

Extras 521

Chapter 521 Heretic Mage

'Sir Ralyks... it's all because of you that I'm alive right now...'

Belle's thoughts were lost in the storm that was her rage and grief. As she stared down the person she desired to kill, most of her thoughts were stifled by noise.

'If not for the ring you bestowed to me... I would probably be dead right now:

Her '[Enchanted Ring Of The Caster]' was something special, after all. Not only did it boost the Magic Power of the target by an unfathomable degree, but it also doubled the attack potency of any Spell used.

Thanks to these attributes, Belle was able to keep using high-level Magic and not run out of Mana like she would have otherwise.

"Thank you, Sir Ralyks..." As her thoughts trailed, she raised her hand and pointed it in the direction of her foe.

There was no real need to point her hand towards him, as her Spells would follow her command regardless, but Belle felt her body moving on its own.

The prime reason for her Spell's efficiency and power, apart from the immense advantage that her ring offered her, was the nature of her Class.

[Heretic Mage] was a Class that focused mostly on offense. 2

One of her Class Privileges was the automatic imbue of a 'sure-hit' effect on any Magic Spell she used. That way, regardless of defenses, it would automatically travel and hit the enemy.

If you added that to the nigh-infinite Mana and 'double power' that her ring provided, as well as the high-level Magic Spells she had in her arsenal, it wasn't a surprise that she was able to keep up with the enemy that she fought.

It was difficult at first, but she was able to keep up with the Dragon Commander and turn the tables around.

This was also not too surprising since, other than Adonis, she had the highest level among the Otherworlders.

Despite all of these abilities that she possessed, it was even a surprise that she would be placed in charge of rescue rather than assault. With her power, the Otherworlders would have stood a much better chance fighting the Dragons.

That was her rationale, and the reason why she opted to join the assault team.

But-

"No. Our main mission isn't to defeat the enemies, but to save as many people as possible. Your task is far more important than ours, and we need someone strong enough to carry most of that burden alone."

-That was what Adonis told her.

She would take the lead in the rescue operations, as the person with the most Mana of the bunch. Rey would simply be her assistant-a footsoldier in the cause.

Belle could definitely understand Adonis' rationale. He, as well as the other Otherworlders were already plenty strong. However, their skill-sets were very limited compared to hers.

Only she could summon a tidal wave of water to douse the flames around her, while also using her winds to carry as many people to safety.

In terms of versatile Magic, she was the best.

Even if she was also incredible at offense, her competence in Magic made her the prime choice in rescue, so she accepted the role without making a fuss.

But now...

"I couldn't care less if they die or not..." Belle growled, forgetting about the rescue operation that she had put on hold for her vendetta.

None of those nameless and faceless people mattered to her at this point.

"You killed Rey, you bastard! You killed my friend-the one person that Sir Ralyks told me to look out for the most!"

Belle's tears overflowed even more as she shuddered at the thought of what Ralyks would say or do to her in response to this gross failure on her part.

'He'll be so disappointed in me. He might not talk to me again. He will hate me for sure!'

More than anything, Belle didn't want to be seen as incompetent by Ralyks. He was the one that she wanted to stand beside one day.

To do that, she would have to prove herself.

Belle already knew that, and she worked incredibly hard to gain his recognition and attention.

But now... all of that was ruined.

"Because of YOU...!"

A single pulse rushed from her hand, and it instantly traveled to her target, crushing his face with a powerful press of wind.

"Guark!"

Blood gushed out of the Commander's face as he crashed on the ground, falling weakly on his knees as he stared fearfully at Belle. Personally, she couldn't care less about his pain or fear.

She didn't think anything of it. Right now, all she wanted was to inflict as much damage to the enemy and hope that he could somehow restore Rey's life to him.

'He can't be dead. I can't let him die... I can't... he can't...!'

Her eyes widened even more as she kept sending shockwave after shockwave at her adversary.

Each hit caused rubble to fly in multiple directions, crushing the charred earth even more than usual. Slices of wind cut through the enemy's wings as they regenerated and he tried to escape.

His flesh was crushed.

His bones were grinded.

His blood was spilled.

Over and over... and over again.

"Bring him back..." Belle whispered. "Bring Rey back..."

After dealing multiple strikes, to the point where the Commander was unrecognizable from his previous, glorious estate, she screamed at the very top of her lungs.

"BRING REY BACK, YOU FILTHY PIECE OF SHIT!"

As her voice echoed throughout the area, everyone around her were finally able to hear the incoherent words she had been mumbling for some time now.

Their eyes widened upon hearing the news.

However, no one said anything. Perhaps they were too scared or startled to speak.

Until-

"W-what did you say...?" A certain brunette raised her head for the first time in so long, her swollen eyes wide with disbelief as she mechanically turned to Belle.

Alicia, still kneeling, moved her trembling lips, staring hard at her ally.

"... What did you say about Rey?"

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Chapter 522 Groveling

Stifling silence hung in the air.

Everyone present, both the Dragons and Otherworlders could feel the palpable tension that spread itself through the expanse around them.

That single question, "... What did you say about Rey?" brought dread to the atmosphere, and all awaited the inevitable answer from the lips of the bloodied mess of a girl who stood amidst the torrents of wind.

Belle turned to look at Alicia's despairing face, and at that moment... all her rage-fueled strength began to sizzle out.

The pain in the eyes of the brunette resonated within her as well, and her tightly clenched jaws loosened to allow for tremors.

"He... h-he..." More tears began to flow down Belle's face.

They were hot and bitter, bountiful as they descended down her pretty eyes. Her weak body soon followed the trail of tears as she knelt on the same ground they struck.

"Rey is dead!" Belle cried out, her voice ascending as high as the heavens itself.

As she let out the words, releasing all the pain and sorrow into the world that watched her, all of her allies watched in shock.

Adonis' eyes widened with disbelief. His countenance made it so obvious that he could not believe what he heard.

Devastated would not begin to begin to describe how he looked.

Lucielle and Brutus both had shocked and pained expressions on their respective faces. The news about the deaths of one of their wards was, as expected, bone-chilling.

It was fortunate that the other Otherworlders could not hear the horrid news. However, none of that mattered in the face of the one person that this revelation affected most.

—Alicia White herself.

As soon as she heard that Rey was dead, something in her heart snapped into two—like a feeble twig. Then, like a glass made of fickle glass, her mind broke into pieces.

"Rey... died...?"

With those mere words, serving as silent whispers, her face clouded up and her brilliant amber eyes darkened; almost like an eclipse had occurred.

Then, the tears came.

They overflowed, bursting out like a dam that had long passed its limits.

Alicia said no more. She simply knelt there, her tears saying all that went on within her fractured mind.

The only voice that could be heard in the tense, tragic scene was Belle's, as she raised her voice and cried at the top of her lungs.

Adonis and the others also had downcast faces, but nothing could compare to the raw pain that the two girls displayed; one by bawling her eyes out, and the other by just standing still and letting the river flow.

The Dragons knew better than to ruin this moment. Any wrong move from them would be met by a swift strike from the grieving humans.

The single look of pure pain and anger mixed on Adonis' face was enough to show that.

