. Hehe, the enemy might think that by finding the Phased Floor they got one over us. Little do they know that I set up this Phased Floor precisely to lure them in. I am going to use them as guinea pigs to beta test the new floors for the future adventurers"

One should know that the grin on Simon's face looked extremely evil at this moment and he appeared like the very demon that he was.

Time had slowly and gradually swept away all of his gullibility, compassion and any humanity that was left within him. Simon had shed his former self like a snake shedding its skin.

In its place stood a being consumed by the darkness that lurked within, a demon in both appearance and demeanour.

Chapter 855- Seven Kings Assemble (3)

A newfound sense of confidence and power emanated from him, infusing him with certainty and conviction. Yet, beneath the surface of Simon's newfound confidence lurked a sense of arrogance that bordered on hubris.

It was a trait born of his newfound power, a belief that he was destined for greatness and that none could stand in his way. What's more this trait only seemed to grow as time passed, fueling his desire and arrogance.

Although it was not completely apparent yet, nonetheless, it was still there. Of course, these profound changes were wrought by the two fragments of pride that now resided within him.

These profound changes weren't apparent to the person it occurred to; however, to others around him, especially to his subordinates who knew him from before, his changes were crystal clear.

Nevertheless, they weren't repelled or driven off by it instead, they embraced his newfound changes with open arms, revelling in the darkness that now coursed through his veins as his new side.

No matter what or who he became, one fact did not change, and that was that he was their master and lord. As long as that fact remained, his subordinates would continue to follow him no matter what became of him with time.

As she looked at the side profile of her master, Bea clenched her hand, finding his new side weirdly enigmatic.

The next instant, her eyes glared at the woman on the other side of him who was also looking at Simon with stars in her eyes. It was obvious that she fancied him and his current demeanour enamoured her.

"It will take them some time for them to return back with their full force. I will send someone to monitor the situation on this floor. Until then, let us return back"

Saying that Simon was just about to teleport the three of them when...

"Master, please return first. I will go with Melinda to the new Harpy floor to talk about some matters" Bea suddenly stated. Her eyes glanced towards the other party who nodded their head too.

"Lord Simon, Bea and I have some important matters to talk about. I will see you off here".

When Simon heard that, his eyes swivelled between Bea and Melinda. These two who couldn't live without insulting one another for even a second, have something important that they need to discuss?

How could that be? It would already be a miracle if they could stand quietly without turning the floor upside down. Nevertheless, with them having spoken their mind, all he could do was return on his own and pray that they wouldn't get into another fight and almost destroy his floors.

Swoosh... a light flashed and Simon's figure instantly disappeared. Now that he was gone, the two women turned to face each other. Space seemed to instantly freeze as they silently glared at each other.

"He is gone. Speak, what is it that you wanted to say to me?" Melinda folded her arms, her bountiful chest moulded under the pressure of her arms.

Looking at her giving off extreme allure that was fatal for any man, Bea couldn't help but snort.

"Don't think that I don't know your intentions".

"Oh, you do? Good for you" Melinda casually remarked.

"Be as concieted as you want right now but let me tell you this. Seducing Master is impossible for the likes of you. And even if we ignore the fact that he won't fall for you, he already has Miss Irene. She won't like what you are trying to do right now" Bea's words contained a faint threat.

"Oh?" Melinda's eyebrows arched for a second; nevertheless, she quickly hid it "I am aware of that. I know my limits, I am not trying to anger her or anything"

"That aside, you are quite sly yourself, aren't you? You use the excuse of Mistress Irene; however, aren't you in the same boat as me? Don't think that I don't know. It's obvious to anyone with eyes that you are pining for him too"

"With his limitless potential and undeniable charisma, he is a prize coveted by many. His confidence that borders on arrogance and his knowledge that gives him an air of mystery, it strokes at other's desires making him even more appealing. Such a splendid man, even if you search the whole world, you won't find many like him. Even I'm reluctant to give up on him"

A look of yearning appeared on her face.

Seeing her and hearing her passionate words, Bea burned in jealousy. She was just about to speak when.

"Don't bother, I know what you are going to say. Don't worry, I know what I should be doing and not. As far as I know, you are in the same boat too. The enemy is close, let us focus on them first. We can talk about romance after that"

Saying that, Melinda too teleported to her floor. Leaving Bea to sort out her own emotions.

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Deep inside the Western Region of the Ghastly Winding Forest was a vast woodland filled with various kinds of exotic plants, floras and faunas. They released a sweet scent in the air capable of attracting all kinds of beings.

Thick mist covered the area year long and the mana here was very dense thanks to the many mystical veins that ran through the ground. The place was extremely beautiful and refreshing and almost looked like a paradise.

However, make no mistake, this place was no paradise but one of the most dangerous areas in the entire Ghastly Winding Forest.

Inhabited by carnivorous plants, insects and monsters, the place was like a venous fly trap, inviting the gullible victim to prey on them. That said, it was not the presence of countless carnivorous plants and monsters that made the place so dangerous but rather what was inside.

Deeper inside the territory lay an ancient ruin covered by thick foliage and algae. If one looked carefully at the trees that grew here they would be able to notice that these tall ancient giants were none other than Mana Trees.

They released dense amount of mystical energy causing the place to be covered in mist all year round. Further inside, there was an enormous temple with a craftsmanship that dazzled one's eyes.

Even though a part of it had collapsed, it still looked quite grand and its former glory was yet to diminish even though hundreds or even thousands of years had passed.

What set the temple apart from the numerous buildings here other than its craftsmanship was the numerous sparkling crystals that hung down from the many trees like stars in the sky.