Their best bet was to wait and rekindle their strength—at the very least, until they would be able to escape their current predicament and report to the Lord.

The humans mourned, and the Dragons waited.

However, neither side could have expected what happened next.

"I decided to leave my dreary abode, yet what do I find here?" A voice that no one had ever heard before suddenly rang in everyone's ears.

It was loud.

It was deep.

It was commanding.

"This place looks even more boorish than the palace. I wonder why..." The owner of the voice stood at the center of the chaos, almost as if he had been there all along.

He had flowing black hair, with hues of dark purple and blue gleaming from its glossy surface. A cleanly cut beard graced his smooth chin as his mature face lay bare for all to see.

This man had a long, exquisite robe. The kind of apparel that only royalty would be allowed to wear. It had none of the unnecessary jewelry and excessive designs that often bloated the attire of human nobility, yet something about his form seemed more pristine.

He had a single obsidian necklace that gleamed with otherworldly beauty, and his pure black attire had purplish blue designs that made it stand out beneath the glow of sunset.

The whites of his eyes were doused in black, and his irises were a fine blend of blue and purple.

Perhaps a hint of indigo too.

Then, decorating his head, as if they were crowns born from his natural skin, were six horns.

"Did someone die or something?" The man was smiling, clearly chuckling at his joke as he floated about a meter in the air.

Both hands were behind him as he observed his surroundings.

The filth and debris were all fed into his senses as he took a swift look around.

He saw the humans. He witnessed the devastation. Then, he cast his sights on the true reason he was there at that moment.

—The Dragons!

"L-Lord Ob'elisk!" The voice of Kar'en rang out loud in a way that none of the humans had ever heard before.

Her tone was filled with only one thing.

... Pure reverence.

Who could blame her? For she was in the presence of one of the 9 Dragon Lords—The Dark Dragon Of The Black Mountain.

Before such an entity, who was she? Who was her subordinate?

They were but mere specks that could do nothing but bow their heads and grovel before his magnificence.

"L-Lord Ob'elisk...?!" The stupefied face that Ser'ith made was only due to his ignorance.

He had never laid eyes on the Dark Dragon Lord before, so he was a little shocked by the suddenness of his arrival.

Thankfully, his instincts had kicked in and forced his body to grovel before the mighty one before his mind even processed what was happening.

That very moment, the creatures known as invincible showed greater awe and reverence to a more supreme entity.

"Well, this is indeed an unexpected turn of events..." The Dragon Lord turned away from the weaker members of his race and finally returned his attention to the still humans who watched in absolute silence.

For a few seconds that seemed to last an eternity, Lord Ob'elisk watched them.

Then... he spoke.

"Which one among you killed that offspring of mine?"

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Chapter 523 Overwhelming Power

'We're doomed.'

Those were Adonis' only thought when he gazed upon the Dark Dragon Lord.

The being's overwhelming presence, his immaculate attire, his commanding expression; all of it oozed the same thing.

—Power.

Sheer, unbridled power!

Adonis, with his Divine Blade, and his allies, were nothing compared to this supreme entity—one that could even be revered as a deity.

Dragon Lords were not like the rest of their kind. They were several levels above them, which was why they were often treated like gods.

Even Adonis, despite his sheer willpower and hatred towards the Dragons, found his legs shaking. His knees were tempted to buckle and crumble to the earth.

It took all of his strength to remain upright and still.

The screaming Belle fell quiet the moment the Dragon Lord appeared, so the entire expanse was as silent as a graveyard.

Not even the strained breathing of everyone could be heard.

They all had to be quiet... and look to the one who held their lives in his hands.

"I asked a question, but it seems like no one is willing to respond." The Dragon Lord itched his ear a little, scanning the audience a little before sighing.

"Look, you people should just relax a little, okay? I didn't come here to fight or anything. If I did, you'd all be dead by now."

The Lord was right.

Yet, the way he said it so casually made Adonis' heart squeeze in pain. The weight of powerlessness was heavy on him, but he could still say nothing.

"You can rest assured that I won't harm the rest of you. I'll take my leave as soon as I'm done satiating my curiosity, so don't worry." He added, scanning the audience once again.

"So who did it? Who killed... ah, what's his name again? Jerardino? Jerado? Erm...?"

He turned behind him to look at the Dragon General, using his facial expression to signal them so they could help him out with the answer.

"I-It's Jer'ard, my Lord..." Kar'en did her best to whisper it, but everyone in the devastated grounds still heard her response.

The shameless Dragon Lord pretended as if that wasn't the case and snapped his fingers the instant she told him the answer.

"Jer'ard... yes. That's his name. He was a miner, and his last recorded location was within your Capital, so I want to know how he died." He said, a small smile forming on his face.

"So who killed him?"

Adonis' mind was clouded by grief, pain, and fear, but there was no way he would fall for such an obvious front from a treacherous Dragon.

The smile of the Dragon Lord was calm, kind, and even somewhat friendly. It seemed so genuine that, despite his overwhelming presence and might, one could probably believe his words and sympathize with his intentions.

But—

'I'm not buying it!' Adonis' mind echoed as he gritted his teeth.

Dragons were the pinnacle of evil in this world. They desired nothing but chaos, and they took pleasure in inflicting as much of that chaos on those they deemed inferior to them.

There was no way a Dragon Lord would try to sympathize with a human, or think of sparing them upon meeting with them.

Dragons were brutal and merciless; and this one was no exception.

'He'll get the information he desires, and then he'll annihilate everyone and everything that exists in his line of sight.'

No one would be spared from his power.

"I can see that you distrust me quite a bit, and I understand why..." The Dark Dragon Lord's voice suddenly echoed in the air, instantly suspending Adonis' thoughts.

"But you're really overestimating yourselves if you think I would make a personal effort to eliminate you." He sighed. "Where's the pleasure in that?"

Adonis felt his teeth clenching against each other as he made a deep scowl.

The Dragon Lord looked at him in particular and broadened his smile. "Even now, despite seeing such blatant disrespect and sensing such deep animosity from you, I still refuse to take your lives."

Yes. He made it a point that he could kill them at any time.

Their lives were literally in his hands.

"I just don't want to. It'll be too bland to do so now, especially since it serves no real purpose."

In essence... they were not worthy to die by his hands.

"..."

None of the humans said anything. They all just watched in silence.

Perhaps they didn't want to tell on Ralyks, their savior, and put a bounty on his back. Maybe they simply didn't want to cooperate with this utterly malevolent entity that stood before them.

Or, the most likely reason, that they were simply too terrified to speak.

"Why don't I give you some time to process my question and come up with an answer?" The Dragon Lord sighed, huffing a bit of air as he turned away in dejection.

He floated off from the humans and went to the side of the Dragons, his backs turned against the purported enemies.

But, both the human and the dragon side knew that they were no real threats to him.

"Once I'm done talking to these two, I'll come for my answer." He waved, and then in the blink of an eye, all three of them vanished.

~VWUSH!~

Slight crackles of purple lightning and energy danced around the area where the three Dragons previously occupied. Now, it was empty.

The only ones left on the devastated grounds were Adonis and the rest of the humans.

Then, almost as if they finally remembered to breathe... the world around them became filled with heavy sighs of both relief and exhaustion.