These crystals releasing soft radiant blue light was none other than Mana crystals and the trees that pieced the dome of the temple were none other than Trees of Mana Crystals.

Given the astonishing sight, it was clear that the temple was the most important site of this place. And in fact, it was. The temple was the place where the King of the Black Ogres, Gil-Garna resided and this was exactly the territory of the Black Ogres.

At this moment, inside the temple, walking past the hallway which was filled with gold, artefacts, mana stones, mana crystals and mystical fruits and various other treasures, one would arrive in front of a gigantic hall, characterised by the huge carcass of an ancient beast that lay there.

The enormous carcass enclosed a pond in the centre where a beguiling and strange flower grew once upon a time. However, at this moment the pond was empty and it was no longer the colour of blood.

Walking past the pond, there was a passageway that led further inside the temple.

"It looks like Gish-Bagh's suspicions were correct. Gish-Bor went to the territory of the harpies the other day and found the place completely deserted"...

"Hoh, so the queen of the harpies really did betray us. If she has decided to go against us, then she would definitely ally herself with the demon. I suspect that she took her clansmen into his dungeon".

Voices came from inside the other end of the passageway which opened up into a vast open ground filled with all kinds of exotic plants and trees.

At the centre of this place, lay a large table where two people facing each other, were seated. Around them, were numerous figures standing upright and tall like a sword. Their auras were restrained as they stood there like a mannequin without making the slightest movements.

However, just based on the faint presence that they released, it was enough to tell others that they were no weak level beings. In fact, each and every being present inside the place possessed a strong presence.

Nonetheless, no matter how powerful they were, they had to still restrain their aura in front of the two beings seated around the table.

"Suspect or not, it is already clear that she has allied with the demon and has relocated her clansmen into his dungeon"

The one to speak was a man with a blazing crimson hair. He had a long violet coloured horn protruding from his forehead and carried a huge Khyber looking blade wrapped in straps to his side.

The man was fairly tall, standing well above six feet and looked extremely human like. Even the expressions and demeanour were no different than an average human.

That said, make no mistake, the man was no human but the king of one of the fiercest races on this world. The king of the Black ogres, Gil-Garna.

Chapter 856- Seven Kings Assemble (4)

Facing him, was a figure of immense stature and daunting presence. His form was like that of a behemoth, towering over all who stood around him.

His bulky figure was clad in endogenous armour unique to their race and looked like it was forged from the very essence of the earth itself. Each piece forged to fit his bulging muscles, he was a sight to behold, a creature of primal might and unyielding strength.

What's more, the armour gave off a mysterious glint making even Mythril look pale in comparison to it. It was said that even the legendary metal mythril is unable to so much as scratch its surface.

With every movement of his, the endogenous armour clinging to his muscles like a second skin, rippled with threatening intensity and each small movement of his gave others a glimpse of the devastation he was capable of unleashing.

That said, it was not his extremely conspicuous armour that stood about him, his physique as well as face did too.

Standing well above three meters tall, he was a hulking monstrosity, a living embodiment of power and destruction. His face which was partially visible through his endogenous helmet, bore the scars of countless battles, each one more hideous than the other and was a testament to his vast battle experience.

His eyes, cold and unyielding, gleamed with a fierce intelligence that belied his brutish appearance. On top of his helmet, a single horn juts forth like a deadly spear. The horn was the symbol and power of his status.

Longer and more menacing than the others of his race, it was a weapon of devastating potential, capable of piercing through even the toughest of defences with ease. It was said that with a single thrust, the horn could shatter any armour and sunder flesh.

This juggernaut of destruction that embodied savagery and brutality itself was the King of the Wastelands, the lord of the Terraquake Rhinos, the Ivory Terraquake Rhino, Yverza.

"Hoh, how do you know that?"

Yverza questioned his eyes turning towards Gil-Garna. As one of the Seven Kings, he was on the same level as the king of the Black Ogres.

"A subordinate of mine, Gish-Bor went to the harpies territory the other day to search for a missing subordinate"

At those words from Gil-garna, Yverza added "One of mine, Drovos of the Earthquake went missing there too".

"Yeah, I am aware. Anyways, though he was unable to find them, he did manage to find out the fact that they had deserted their territory. What's more, he had also coincidentally found the shortcut the harpies took to relocate into the dungeon"...

"What?!!"...

"Gish-Bor, report your findings"

At those words, one of the human like ogres with indigo horn standing behind Gil-Garna, stepped forward. If Simon was here, he would be able to instantly recognise the man after all, he was one of the intruders who had entered his dungeon recently through the installed Phased Floor in the harpies territory.

"Yes" on the ogre king's command, Gish-Bor started recounting the events that occurred that day.

"And that's how I was able to tell that the place I was in was the dungeon. It was not only the monsters, but the mana and the natural treasures there were all pointing out that I was right. I don't know how it appeared there but my guess is that it was created to allow the race of harpies to relocate to the dungeon"

"If we can use the very same shortcut to invade his dungeon, the demon would be caught by surprise and we would not have to spend our efforts clearing the dungeon from the start" Gish-Bor explained.

The place turned completely silent once he was done recounting his findings. Everybody whether they be the Black Ogres or the Terraquake Rhinos, they all wore varying emotions on their faces.

Some were shocked, some had questioning gazes while some stared at him with looks of disbelief. However, since their two leaders had yet to make a comment, they did not dare to utter anything before they did.

"This is interesting, I do recall some vague information about the dungeons being able to do something like that from the Memories of the world that I inherited. If it really is the shortcut, then it would save us a lot of time and effort" Yverza muttered, his voice booming.