Once the overwhelming pressure was gone, the humans were finally able to move their bodies and turn to each other.

All of them were frightened.

"W-what do we do now...?" For some reason, they all turned to Adonis the moment the question was raised.

Brutus, Lucielle, Alicia, and Belle... all of them stared hard at the Hero for an answer. He always knew what to do, and what was going on, after all.

However, for the first time ever, Adonis fell short of their expectations and cast his gaze on the ground.

"I... I don't know."

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Chapter 524 The Only Solution

No matter how one looked at it, humanity was screwed.

Now that a Dragon Lord had arrived here, there was no hope for survival in the slightest.

Even if they managed to fend off the Dragon Lord-an impossible feat on its own-this would only alert the other Dragon Lords, which could inevitably spiral into a more devastating situation.

"If we tell the Dragon Lord what he wants, there's a chance he might leave us alone, right? Why don't we go with that?" Lucielle spoke up, her voice oozing with concern.

The bright smile she usually had was gone, and nothing but pure seriousness remained.

She was staring at Adonis, as was everyone who had gathered in a circle. The bodies of their unconscious allies were still laying on the ground, and while Lucielle managed to give them emergency potions, they were yet to gain consciousness.

Only Brutus, Belle, Alicia, Adonis, and the Grand Mage herself, were gathered around in the circle; discussing their next move.

Well, it wasn't more of a discussion and more like haphazard suggestions.

"That won't work." Adonis sighed, shaking his head slowly.

No matter what suggestions were made, he always shot it down with a valid point that completely rendered it non-feasible.

"Even if he spares us, which I highly doubt, you can be guaranteed that he'll send a horde of Dragons to burn this place to the ground."

None of the denizens of the city-them included—would even have any time to recover.

"We could escape within that moment of grace, couldn't we? There are secret paths that-!"

"The Dragons aren't stupid. They are sure to prepare for that." Adonis responded, shaking his head even further as he gritted his teeth. "All of this... it all started with the emergence of that first Commander."

If only they never met that thing, none of this would have happened.

"Are you blaming Sir Ralyks right now? Are you saying all of this is his fault because he killed that Commander?" Belle swiftly spoke up, her brows furrowed very narrowly as she glared deeply at Adonis. "Should he have let the Commander run rampant and kill all of us?!" "T-that wasn't what I... haaa, just forget I said anything." Adonis made a big sigh, regretting his choice of words.

Thankfully, Belle was appeased by that, so she kept quiet.

"What now? What can we do to ensure the best of results?" Brutus' deep voice interrupted the tense atmosphere, and he cast his gaze specifically towards the Hero.

"You have something in mind, don't you?"

For a moment, Adonis said nothing. He just let his thoughts marinate a bit, soaking in the tense situation and the inevitable return of the supreme adversary.

But, after a few seconds... he opened his lips and let out what he considered the only way out.

"We have to fight and win against the Dragon Lord."

The moment he said this, Adonis was greeted with surprise. One would think that he, more than anyone else, would know how impossible of a task that was.

It was insane, if not suicidal, to think of such a thing as the only feasible solution.

"What do you mean? Can you elaborate?" Brutus, rather than judging him or wallowing in the impossibility of the suggestion, went on to ask.

There was no way Adonis would have said something so absurd without a reason. Every person in the room knew that, which was why they did not instantly speak against his words.

They simply waited for an explanation.

~VWUSH~

In a flash of energy, something emerged from Adonis' outstretched hand. It was a dark cube, one that pulsed with a forbidden power. -The Unknown Box.

"This is the only thing that can help us out now." Adonis muttered, staring at the item which floated above his palm.

The box bounced steadily in the air, warbling with invitation as everyone stared keenly at it.

"It allows its user to temporarily awaken and use the full potential of a Skill, without any Mana Charge or drawbacks... once per day."

Adonis had used this in the Grand Calamity Class Dungeon, so the Otherworlders could already testify to its power.

"There's something else about it, though..." Adonis furrowed his brows as he continued. "... This item isn't restricted to only one wielder."

The moment everyone-particularly the Otherworlders-heard this, they gasped.

"H-hold on, are you saying we can use it as well?" Belle asked, her nearly bulging eyes staring at the item.

"Yes." Adonis nodded.

Despite admitting to this, though, his expression remained more grim than optimistic.

"There's a catch, isn't there?"

The sudden question caused everyone to tremble in surprise. They were stunned by what was asked, sure, but more surprised by the one who asked it.

The group instantly stared at Alicia, who had remained quiet until now.

"How did you guess?" Adonis asked, his lips forming a sad, wry smile.

"You would have suggested its use earlier, when fighting the Dragons... no, even before then. During the Grand Calamity Dungeon."

The fact that Adonis never suggested the use of the Unknown Box- not even once-showed that there was something about it that made the Item undesirable to use.

"Am I wrong?" Alicia stared coldly at Adonis while asking.

There didn't seem to be any particular emotion in her eyes at all. It just seemed dull and somewhat dark.

It caused Adonis to shiver a little, but he shook his head regardless.

"No. You're spot on, actually." After speaking to her, he turned to everyone else, sighing as he revealed the problem with the cube.

"It's a cursed item. Using it will cast a random curse upon the target -one that is permanent."

Shock coursed through those who heard this, but Adonis was not done.

"The curse varies. It could be something as simple as being allergic to a certain food, or being crippled forever. It's random, but the effects are permanent."

"B-but why would Sir Ralyks give you such an Item if its so cursed?!"

Belle raised her voice as she stared at the item with newfound caution.

"Because my Hero Class prevents curses from working on me. Most curses won't affect me, and the few that do wear off eventually."

In essence, only Adonis could properly use the Unknown Box.

Chapter 525 Eerie Execution

The dreary quiet that enveloped the expanse seemed to last an eternity.

A choice had to be made among those who were still conscious, but it was not an easy one to make.

"I didn't say anything before because I didn't ever want you people to use it. As the future of humanity, if any of you succumb to a curse that permanently damages you, or removes you from the fight, then... our chances of victory in the long run will be greatly compromised."

As Adonis said this, a slight scoff echoed from Alicia.

"So why suggest it now?"

His face fell even further as he clenched his fist, bracing himself to answer the question.

"The circumstances have changed. The way I see it... there's really no way out this time. Humanity is doomed either way, so it's best we go all-out and fight to the bitter end."

It would be foolish not to use everything at their disposal at this point.

"If you each upgrade your abilities to the fullest, that will place it at the epitome of SS Tier, which should allow us to obtain victory." Adonis added, staring at each person among the audience.

Alicia's Healing would prevent them from dying as they made their attack. Belle's Wind Magic, coupled with her Heretic Class Privilege would give them the offensive advantage. Lucielle's power to hijack or jam the Skills of her enemies would be a perfect counter to the Dragons, and Brutus could be their vanguard and hold off the Lord.

Alicia's Healing would prevent them from dying as they made their attack. Belle's Wind Magic, coupled with her Heretic Class Privilege would give them the offensive advantage. Lucielle's power to hijack or jam the Skills of her enemies would be a perfect counter to the Dragons, and Brutus could be their vanguard and hold off the Lord.