"Any chance that it is a trap?"...

"I thought along those lines as well when I first heard it. That is why, I sent a few more subordinates to investigate it. Considering that the shortcut is still open, it can either be that it's not a trap or the demon is not unaware of us"

"Either way, the existence of the shortcut is a good thing for us. Once we enter it with our forces, trap or not, we can just destroy it with overwhelming might"

Gil-Garna gave a fierce smile. As one of the Seven Kings, even though he was wary of the Demon of the East and his fastly growing powers, the confidence he had in his strength was absolute.

"Haha, you are right. It makes no difference whether it is a trap or not once we enter it. However, things seem to have become a little troublesome now that we know the queen of the harpies has sided with the demon"

Yverza muttered, a slight frown of concern could be seen on his face. More than the demon, it seems that this juggernaut of destruction was more afraid of her.

As one of the Seven kings, it did come with reason that the two of them would be daunted by her presence. The two of them were very familiar with her powers.

The queen of the Harpies, not only were her abilities unique but her Evil Eyes were mysterious and deadly. One wrong move, and even they who were fellow Seven kings, could die under those eyes of hers.

If it was a head on battle, then the both of them had absolute confidence in winning after all, the Black Ogres and Terraquake Rhinos were warring races born with high stats and a natural fortress like body built for combat.

However, the harpies were a race that specialised in aerial combatants and tricky abilities that made them a tough opponent for them. And among them, their queen who possessed the unique Evil Eyes was even more of a headache to deal with.

Given all of this, it was only natural for them to be concerned.

"You are right, Melinda is indeed a big concern. However, as long as one of us could hold her down, the other can then swiftly defeat the demon. Thus essentially neutralising her presence"

Gil-Garna stated. It was just as he said, their opponent was the demon, not the queen of the harpies. As such, as long as one of them held her down and stopped her from helping the demon. They could avoid fighting life and death battle with her while also effectively neutralising her presence.

"It looks like you have come up with all kinds of scenarios in your head"

Yverza looked at the king do the black ogres and smiled in a manner that held several different meanings.

"But of course, I have been planning for this attack for a long while now. You should know that I have been keeping a close eye on the Demon of the East ever since I became aware of his dungeon"

"If not because I was held up by some other matter at hand and couldn't leave my station, I wouldn't have allowed that demon to grow till this point. I am sure that after witnessing the spectacle that occurred in the eastern skies of the forest a couple of months ago, you would agree with me"

On Gil-Garna's words, a solemn look appeared on the former's face. The spectacular phenomenon that occurred in the Eastern Sky was visible from the entire Ghastly Winding Forest and even from lands far beyond.

That vast column of mana rushing into the sky like an erupting volcano only occurred during certain special situations. And the only thing capable of creating such a huge commotion in the ghastly winding forest was the new dungeon created by the demon.

Only a dungeon when it reached a certain rank would be able to create such a natural phenomenon. The eruption of mystical energy into the air marked the ranking of the dungeon.

And for a newly established dungeon to be already creating such a worldly phenomenon, what did it indicate? The concept was so ridiculous that Yverza felt that it wasn't even funny.

To be able to grow at such a rate, the demon had to be controlled if not eliminated before he became a threat to even to them. It was also for this reason that the king of the wastelands, the Ivory Terraquake Rhino decided to form an alliance with the king of the Black Ogres.

The others might not think that the demon was any threat to them; however, he thought differently. Unlike the others, the memories of the world he inherited when integrating with the power left behind by the ancient beast carcasses possessed a little more information.

As such, he held certain information that even Gil-Garna or the other Seven Kings didn't have.

"What are our chances against the demon?"

He questioned. If the demon was so easy to deal with, they wouldn't have formed an alliance or waited this long for that matter.

"Don't worry, I have been preparing for this attack for a long time now. The dungeon will definitely be conquered by us. I have received formal replies from... Oh!?! Speak of the devil, they are here"

Chapter 857- Seven Kings Assemble (5)

Gil-Garna who was in the midst of speaking, suddenly arched his head as he looked up. Yverza also felt something and followed his gaze.

"Haha, Gil-Garna, to have invited me so deep into your territory. Aren't you afraid that I might attack your domain?"

A hearty laugh sounded out. Immediately, the sky over the ancient ruins darkened as storm clouds brewed over. Vaguely, they churned and agglomerated together to form a gigantic serpent of sorts that had its mouth open as if trying to devour the world.

"Emerald Viperlord, so you have finally come" Gil-Garna stood up from his seat and courteously greeted the new entrant.

There in the sky, where the mouth of the gigantic sinister serpent made of cloud was, a figure could be seen slowly emerging. Decked in sleek obsidian scales glistening with an oily sheen that formed an impenetrable armour of sorts around them, the figure commanded both awe and fear.

They possessed cold, merciless eyes as polished onyx and had a long slithery tongue that came out of their mouth every time they opened it to speak.

From their broad, muscular shoulders, twin serpentine arms extended, their scaly skin rippling with latent power. Razor-sharp claws adorn each hand, capable of rending flesh and bone with lethal precision.

Atop their fearsome visage, a crown of serrated horns juts forth, each tip coated in a venomous substance that drips like liquid malice. Unique to them, the figure possessed a predatory aura that made one intrinsically afraid just by looking at them.

"I can't possibly walk out on such an interesting event. Oh? The king of the wasteland is also here huh?!! ShaShaSha, Gil-Garna you cunning fellow you, you know how to manipulate others"

Saying that, the figure quickly dropped down. Given the way he was speaking to Gil-Garna, it was clear that he possessed a standing that was not any inferior to the latter. And it was indeed so, the figure that just arrived was Emerald Viperlord, ruler of the swamps and one of the seven kings of the forest.

"Haha, Shasurna you came at the right time. We were just in the midst of discussing an important matter" Gil-Garna spoke. His voice just sounded out when...

BOOM... a defeating noise breaking the speed of sound, reverberated across the sky above. RUMBLE... crimson thunder flashed and the huge snake that was formed formed from the clouds in the sky, was instantly torn and scattered apart.

That was not all, while one part of the sky was covered in a layer of dense crimson lightning, another part formed an infernal world. Columns of thick golden flames erupted out of the ground and rushed towards the sky in a brilliant display of fireworks.

The air around this part of the sky was extremely hot causing the flora and fauna to instantly die out.

TSK... seeing this scene, the Emerald Viperlord or also known as Shasurna, clicked his tongue.

"These two are as flashy as ever" His mood was sour now that his thunder was stolen with the arrival of more people.

"Haha, Chimera Warlord, Gufardus and Ruler of the Lightning Peaks, Wind Lightning Draconic Falcon, Vesgard. You are all just in time" Gil-Garna quickly called out the names of the new entrants.

Up in the sky, the flames and thunder spread apart to reveal two figures. One of them had the head of a lion, the upper body of an ape, the lower body of a bull and a snake like tail. Their body was covered in stitches and rippled with raw destructive power. Just like their monicker, they were a chimaera through and through.

The other being had a humanoid figure with deep amethyst like eyes that sparked with thunder. He was holding a sceptre and had long unkempt hair and beak for mouth. the sharp talons that he had for legs, were so sharp that they could easily tear through most sturdiest of defence.

The wings that carried him airborne rumbled with the sound of thunder every time that they flapped.

When Gil-Garna called them out, they slowly descended from the sky and arrived at the table where the King of the wasteland, Ivory Terraquake Rhino- Yverza and Emerald Viperlord- Shasurna were already there.

"Would you look at that? Who would have known that the two most mysterious figures and recluse of our Ghastly Winding Forest would also arrive here? Did Gil-Garna's proposal woe you guys in too?"

Shasurna laughed, his words laced with venom.

"Aren't you here too? If a two faced snake like you can come here then what's wrong for us to come and see what all this commotion is about" Gufardus spoke offhandedly. Not mixing any words and sparing no face for the other.

This caused the green snake like face of Shasurna to turn even green. However, Gufardus paid no attention to him and simply took his seat as if he owned the place.

"Gil-Garna I am here as per your invitation. However, if your words fail to catch my attention, do not blame me for leaving abruptly"

The one to speak was Vesgard. His words were short, cold and precise, telling everyone one that he was a man of few words.

"Haha, there is nothing restraining anyone. I'm already grateful that all of you responded to my invite in the first. If you do not like the proposal I am going to make next, you are free to leave any second"

Gil-Garna spoke, acting as the host. He was quite tactful and knew that it was impossible for all the seven kings to band together. As such, he made it open that anyone could leave if they did not like his idea.

Well, in any case, he wouldn't be able to restrain them and there was no meaning for them being here if they weren't going to be a part of his plan.

Vesgard nodded before finding a seat too. Seeing that almost all of the seats were filled, a smile appeared on Gil-Garna's face. A scene like this where all the Seven Kings gathered, well almost all, was an extremely rare scene.

It was so rare that other than a couple of times, it hadn't occurred any further. At least as far as Gil-Garna knew, they hadn't gathered like that for a couple of decades now. And every time that they did, it was due to the summon from that being, the most ancient of them all.

However, today he managed to achieve something similar, how could he not be happy?

'One day, I'll make it so that all of them follow me just like today. No, not one day. After I capture that dungeon, I'll use its resources to grow even stronger. At that time, even that ancient monster won't be able to stop me'

Gil-Garna thought inside his head, fantasizing about a beautiful future. After he saw that everybody had taken their seat, he began his explanation.

"As I have already told you, my plan is to wad out this growing bud of concern in the forest before it grows too strong. As such, I have invited you all to discuss some matters I have thought of to solve it"

While Gil-Garna spoke, the others quietly listened. This was especially true for the Black Ogres and the Terraquake Rhinos who were standing there while sweating profusely.

With a room full of Seven kings, the greatest and most powerful beings present in the entire Ghastly Winding Forest, one could imagine the kind of pressure the place was engulfed in.

Usually, for subordinates like them, it was already rare for them to encounter a Seven King or two. Much less see them gather all together like this. The scene in front of them could be said to be legendary.

Even for subordinates the likes of Gish-Bagh and Gish-Bor, the scene was much too striking. Gil-Garna continued speaking, he started by explaining how the dungeon represented a significant threat and how it could destabilise the delicate balance maintained by the seven kings.

"Already, we have seen signs of its growing power. The demon that resides within its depths is becoming more aggressive and bolder day by day. If left unchecked, it will soon become a force to be reckoned with, one that could disrupt the delicate hierarchy in the ghastly winding forest."

He paused, allowing his words to sink in before continuing "It's not like you guys haven't seen the effect of its influence, the worldly phenomenon that erupted from the eastern skies a few months ago that could be seen throughout the entire forest. I do not even need to explain as to what it represents"

"The rate at which the dungeon is growing makes it by the far the most abnormal and the greatest concern we must address before it is too late".

The seven kings were all silent as they listened to Gil-garna. It was not like they didn't understand what he said and it was not like whatever was said did not concern them. They had all seen and witnessed the phenomena that occurred in the eastern skies a couple of months ago.