"I'll have to use Limit Transcension again so I can assist in the battle. It'll greatly drain my Stats, but if I manage to kill the Lord, then I should be able to regain all of it."

That was the most optimal solution at the moment.

"But what of the aftermath? What will happen after we kill the Dragon? Won't the other Lords be alerted by that? Wouldn't that cause even more calamity to befall us?"

This question from Lucielle caused Adonis to nod his head and bite his lip slightly. It seemed he was out of words to say.

"Even if they are alerted, I'm sure the death of a Dragon Lord will cause them to exercise more caution in whatever next step they want to take. That should buy us more time to evacuate the city or at least prepare for another attack."

Once again, everyone was surprised by Alicia's words. Even though she spoke in a dead, completely emotionless tone, her voice rang with mechanical logic.

"I agree with Adonis. This seems to be the most optimal choice for survival."

At the very least, if they managed to kill the Dragon Lord, they would have a day or two before a full-blown invasion happened. "If that's the case, we can simply use the Box again and unleash our full potential."

"B-but the Curse—!"

"Would you rather be cursed... or be killed?" Alicia's words echoed harshly as she stared coldly at Lucielle.

The Grand Mage backed off, and decorum took charge.

Then, as if out of nowhere, Belle's tiny voice echoed something that all of them must have considered at least once, but no one was able to say.

"S-Sir Ralyks... might come to save us..."

Judging by the devastation around them, and the chaos that had already been wrought by the Dragons, coupled with no signs of salvation from anywhere, it was safe to say that the Dark Adventurer was not present.

"I think it's best not to rely on Sir Ralyks." Adonis smiled as he looked at Belle's teary eyes.

"B-but... where is he now?"

As she sobbed, Alicia sighed and looked far into the distance.

"He might be dead too."

Her words caused Belle's widened eyes to bulge even further, and tears flowed from them as she considered the possibility of those words.

"What? Why would you even say that?" Adonis swiftly snapped at Alicia, but she displayed no remorse for her words.

Instead, she simply shrugged and muttered a half-hearted response.

"Just a hunch."

Once again, silence echoed among the gathered students. No one uttered a single word as they kept interchanging glances among one another.

Then—

"I should be the first to use the Box. With it, I can heal all of you and return your bodies to optimal status. I can also heal everyone else and get potential backup." Alicia stood to her feet, stretching her hand towards Adonis as she maintained an upright posture.

Still, there was no emotion in her eyes.

One by one, everyone rose to their feet, including Adonis who kept staring at Alicia with hints of worry and concern.

"A-are you sure...?" Her plan made sense, and it was indeed optimal for her to go first. But this bravery of hers also meant that she would be the first to be affected by the curse once the effects of the Box was over. Most people would be terrified of that.

"Don't worry about me." Alicia made a hollow smile as she stretched her hand even further to him. "I'm fine."

Adonis handed over the box to her, and it began to pulsate with a somewhat ominous power the moment the transfer was made.

"Remember not to use it until the Dragon Lord shows up. We need to conserve as much time as possible before—!"

~VWUUUSH!~

In the blink of an eye, the trio of Dragons returned, all of them looking good as new.

They all had humanoid appearances, with the General and Commander respectively keeping their heads bowed as the Dragon Lord stood before them.

He still had a calm smile on his face, with both hands placed behind him and a gentle aura surrounding his stifling presence.

"So, have you made your decision?" He asked.

Adonis and the rest of the humans gulped. It was now Alicia's cue to unleash the power of the cube and then pass it to Lucielle, who would shut off the Lord's Skills.

Afterwards, Belle and Brutus would take their respective turns and attack, while he joined the fray. That was the plan. However... "Sorry, Adonis..." Alicia's voice coldly rang in the air as she grabbed the box with both hands and stared at it with eerie intent.

"... But I'll be doing this on my own."

No one understood Alicia or what she meant by that, but they could already sense the ominous effects of her words.

However, to her, she saw something else.

'I... I can't let this happen...'

Two of her friends were dead—first Snow, then Rey—and now there seemed to be certain death waiting for everyone else.

Even if they didn't die, they would get cursed with permanent effect; and that was all for a temporary boost in power.

Were they even guaranteed to win, even with the upgrade? No.

Their experience within the Grand Calamity Class Dungeon already showcased that splendidly. In essence, more people were most likely going to die or suffer for a cause that was not assured.

Alicia could not accept that.

So, if that was her line of thought, why then did she agree to the plan? Well... 'It was all for this moment...'

Before Adonis—as well as everyone else—could say or do anything, the voice of the girl echoed out with thunderous power.

"[Divine Beast Summon: Divine Tier]."

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Chapter 526 Dark Dragon Lord

[Moments Earlier]

"M-My Lord... what exactly do you plan to do with those humans?"

Kar'en, as well as her subordinate, were bowed in the presence of the Dark Dragon Lord, but after getting his permission to raise their heads, they both cast their gaze upon him.

They still remained on their knees, though.

As Kar'en's crimson eyes reflected the immaculate form of her superior, she felt tremors within her body. Merely speaking to him gave her shivers.

Despite belonging to the same species as the Death Dragon Lord, and one of those recognized as viable candidates to succeed him, she still revered the Dark Dragon Lord as her true master.

She had trained under his guidance for the longest time, after all.

"Hm? What do you mean? I already said I would let them go, didn't I?" Lord Ob'elisk replied, almost acting surprised by the General's questions.

"J-just like that...?"

The Dragon Lords were mysteries, even to the members of their race. As such, it was very difficult to decipher the true emotions and intentions of one, even if they outwardly displayed a particular trait.

The Dark Dragon Lord was known to be detached and ruthless, yet here he was talking about sparing the insignificant humans.

'Lord Ob'elisk doesn't even care much for any of his offspring, especially if they're weak. That's why he did not even hesitate to take me under his wing despite not being from his lineage...'

As long as one was competent, they had the attention of the Dark Dragon Lord.

"I-I don't understand..."

"You don't need to. It's just going to be a waste to eradicate them now, after all." The Dragon Lord said with a slight shrug.

"Besides, we can eliminate them at any time. There's nothing wrong in waiting a little while longer to fatten up the lambs a little longer."

"I-I see..." Kar'en clasped her hands as she heard her Lord utter those words.

Once again, she was reminded of his ruthlessness and detachment from any life he deemed inferior. Her eyes glistened and she nodded in respect for his words.

"By the way... the both of you should have this." With a snap of his fingers, Lord Ob'elisk caused two potions within special-looking vials to appear in front of each kneeling Dragon.

The purplish liquid within the vial sloshed within the glass-like compartment, and while it glistened with allure, a certain danger oozed from within it.

"M-My Lord...?"

As Kar'en eyed the floating potion in front of her, she couldn't determine whether it was poison, or some other kind of concoction. The look on Ser'ith's face showed that he too was faced with the same conflict.

"They're Recovery Potions. Stop being overly dramatic and consume them." Lord Ob'elisk sighed, almost slapping his hand on his face while shaking his head.

He didn't say any further, but his expression alone showed how disappointed he was that they thought he would feed them poison.