The fact that the dungeon was rising fast in rank, was a fact that they all knew. In fact, this point bugged all of them; however, they were not as enthusiastic as Gil-Garna to do something about it.

Seeing the fluctuating faces of the seven kings, he knew that the iron was hot. Now was the time to strike.

"The dungeon's presence has stirred unrest among the inhabitants of the forest, if we don't do anything..."

He went on, just as his voice grew a notch more intense, his sentence got stuck in his throat. The next instant, his eyes immediately scanned his surroundings.

Chapter 858- Seven Kings Assemble (6)

Deep shock could be seen in those ogre like eyes of Gil-Garna which had been unfazed when facing all the other seven kings. It was not only him, Yverza, Shasurna, Gufardus and Vesgard all wore similar looks of shock and disbelief as they stared at their surrounding.

At this moment, the entire land was trembling gently as if a small earthquake was occurring. If one paid enough attention one could even hear the deep rumbling noise coming from the depth of the earth like an omen foreshadowing something.

That was not all, As the Seven Kings watched in awe, the landscape began to transform before their very eyes. Flora and fauna across the entire black ogre territory, stirred in response to some unknown force, coming to life in a display of vibrant vitality.

From the earth, new life emerged, sprouting forth in a riot of colours and shapes. Flowers burst into bloom, their petals unfurling like delicate works of art. Trees swayed in a graceful dance, their branches reaching skyward as if reaching for the heavens.

The once-dormant land seemed to awaken with a newfound vigour, teeming with the promise of growth and renewal. The sounds of the forest shifted, as if harmonizing with the changing landscape.

Birds sang melodies of welcome, their songs echoing through the canopy in a symphony of greeting. Creatures of all shapes and sizes emerged from their hiding places, drawn by the magnetic pull of this unseen force as if coming forward to greet their king.

"Oi.. Oi... you can't be serious?" Shasurna spat, in his shock he almost fell down from his arching chair.

"I can't believe this. Is that person coming for real?" Yverza spoke out the words that were in all of their hearts.

"A change like this is something that only that person is capable of instigating" Vesgard mentioned. He was the most calm out of all the seven kings as he drank the drink prepared for him.

"He is here!!" Suddenly he put down his glass and stared at a tree not very far away from them.

At that moment, the tree began to visibly morph. Its branches twisted and contorted, weaving together to form a humanoid figure. The humanoid figure was covered in gnarled wood, and ancient bark etched in swirling patterns that resembled the forest.

His figure was tall and his eyes glowed with an otherworldly light, reflecting the wisdom of centuries past.

"Haha, I hope I am not late, Gil-Garna?"

The figure spoke. As he took each step, he exuded an aura of primal power, his very essence intertwined with the natural world around him.

Who could the figure who was the very embodiment of the forest's might, a living testament to enduring strength and resilience be other than Aldebaran?

The seven kings stared in shock, a surge of reverence and deep fear involuntarily sprung into their bodies just by standing near him. No matter how mighty they acted amongst each other or called each other the Seven Kings; however, in front of this ancient monster, they might all just be children.

Although Aldebaran was also coined as one of the Seven Kings along with them, it didn't mean that he was in the same realm as them. Coining Aldebaran as one of the seven kings, it was something that was done by those stupid human adventurers who didn't know any better.

No matter how haughty or prideful they usually acted among themselves, they had to set aside all of that and act humbly in his presence. Aldebaran was not just the ruler of one of the king clans, the Ancient Treants but the guardian of the forest itself.

It was his presence that deterred the powerful foreign beings from coming into the Ghastly Winding Forest.

"For you to come here, does that mean that you are also interested in the Dungeon of the East?" Vesgard questioned.

Perhaps if there was anyone among the seven kings, who was not as deterred and fazed as the others, it would be him. Having a good relationship with Aldebaran, he didn't stand on ceremony as the others and continued to sip his drink.

"Haha, you all are here. How can I miss the fun? Gil-Garna you don't mind if I join uninvited right?"

Although he asked, he did not wait for the latter to reply and found a seat next to Vesgard to sit on.

The Ogre king who was called out, opened and closed his mouth, unable to say anything. His face twitched evidence that he was yet to come out of shock. It was indeed true that out of all the invites he sent to the seven kings, he didn't send any to Aldebaran.

The reason for that was because he thought that the latter wouldn't be interested in his plans. This was one of the reasons; however, the main reason was that if Aldebaran joined the mission, then he wouldn't be the leader anymore and won't be able to hoard the treasures of the dungeon for himself as he planned.

He was not worried about the other seven kings since they were in the same realm. Even if he couldn't defeat them, the other party wouldn't be able to stop him either when it came to making his moves.

And besides, he had prepared a trump card for this day, even if it was the demon, the queen of the harpies or the fellow seven kings he was against, he had the confidence to defeat them with this.

However, it was a whole different thing if you throw Aldebaran into the mix. Forget about defeating the other, it would already be a miracle if he could even hurt them. Naturally, the appearance of Aldebaran had completely derailed his plans.

That said, he was the king of the ogres and one of the seven kings not without reason. He quickly composed himself and sat down on his own seat.

With the arrival of Aldebaran, the already heavy pressure in the place intensified to the point where it became stifling. Some weak level black ogres and terraquake rhinos fainted unable to handle the pressure. They had to be rescued by their comrades and taken away.

"This feels quite good, isn't it? How long has it been that we gathered like this all together?" Aldebaran asked with a smile.

"The last time was more than twenty years ago when you ordered us all to assemble in the ancient treants territory to tell us about the changing times" Vesgard answered.

"Ah, that's right. It had been that long huh? How time passes that quickly. It feels like just yesterday when I sheltered you all in the forest. Now look at you all, becoming the seven kings of the forest and establishing your own reputation".

The seven king's faces twitched when they heard that. For them, the events mentioned by the king of the ancient treants was a long long time ago, more than seven hundred years.

At that time, they were just younglings filled with vigour and zest. It was only with time and protection from Aldebaran that they were able to temper themselves, learn about the importance of perseverance and establish themselves.

Seven hundred years, it might be long for them. However, for the guardian of this forest who had been alive since the ancient time, it might just as well be a couple of months.

"Oh? By the way, I don't see that lass here. Did she not come or is she running late?" he questioned.

"About that, I will be explaining in a while. Since Lord Aldebaran came here, does that mean you are also interested in our upcoming expedition?" Gil-Garna spoke.

The former looked at the ogre king, his empty eye sockets glowed with deep emerald green light at this moment.

"The alliance of the seven kings attacking the dungeon, such a big manoeuvre will have its impact felt all across the forest and even to lands beyond. It could very well change the forest forever. As the Guardian of this land, how could I not participate in this important meeting". Aldebaran explained his reasoning.

"Of course, I am not here to dissuade any of you. Feel free to discuss among yourselves about your upcoming expedition. Just think of me as an observer, an old man with too much time in his hand".

So that was the case, everyone nodded their head, feeling relieved inside. Since Aldebaran was non committal, it also removed all the pressure from them.

They wouldn't have known what to do if he suddenly showed his dissuasion against attacking the dungeon. Or worse shown interest in attacking the dungeon. Wouldn't they have to follow his commands?

As the guardian and most powerful being present in the forest, his words were the rule. As such, whatever he decided, would become the ultimate rule that all of them had to follow.

Many of them sighed in relief; however, the most relieved out of them all was Gil-Garna. Aldebaran's non committance showed his non participation. This meant that he wouldn't be joining them for the upcoming attack. That was a great thing for him.

"Since that is lord Alder's intention then I shall continue with the briefing. As I have said earlier, the dungeon has been an increasing threat we can no longer avoid. What's more, it has become even more powerful recently" Gil-Garna carefully layered his words, attracting the attention of everyone.

"I know what you guys have been thinking about. Where is Melinda, the queen of the harpies and the master of the Evil Eyes? Well get that, a few days ago I was notified of something when I sent my subordinates with a message to the harpy's territory".

Chapter 859- Aldebaran's Ramblings

"However, when they arrived at the Harpy's territory, the place was already empty. That's right, there was no one to be found nor any soul to be seen".

Gufardus and Shasurna arched their brows at those words "What do you mean? How can they just disappear out of the blue?".

Gil-Garna looked toward the seven kings and smiled "That's right, they didn't disappear but rather relocated to a new place?"...

Relocation?!...!

"What nonsense. Gil-garna if you have called us like this to tell us some made up stories, then you have wasted our time" Vesgard the most composed of all, spoke offhandedly.

One of the king clans, if the clan of the harpies were to move to a different place, such a big movement would naturally attract everyone's attention. But forget about any news of relocation, they did not see even one harpy coming out of their territory.

And even if considering that the harpies did relocate, where would they even move to? The current territory of the harpies was the most perfect place for them to inhabit. There was no other place that could suit their natural disposition in any place else in the entire Ghastly Winding Forest.

"Wait... wait, I'm not done with the explanation. Don't jump to conclusions, at least listen to everything that I have to say. I have said that they relocated to a new place for a reason. What's more the place they had relocated to, could easily harbour all of them and allow them to live in their natural habitat"...

"Are you meaning?"

The seven kings were no idiots, although most of them had more brawns than brains, the quick witted ones naturally sensed the underlying meaning behind his words.

"That's right, they haven't relocated to a new place in the ghastly winding forest but rather inside the dungeon. A few days ago, I sent my subordinates to the territory of the harpies with a message from me for their queen"

"Though we didn't find them, we did end up discovering the shortcut they used to relocate all the harpies in the dungeon. It was created deep in the heart of their territory and was hidden quite well"

"The shortcut leads directly to the deeper floors of the dungeon and is wide enough for a big army to pass through. As for whether I'm lying or not, I'm sure all of you know it better".

Gil-Garna's words caused the seven kings except for Yverza and Aldebaran to make quite an unusual face. Of course, they knew fully well whether he was lying or not from the memories of the world they inherited.

As such, they knew that the dungeon indeed possessed an unusual power to create a shortcut that connected with the outside world. Just that only some powerful dungeons which have existed for hundreds of years or probably even thousands, are able to do something like this.

How long had it been since the dungeon in the east emerged? For it to be able to create something that is exclusive to only old and powerful dungeon, it was hard to believe.

"Are you guys finally starting to realise how unusual this dungeon is? If it ranks up at this rate, soon a point will come where the entire ghastly winding forest would be too small for it. As such, I suggest creating an alliance to attack the dungeon and snuff this growing plague from our forest once and for all. The Ghastly Winding Forest is ours, the seven kings and not the Demon Noble's territory"

Gil-Garba timed his words perfectly causing even the composed ones like Vesgard to have their emotions fluctuate for a slight moment.

"I see, so you plan to use the very same shortcut created by the dungeon to attack it. I must say, it is quite an ingenious plan. However, have you considered all the possibilities? Possibilities like at what cost will the victory be for? Or what if you lose?"

Aldebaran suddenly placed an odd question with a smile on his face.

From the start to finish of his presentation, this old monster had been unfazed only showing slight interest at times suddenly asking a question. Even Gil-Garna was unable to determine what was their objective behind placing such a question. Nevertheless, he still replied confidently.