'Why would I even do that?' He almost opened his lips to say. 'You're my subordinates. Plus, I could just kill you myself if I wanted you dead...'

He restrained himself from speaking any further, though, considering how these two would probably misconstrue his words to suit whatever perception of him that they had in his head.

'It seems my very presence here has sparked a lot of misunderstandings...' He sighed internally, turning away from the two who had already begun to consume the contents of the vial.

As they did so, their bodies glowed, and they began to recover their Life Force, Mana Levels, and Combat Ability.

His Potion was very potent, after all.

'I wouldn't have come here if it was left up to me, but... apparently, the Emperor caught wind of my secret investigation and told me to ensure the heart of human civilization was still left standing...'

That meant he had to make sure the Capital didn't suffer any major damage or fall.

'I have no idea what the Emperor is thinking, and why this battle needs to be dragged out for so long like this, but... frankly, I don't really care.'

When Ob'elisk thought about something for too long, he had one solution that always worked for him.

'I can't wait till I'm done here so I can go back to sleep.' Right now, that was the only thing on his mind.

He was even feeling a little sleepy as he stood.

'The Emperor wants to spare the humans, so I have to obey. The reason I showed up was to stop the whole investigation personally, and also to personally see how much human civilization has grown.'

It had been a couple decades or so since he last came out to check the humans out—or even left the comfort of his castle at all—and it seemed not much had changed about them.

Their civilization looked pretty much the same.

'Well, it's a good thing I came when I did. I initially thought I would have to stop my minions from killing more humans, but it seems it was the other way around.'

Ob'elisk couldn't have anticipated what he saw with his eyes. The humans actually had the upper hand in the fight.

'They've killed three of them already, and these two would have surely died if I didn't show up.' He cast his gaze on Kar'en and Ser'ith—both of them looking completely rejuvenated thanks to his Potion.

'Well, none of that matters now. All I need is to get the name of the guy who killed my offspring and kill him, at least to save some face.'

He didn't really care for revenge, but he couldn't afford to show up after so long and not do anything. That would reduce the perception of Dragon Lords in the eyes of humans, and he was sure the Emperor would scold him if that happened.

'At the very least... I should just kill my child's murderer. That's more than enough justification, right?' With that in mind, he nodded and completely turned to his subordinate.

They were already on their feet, saluting and ready for action. It was moments like this that reminded Ob'elisk that his subordinates were at least somewhat sensible.

"Okay, let's return."

*

Chapter 527 The Present Calamity

[The Present]

As the voice of the Grand Tamer sprang forth, a miracle was born into the world.

The ground split wide open, and the clouds completely parted; all to welcome the arrival of a being that transcended the knowledge and power of everyone present.

The witnesses stood frozen, almost as if they were stuck in time, as a brilliant circle formed on the ground. Runic inscriptions decorated the Magic Circle, with several layers overlapping and mixing with each other in a perpetual dance.

A brilliant light shot up to the vast sky as the Circle's completion was reached, and a massive dome of incorporeal energy instantly covered the entire area.

Then, from within the swirling blue void that existed within the Circle, something began to emerge.

-Something unnatural.

The being was covered in scales from head to toe—silvery blue scales that were bathed in the white color of the Magic Circle it occupied. It had a muscular form, as well as a massive gait of about three meters.

It had two incredibly massive hands, and its stumpy legs seemed to be made up of nothing but muscles underneath those scales.

A tail flapped behind it, also covered in scales, and jagged spikes rose from behind the beast-as if protruding from its spine. It had a bald head, with only one horn, tall and majestic, rising from the center of its forehead, as its eyeless face was raised.

It had a terror-inducing maw, however. Like the teeth of a shark, though several times multiplied within its seemingly bottomless mouth, the terrible jaws of the beast opened a little, releasing drool-like saliva to the ground.

Hunching a little, like an exhausted creature who had a heavy weight on their back, the beast let out a steamy breath as it made its appearance.

It was here, in its full majesty-a creature of abomination and horror.

A Divine-Tier Beast.

"Haaa..." More steam proceeded from its lips as the barrier around the circle ensured it remained right inside it.

Usually, any Summon would be restricted from ever leaving the confines of the Circle until the Summoner or Tamer deemed it so. This was in order to protect the one who called forth the beast, giving them time to hurry to safety, or to bond with the creature.

As such, no creature could ever defy the binds of the circle that surrounded it.

Unless...

-ZZZTTZZZ-

... They were like this one.

The muscular body of the beast passed through the barrier, instantly causing the thing to melt as it came into contact with its scaly skin.

A gust of wind would have offered more resistance than the barrier that was supposed to trap it.

Then, as its two monster-like feet touched the bare ground, finally escaping the grasp of the Magic Circle, the brilliant display of white light finally ceased.

The Circle vanished, revealing the true form of the Divine Beast.

Its silvery-blue scales made it seem more like a fish than a reptile. It also had gill-like openings on its very muscular neck, and tattoo-like markings that covered its entire body -especially its back.

Once its appearance was fully known to those before it, they were finally able to move.

"N-no... you didn't..." Adonis whispered, almost whimpering as his eyes took in the monstrous thing that stood a few steps away from him.

Lucielle, Belle, and Brutus had no idea what kind of creature they were looking at, but they instinctively knew at that moment.

... This thing was dangerous!

They remained frozen in their respective positions as the Divine Beast walked ahead, moving past them without bothering to pay them any mind.

Its eyeless face seemed to be focused right head, towards the three Dragons that stood in the distance.

And what were their reactions?

The Dragon General and Commanders had similar reactions to the rest of the humans. They were terrified of the existence that just manifested before them.

-The one that was marching towards them.

As for the Dragon Lord, he had a far more complicated expression. Yes, something akin to fear was embedded deep within his eyes, but there was something else.

... Something more primal.

"Y-you..." The Dragon Lord growled, his calm and collected mask completely shattering that very instant.

"WHAT ARE YOU?!"

Panic mixed with an instinctive desire for survival filled his face.

-BOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOM!~

An immeasurable burst of purple energy exploded that very instant, all rising from the Dragon Lord. Without hesitation, he began to initiate his full transformation.

His wings grew much larger, dark scales began covering his flesh. His horns grew much bigger, and his body was about to follow suit.

Then-

-WHOOOSH!~

Faster than a bolt of lightning, or the blink of an eye, or any other means of sensory function that any living entity could possibly achieve, the silhouette of the Divine Beast rushed towards the Dragon Lord.

What happened after that was a blur-even for the Dragon Lord.

The Divine Beast had the head of Ob'elisk trapped between both of its huge, scaly and webbed palms. Somehow, the Lord seemed a lot smaller than normal compared to the two colossal things that pressed against him from both sides.

"[D-Divine-]!"

Before the Dragon Lord could utter his Spell, or Skill, or whatever attempt at resistance that was supposed to preserve his life, his head was instantly squashed by the Divine Beast.

-CRUNCH!~

The sound of his shattering skull echoed in the air, like a 'pop' that exploded within the fraction of a second.

After that-

-SPLOOSH!~

His purple blood burst out of his mashed head, with every drop oozing out of the squished flesh and squeezed innards. The jellies from his eyes mixed in with the mucus, sweat, drool, and tears-all of them merging with the blood to create a disgusting blend of gore.

The putrid smell of the Lord's entrails were yet to spread into the air, but those who were closest to him could already sense it.

Some of their Master's body parts had landed on them already, and they were yet to fully comprehend what was actually going on.

"A-ahh..."

Their eyes only began to slowly widen once the corpse of the Dragon Lord descended on the ground, splashing in the filth of its own entrails.

First, Kar'en recognized-with her blurry vision-the horrifying image of the bloodied corpse belonging to the Lord she served all her life.

Her body trembled, and once she had reached the precipice of what she could possibly handle, her lips parted wide open for a scream.

"AAAARRRR-!"

Before she could complete it, the Divine Beast grabbed her by her head, its webbed hands covering the entirety of her mouth before she could make another sound.

Then-

~SQUISH!~

-She also died without any regard or hesitation from the Beast.

"U-uarrghhh!" Ser'ith, the instant he was able to process the deaths of his two superiors, instinctively activated his Spatial Magic.

But-

-ZZTTZZZ...TZZZ-

-Somehow, it wouldn't work.

It almost felt like some overpowering force filled the air, preventing space from tearing up and heeding to his commands. This immense energy that saturated everything around made Ser'ith completely powerless before the Beast.

Since Spatial Magic wasn't working out, he attempted to fly away, both wings flapping powerfully as he initiated full speed instantly.

But-

"Ack!"

One of his wings was caught-quite easily-by the Divine Beast. The *most* uptodate s are published on *.com*

"Eeek!"

Its massive hands brought Ser'ith closer to him with ease, and before the Commander could resist, or even cry out for mercy, the maw of the creature spread wide open.

"S-Spare m-!"

~CRUNCH!~

The Divine Beast crushed Ser'ith with its powerful jaws, easily decapitating his head and sending the rest of his body limp that very instant.

Blood gushed out of his gaping neck as he died, and his body was flung lifelessly on the ground, joining the other two in gory harmony.

Death... a painting of death was created, with the Divine Beast its brilliant architect.

"Huuu..."

Steamy breaths escaped its maw, as the bloody stains on them were instantly purified, turning into white crusts of dust and fading away that very moment.

All that happened occurred within only a few seconds, and the Dragon Lord, Dragon General, and Dragon

Commander... all of them perished within such a short span of time.

"Haaa..."

The Divine Beast, its magnificent body glistening under the brilliant sunset, as well as the incorporeal dome that spanned at least a mile from where it stood, leaked out a steamy sigh.

This dome was not the function of a skill, neither was it Magic.

It was simply the product of the excess energy that the Divine Beast exuded. Its mere presence caused power to saturate the entire sphere where it occupied.

None could deny, as they set their sights on the creature of raw and primal destruction... that it was the most powerful entity they had laid eyes on.

-A true calamity upon this world.

[STATUS WINDOW]

- Name: Dagon.

- Race: Deity (Fallen)

- Class: Divine Beast (SS-Tier)

- Level: 1 (70.53% EXP)

- Life Force: 300,000

- Mana Level: 250,000

- Combat Ability: 150,000

- Stat Points: 0

- Skills (Exclusive): [0@#\$\$%^&!)#G] @

- Skills (Non-Exclusive): NIL

- Alignment: Neutral Evil 2

[Additional Information]

A fallen deity hailed as an embodiment of chaos and destruction. Now a mere vestige of its former self, reduced to a mindless creature with no real sense of reason, this entity follows only its basest instincts.

It is a true monster.

[End Of Information]

*

Chapter 528 Dagon

Silence.

What else would exist after the sight that had just been force-fed to the people who had just watched such a horror take place?

Adonis, Lucielle, Brutus, and Belle... they all stared very frighteningly at the Divine Beast—Fallen Deity Dagon—who had easily destroyed their enemies for them.

There was, however, one question on their mind after seeing this.

'Are we next?'

As if to answer their question, Dagon cast its gaze on the humans before it. It had no eyes, but it could perfectly perceive everything around it; probably even better than those who had perfect sight.

None of the humans concerned it in the slightest. There was only one that had its full attention at the moment.

—Alicia White, the one who summoned it.

"Grrrr..." Dagon growled, taking a step forward as it began to approach the Grand Tamer.

It had no real mind of its own, now nothing but a creature of pure instinct, so there was no real intelligence or calculated motives behind its actions.

The only reason it marched forward was due to an instinctive directive.

'KILL THE TAMER!'

Dagon was incapable of rational thought, but its instincts told it that if the Tamer lived, then there was a chance that it would be captured and held captive by a power it could never hope to resist.

No one desired to be subservient to another—especially an entity weaker than them.

As such, Dagon marched forward with obvious animosity oozing from it as it growled.

Its prey was unmoving, so it didn't bother exerting any real power.

It seemed the prey understood her fate.

She was going to die by its hand, and just like the fallen lizards that had perished moments before, her fate was sealed.

The only problem were the sacks of meat who stood in front of her, supposedly trying their hardest to protect her from its grasp.

There were four of them in total, none of them posing any real threat to it. As a result, it didn't really exert itself and kept marching forward.

Then, it reached their presence.

"[Divi—]!"

~WHAP!~

A single slap from Dagon caused the blond one to fly away, instantly knocked unconscious by the light sleight of the Beast's hand.

The next two were dealt in similar fashion, this time Dagon raising both hands to push them away in swift motion. Just like before, they were sent flying like canons, despite the creature not putting any real strength in its attack.

To the being, they were nothing but mild hindrances that could easily be shifted aside for its goal.

All it desired was the Tamer's life.

The last one that stood before it was a blond girl—petite and cute—and she looked incredibly frightened just standing before it.

Something about this girl seemed... different. Dagon could sense something inside her, like a mark that had been placed by a high entity similar to itself.

No... this one was different.

Either way, by process of instinct, Dagon didn't hit the girl. Instead, it carried her by the head—gently, of course—and placed her behind him so she wouldn't get in the way of its task.

She was shivering throughout, probably scared that the Beast would crush her head like what he did to the Dragons. Well, it didn't.

The girl collapsed on the ground, probably passed out, once Dagon took its attention away from her, now staring only at its prey.

"Grrrr..." It growled in a low tone, its hulking stature standing majestically before the one who would soon perish at its hand.

"I knew this would happen..." The Tamer whispered, not that Dagon could understand whatever she was uttering.

It just wanted to kill her.

"At the very least, with this... only I have to die."

Dagon raised its hand, ready to crush her head and have her perish in the most convenient way possible.

"No one needs to be cursed. The enemies will be defeated. And... I'll finally be reunited with Rey and Snow, wherever they are." The smile on her face perplexed Dagon for a moment. It didn't have a mind to properly process emotions such as this, but it still stunned him for a moment.

The others whom it killed depicted fear and terror, yet this one was showing a completely different emotion.

How odd it was...

"The death of a Summoner severs the tether that binds the Summon to the location they appear in. Once I die..." Alicia looked at her fallen comrades and smiled. "... They will be safe."

Dagon would return to the place he emerged from, and—even if it would be for a brief moment—there would be peace.