"Of course, since I am doing this, naturally the possibility of us winning is 100 per cent. As for defeat, the chances are zero. I have calculated all the power the enemy might possess, tricks they could use and based on that, I have assessed that if I have the aid of three of the seven kings, we can completely win this battle".

"I see, in that case, when are you planning to attack?" ...

"As soon as possible" the ogre king grinned "Our clan is already ready and is on standby near the territory of the harpies.; Of course, if any of you wish to join us we can wait for a day or two for you and your clan to arrive".

Gil-Garna glanced at the seven kings, the reason why he invited all of them here was because he hoped to reel some of them into his plan. Of course, he didn't expect everyone to respond to his call.

Beings like Aldebaran, Vesgard and Gufardus who were quite mysterious and usually kept to themselves, their presence here was a pleasant surprise.

"Haha, this old man is much too aged for all of this. If it was in my prime, I would have lend you a hand or two. However, it's impossible now. I will leave you youngsters to your plan. Now then, please excuse me" Saying that, Aldebaran stood up from his seat.

"I will leave too. I have no interest in attacking the dungeon. As long as they don't antagonise me first, I'm willing to let them continue on like this" Vesgard spoke his intentions too.

"I would have liked to give you a hand, I am quite interested in this dungeon which is able to increase in rank so fast. However, I am busy with something right now and can't separate myself out of it" Gufardus also stood up to leave.

Gil-Garna didn't say anything to stop them from leaving. It was impossible from the beginning for the seven kings to work together anyway and besides he already knew these existences won't help him either.

He chose to invite them and reveal his plans to them because he didn't want them to get in his way.

"Haha, I pray for your success king of the Black Ogres. We shall meet again"

Aldebaran looked at Gil-Garna for one last time, threw some words full of deep meaning before leaving. Earth rumbled and with a gust of wind, the tree that had morphed into the appearance of Aldebaran, returned to its previous state.

His exit just like his entrance was as mysterious as ever.

After Aldebran left, thunderbolts started charging in the sky and with a flash of blinding crimson light, Vesgard flew into the sky and disappeared from sight.

At the same time, a deafening lion roar sounded out and a flaming conflagration that looked like a hideous chimaera, formed carrying Gufardus into the sky.

Once all of them left, the peace that had been shattered by their powerful presence returned once again. The heavy pressure disappeared and the ogre and teraquake rhino subordinates could finally breathe again.

"Since you are still remaining does it mean that you are on board with our plan?"

Gil-Garna tore his eyes away and looked at the sole remaining seven kings other than Yverza still seated in his seat. The person he was looking at, was none other than the king of the swamps, the Emerald Viperlord, Shasurna.

"ShaShaSha... do you think I'm like those idiots who can't see the bigger picture? Out with it Gil-Garna, I know you don't just want to defeat the demon. Destroying a dungeon is a waste of treasure, especially one as unique as the one the Demon of the East set up"

"I know you are planning much more than those simple lines you threw at us. I want to join you, tell me your real objective?"

The last remaining seven king smiled, his onyx like eyes seemed like it was able to pierce through one's soul.

"What do you mean?" Yverza asked keeping a straight face.

"Don't use that trick on me. I know when a face is lying when I see one. ShaShaSha... If you want my help, you must include me in your real plan" Shasurna licked his lips with his slithery tongue.

"It seems like it was foolish of us to think that we could trick the first variant shaman of his race. You are deserving of your fame Emerald Viperlord. Very well, I shall brief you about our real plan. However, before that you must order your clan to assemble. The shortcut is still open but we aren't sure how long it would stay like that. Before it closes, I would like all our three clans to enter it" Gil-Garna instructed.

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A few hundred kilometres away from the territory of the black Ogres, a crimson thunder light flashed and the figure of Vesgard appeared with it.

"What do you of it Alder?"

His voice carried by the wind echoed across the surroundings. However, there was no one to respond to him. Vesgard wasn't bothered by it and simply waited for some time.

Suddenly, the trees started swaying with a mysterious wind and the land became more verdant. Thud...thud... thud... footsteps sounded out and the figure of Aldebaran who had once again taken arboreal form, appeared beside the Wind Lightning draconic falcon.

Chapter 860- Aldebaran's Ramblings (2)

"You are the only one who can sense my presence Vesgard" the bark on Aldebaran parted appearing like a smile.

"Isn't it because you deliberately didn't cover your presence?" the former retorted.

"Haha, even if I didn't cover my presence, believe me it is not so easy to sense me. Anyways, what do you mean by your words?"...

Vesgard was silent for a while, his eyes followed Aldebaran's and stared at the eastern sky of the forest.

"I have known you for a long time to know that your identity is special. You claim yourself as just a simple guardian of this land and the other seven kings seem to be readily accepting that. However, I always had doubts about that"

"I always wondered why this land needed to be guarded. Where did that thing you are protecting come from and what does this forest mean to you? The memories of the world that I have inherited isn't complete as such, I can only make my own assumptions"

"Of course, these are just my thoughts and there are many things that I don't know but I know one thing. Having known you, I'm sure... you are waiting for someone or something to happen that would change this world forever".

"Hoh, why do you say that?" Aldebaran's eyes sockets narrowed causing the emerald light coming from it to dim.