That was her final gift to humanity; the sacrifice she was willing to pay for a world she despised.

"Do it... kill me." Dagon didn't need her permission to execute her. He would have done so anyway, and that was evidenced by how its hand moved towards her.

Then—

~SQUELCH!~

Another obstacle interfered with Dagon's actions, launching their body to protect Alicia... just in time to save her from being crushed.

The blood that sprayed out belonged to this new obstacle who jumped right in front of her.

He was a teenage boy, muscular for a human. His back faced Dagon, so his face was staring at the Tamer whom he just saved with his sacrificial act.

"I... I guess... I was able to do... something right in the end..." The boy whispered, soon coughing out blood from his tired lips.

A massive, bloody hole had been created on his torso, with Dagon's hand sticking right out of it. Needless to say, the human was a walking corpse at that point.

"B-Billy...?" Alicia whispered, her eyes widened as she watched one of her allies, one who was supposed to still be unconscious, save her from her expected end.

"Y-you... no... why did you... you shouldn't have..." Her whispers were cracked, and tears flowed from her eyes as she watched blood ooze from his body.

"I-I'm sorry. I went ahead and imposed again, didn't I...?" He whispered, a pained smile on his face as he stared at the girl he saved.

The truth was that Billy's was awoken by Alicia's voice. He barely heard what she was saying, but when he opened his eyes, his blurry vision caught the monstrosity known as Dagon standing in front of her.

At that moment, he only thought of one thing.

'Alica! I have to save Alicia!'

Whether this was rooted in his obsession or not was of no consequence to Billy. In that decisive moment, he simply desired to protect the girl he cared about. Hence, he pushed his aching body to

its limits and sent himself hurtling right in front of her... causing him to get impaled by the beast in her place.

"I just..." He muttered, his tired eyes looking at the girl.

His sight was blurry, so he could hardly make out her features. Was she crying for him? Was she sad? Was she relieved? He couldn't really tell. But... somewhere within him, he was glad that he was able to help—to be of some kind of use to her, instead of causing her trouble.

"My body... moved on its own. I guess it's because I—"

~SPLOOSH!~

Billy's body instantly exploded into an eruption of blood and flesh as Dagon used his second hand to swipe him away.

The pressure alone was enough to cause his entire flesh to burst.

His words remained unfinished, and the contents of his heart remained unheard. The only thing left of Billy... was the rain of entrails that followed his death.

*

Chapter 529 March Of Death

Death.

It's such a frightening thing.

It fuels its victims with desperation as they attempt to swim against the inevitable tide of tragedy that rushes against them.

This unstoppable march... it never ends.

Scary, is it not? Enough to turn knees weak, and body limp.

Well, an embodiment of this very concept now stared down at a girl—a teenager who was no more than sixteen—right after taking the life of her comrade.

The smell of blood and gore filled the air, creating an acrid odor that would cause any to crinkle their nose and leak out a tear or two.

This overwhelming sensation, and the bleak atmosphere caused by the shadow cast by the creature of chaos, finally began to register in the broken mind of Alicia White.

It was at this moment that she fully understood the terror of death.

Her response.

"ARRRRRRRGHHHHHHHHHHH!!!"

A loud scream, akin to the cry of a powerless cur, filled the air, as tears fell down her eyes.

Who was she crying for?

Her fallen friends? Billy? Herself? Perhaps all of the above...

Either way, there was only so much strain that a human mind could take. After that single cry, Alicia could no longer bear the overbearing weight that constantly tasked her brain and body.

As such, she passed out right there and there.

As her lids closed shut, her kneeling body began to descend to the ground. To anyone watching, it would have been a swift fall to the cold earth, but... to the Beast that observed the slump, he witnessed it with much time to spare.

Once again, it thrust its hand towards Alicia's falling body, planning on wrapping its palm on her face and crushing it in one try.

That would be the end of everything.

~WHOOOSH!~

In swift motion, much faster than before, it lunged its hand towards Alicia.

At this point, everyone was unconscious. No one would be present to stop this execution; not that they would be able to do anything but serve as witnesses even if they were awake.

The inevitable march of death had come... and Alicia was chosen as its new prey.

~CRUNCH!~

The sound of cracking bones, or breaking scales, echoed in the air.

It was loud, but also gradual and subtle... like it happened over time, all encapsulated in a mere instant.

"Hey..."

The voice of a young man followed the sound of the breaking scales and cracking bones.

He was currently holding onto the girl who had fallen, her unconscious body resting on his broad torso, with her head finding comfort in the warm embrace of his unoccupied hand.

His dark cloak fluttered, and the black mask that he donned reflected the sunset. With one hand, he held onto the slumbering girl, and with another, he tightly grabbed the wrist of the Beast in front of him.

"... Back off!" His deep, dark tone burst forth, and his crimson eyes flashed brightly once he made this powerful declaration.

For a moment, there was tense silence—rightfully so, too.

No one had ever been able to stop Dagon since its arrival in this world. If they did, they would easily pay the price with their lives. However, not only was this dark-coated man in the mask fast enough to react to its swift movement, he was strong enough to stop its attack.

It caused the Divine Beast to pause for a moment, feeling its silvery-blue scales crack under the incredible strength of the man of darkness.

"What the hell are y—?!"

~WHAM!~

Before the masked man could say anything more, Dagon moved its other hand at full speed, sending it flying towards the intruder.

The result was devastating.

~BOOOOOOOM!~

The masked man was sent flying, his body flung across the area as if he was nothing but a ragdoll who could hardly react to or resist the overpowering current of force that Dagon unleashed.

Dagon failed to calculate one thing, though...

"Grrrrr..."

... The prey that it desired to eliminate had been flung away with the man that held her.

The Divine Beast was fast enough to see what had happened. The man surely let go of his other hand and tried to block the incoming assault as fast as he could, but Dagon was much faster, so it ended up sending him flying deep into the woods.

Dagon knew the man wasn't dead, though.

The sensation it felt once impact was made... was different from the usual kind. Usually, those who were hit by Dagon's full speed would turn into paste before its hand even touched them, but there was no such sensation here.

Dagon definitely felt the impact.

"Grrrrrr..."

That meant the man was still alive—and most likely its prey as well.

It couldn't have that.

~VWOOOOOSH!~

A bright ray of light flashed from within the forest, destroying everything in its path as it approached the Divine Beast.

Recognizing it as a deadly assault, Dagon quickly moved out of the way, but not without the blast scraping a part of its scales.

"GUARH!" It yelped, grabbing its hand to feel its scales and a part of its flesh shaved off by the brilliant white light.

This was the first time since its arrival that it had felt pain.

And, the architect of that fear, was walking towards him... on the ruined path paved by the brilliant white light.

The man had Dagon's prey in his arms, cradling her like one would a baby. He was also walking slowly towards it.

Dagon felt challenged.

Its primitive instinct didn't understand most things, but there were certain emotions that even wild beasts felt. Pain. Fear. Intimidation...

... And a desire for vengeance.

Dagon turned towards the approaching man, also beginning his own slow march towards the much smaller being that kept advancing forward.

Both man and beast took steps forward, until they closed the distance between them and were right in front of each other.