"Didn't I tell you I have known you for a long time? As your friend I have seen you procrastinating about the old times and the future that you want to see. I can't tell when you are excited about something and tired enough to wish that you had died already"

"However, all of this changed since a couple of years ago. You seem to be no longer lost in the memories of the past and seem more forward looking as if eagerly waiting or expecting something to happen"

"Let me guess, these changes started to appear when I last visited you. At that time, you were sheltering the Forest Spring Spirits who were being hunted by the humans due to their insatiable greed. It was also around the same time when the dungeon emerged. If I had to take a shot, I would say that it is because of these aforementioned reasons"

"You... you are expecting something out of that dungeon aren't you? If not, as the guardian of land who has fought and repelled back the advances of the demon continent so many times, you wouldn't have allowed this demon to setup his dungeon here. This forest is precious to you, it reminds you of your old memories or perhaps is associated with it"

Vesgard spoke, his sharp eyes landed on the being next to him.

Hearing what the former had to say, Aldebaran's glowing emerald eyes dimmed and his figure had also stopped moving. The next second, he erupted in a thunderous laughter, his voice booming across the entire mountain peak.

"Haha, I guess I should expect no less from the Wind Lightning Draconic Falcon, one fo the subsidiary races of the dragon clan. You are indeed worthy of being from that clan".

As he said that, his slightly stiff body relaxed. Of course, he was all tree and branches, there was no skin or muscles to know for sure that he had relaxed. It was just a figure of speech based on how the tree barks dropped down, giving him a relaxed atmosphere.

"You might be right, I am indeed looking for something, a change to be correct. This world has become stagnant like a caged trap ever since that time. Of course, at that time, even I was too little and immature to understand the aftermaths and repercussion that it would bring to our world"

"Everyone was helpless, they could only rely on him. And what did they do in return? Deviating from the goal they start fighting among themselves and cause bloody wars. If that's not looking on him then what is? The people of this world have forgotten their true purpose"

"A change needs to occur. Finally, that wind of change which is only a small breeze right now, has arrived. Only this wind of change can save this world. I have been waiting for a long time now, so long to give up hope many times. However, in the end, still believing in my duty and the old memories, I continued to guard this land"

"You say that this forest is precious to me? Well of course it is, it is the very place that I was born in, it is the very place I met master. Of course, it was not called the Ghastly Winding Forest nor was it located here at that time"

Lost in the world of his own, Aldebaran recounted some events from the past. His words vague, painted a picture of an ancient world, events from the past that had been completely forgotten by the people of the present time.

The goal they had been mentioned and the being who sacrificed himself to save the world and whose expense they are still living on.

"Who are you talking about? What do you mean the Ghastly Winding Forest was not located here? What has this do with the things that I just mentioned?"

The more he heard his explanation, the more questions popped inside Vesgard's mind.

"Even if I tell you now, you won't be able to do anything. It is still too early and you won't be able to handle the repercussions of the information. There is no need for you to be so impatient. You are

still young and unlike me, you still have long years to live. With time, you will naturally have answers to all those questions" Aldebaran answered.

The former pondered deeply at those words before finally nodding his head. "Alright, I'll stop asking you questions and wait to see what kind of change you hope for myself. However, can I ask you one last question?"...

"Go ahead?"...

"Do you believe that the dungeon would survive this ordeal? Gil-Garna and his group are sure to attack the dungeon from that shortcut they found. It seemed like Yverza and Shasurna are also on board. Three of the seven kings, this kind of power isn't something that a newly emerged dungeon can handle. This wind of change that you are talking about, I'm afraid that it will get snuffed before it can even grow into a full fledged gale?"

Vesgard questioned. Although he was not interested in the dungeon, based on what he understood from Aldebaran, this dungeon and the demon who created it seemed to be special.

However, no matter how special one was, in this world, strength was the final determiner of everything. If you don't have strength, you are just another stepping stone on the path of someone else who is stronger than you.

One needed time to grow stronger along with other various factors that are associated with it. However, if one is denied even that, then it is the end for them. The same was the case with the Dungeon of the East. It was special no doubt, being able to rise in rank so fast. It had already overturned the unwritten law of this world in its head. But it was still too premature and unexperienced.

It had only been over four years since the dungeon emerged in the forest. Given the timeframe of its emergence to till now, it would be appropriate to say that it was not ready to face beings on the level of the Seven Kings and the clans they led.

If the dungeon falls, so would the demon and the wind of change that he mentioned about would also be gone forever before it could even stabilise itself in the world.

"Haha, I was wondering what you will ask. So it turns out you are worried about the dungeon" Contrary to what Vesgard expected, instead of being worried for this wind of change he mentioned, he looked all relaxed and free of worries.

"Don't worry, he won't be defeated by the likes of Gil-Garna and his group"...

"How can you say that? Gil-Garna is a variant ogre of his race who was able to reach the violet horn. With the inheritance of the ancient beast he received and the various shadowy movements he had made these past decades, his strength has grown even further"

"The black ogre tribe is also far stronger than before. This is not mentioning the fact that he is joined by Yverza and Shasurna who are not any weaker" Vesgard seemed unconvinced.

"Hmm, it looks like I won't be able to convince you with simple words. Then how about this, what if I tell you this, I have personally tested the strength of the demon myself"...

"What?!!"

As soon as Aldebaran mentioned that, his expression changed and he couldn't help but doubt his ears. What did it mean for Aldebaran, the ruler of the ancient treants, the guardian of the forest and the strongest being here, testing the strength of the demon himself?

Putting aside the fact of how the latter performed, just the fact that Aldebaran went out of his way to even test the strength of the demon himself proved how highly he viewed the other party.

"How did he perform?".

The bark on Aldebaran's face arched appearing almost like a grin "He aced the first trial I set for him even though I made it so that it was impossible to clear. As for the second trial, it is ongoing you will have to wait for a while. Ah, about that... don't worry you won't have to wait longer to know the result"