"Huuuu..." Dagon leaked out misty breaths as it stared down at the masked man.

The masked man raised his head to look upon Dagon's frightening self.

Both stood there in silence for a moment, perhaps waiting for the other to make their first move.

Dagon didn't hesitate in the slightest.

~WHUUSH!~

It sent its two muscled hands charging towards the man in swift motion.

A brilliant golden barrier instantly appeared to stop it, but the Divine Beast easily broke past it—the same way it did with the Summoning Circle that tried to bind him.

"Wha—?!"

The sound of the human leaked out, but Dagon paid no mind to him. He simply moved too fast for the sound to make any real sense.

In a fraction of a moment, it was going to reach for his head and crush it; just like what it did to the Dragon Lord.

~FZZT!~

A slight buzzing sound echoed, almost like a glitch, and the human vanished from his position. He appeared a few meters away from Dagon, still carrying the unconscious girl in his arms.

"GRRRRR!"

In a flash, moving its legs in quick motion, Dagon easily closed the distance between itself and the human once again—seeing it as a pesky bug that wouldn't just stay in one place and die.

With nowhere left to run... the human could do nothing but die!

*

Chapter 530 Awake

[Moments Earlier]

"U-urgh..."

Rey felt a mild headache as he woke up from the realm of unconsciousness. The headache soon vanished, however, same with the last vestiges of pain that coursed through his body. It seemed all his Passive Skills were doing their work.

"R-REY!" The loud, relieved voice of someone familiar burst out as he felt the weight of someone fall on him.

It took a few seconds, but after Rey finally acclimated to everything around him, he was able to recognize the young lady whom he currently had in his embrace.

"Esme..." He muttered, his lips moving a little sluggishly.

The moment Esme heard this, she left his embrace and looked him straight in the face. Her two hands were still holding him, but they trembled a little as she stared at him.

Her moist eyes, and the relief that permeated her face told Rey that she must have been incredibly worried about him.

He understood that well.

"Thanks for looking after me, Esme..." Rey muttered, slowly rising to his feet as he held his head while closing his eyes.

Memories of the last thing that happened to him flooded his mind at that moment. He remembered the intense pain he felt right as he began losing consciousness, as well as the System's message to him moments before everything went dark.

"I remember..." Rey whispered, his face slowly darkening as he began making a complicated expression.

His eyes widened as soon as his mind processed everything—the implications of what occurred to him—as quickly as it could.

"What happened, Rey? Why did you suddenly—?"

"They're in danger! All my friends are in danger!" Rey yelled out loud, turning to Esme with a panicked reaction.

"A-ahh...!"

"Status Window!" He said hurriedly.

[STATUS WINDOW] - Name: Rey Skylar.

- Race: Human (Otherworlder)
- Class: Anomaly (A-Tier)
- Level: 70 (00.00% EXP) - Life Force: 73 (+231) {+900}
- Mana Level: 120 (+231) {+950}
- Combat Ability: 103 (+231) {+990}
- Stat Points: 75
- Skills (Exclusive): [Doppel]
- Skills (Non-Exclusive): [Fusion/Fission]. [Merger]. [Dead Calm].
- Alignment: Neutral Good

[Additional Information]

You are an irregularity to the world. Achieving the unbelievable, shaking the balance of reality... you seek to overturn what is and isn't.

Will you succeed? Or will your failure be miserable?

[End Of Information]

"D-damnit..."

It was just as he feared. "I really lost half of my Levels..."

Rey clenched his fist as he felt a wave of frustration shroud him. Rather unfortunately for him, he didn't even have the time to process what just happened.

"Y-your Levels? Why? How? I don't under—"

"How long was I unconscious for?" Rey interrupted Esme, not having enough time to properly address her confusion.

Thankfully, despite being completely disoriented by Rey's bombardment of new information, Esme didn't hesitate to answer his question.

"I wasn't really paying attention to the time, because I was worried about you, but... I'd say about an hour or so. It hasn't been very long."

"An hour? That's too long! I could be too late! What if I'm too late?!" Rey began to mumble to himself, looking at his Status Window again.

He violently itched his head, as if slowly growing insane. His widened eyes reflected the deep conflict and fear that ravaged his body.

'For my duplicate to have died, it means there's some kind of threat in the Capital, where I transported them to.'

A lot could have happened within an hour.

'W-what if—?!'

"Rey! If your friends are in danger, you should be on your way now." Esme's voice suddenly woke Rey from his indecisive bubble.

His eyes flashed in shock as he heard those words from the Half Elf.

The decisive smile she had on her face, the nod of encouragement that she gave him, and the glistening sparks within her blue eyes... all of those things snapped him out of the flurry of confusion that would have swallowed him whole.

"A-ahh... thank you, Esme." Rey said with a slightly worried, but more resolute expression on his face. "You're right!"

"Should I come with? I could help out—"

"No! No, you stay here..." Rey raised his hand to stop Esme, his voice reverberating in the air as panic spread from his tone.

"I-I have no idea what we're dealing with here, so it's best you remain here. Sorry..."

"I understand."

Upon seeing Esme's smile, Rey smiled back. His heart was pounding, and his body was trembling, but he put everything under perfect control.

"First..."

In a mere instant, his Ralyks attire appeared on his body, with the mask covering his face.

'I have no idea what happened in the capital, or what's going on at the moment. The safest option is for me to use this persona.'

Rey realized that he would probably have to go all-out in the upcoming conflict, so he had to be ready.

"Second..."

~VWUUUUUUUUUUUSH!~

Rey activated all of the Buff Skills at his disposal, making sure they all functioned at maximum power right before he arrived.

He didn't want to be caught off-guard, after all.

'Better safe than sorry! I could be overreacting, but I can't afford to let my guard down at this point...'

Once he was done activating all his buffs, all three of his numbers jumped incredibly high.

- Life Force: 60,000 (+231) {+900}

- Mana Level: 90,000 (+231) {+950}

- Combat Ability: 70,000 (+231) {+990}

'This should be more than enough for any enemy I could possibly hope to face...' Rey thought to himself.

If he hadn't been so badly affected by the death of his clone, the numbers would have been much higher, but he didn't have the time to mull over the little details like this.

"Alright... let's do this!"

Closing his eyes, he activated his Spatial Magic Skill, instantly allowing himself to be transported to the last known location of his clone.

However...

~ZZTTZZ!~

'H-huh...?'

Something interfered with the Spatial Magic, and while he was indeed warped away from the Grand Calamity Class Dungeon, he found himself in a completely different location.

'H-huh...?!'

Rey was thousands of feet in the air, feeling the winds brush past his face as he fell to the Capital right beneath him.

'W-what... what the hell?!'

His eyes widened as he saw the City in smoldered flames. A portion of it was completely destroyed, and other sides had been destroyed by massive debris or the spread of fire.

Thankfully, it didn't seem like the damage would extend any further, and there also wasn't anyone close to the site of destruction.

Despite the horror of this sight, Rey found himself more distracted by the wave of dense energy that covered a portion of the Capital, as well as areas in its outskirts.

'Is this what affected my teleportation?' That was the most likely answer.

He narrowed his eyes as he tried to pinpoint the source; which was when he witnessed the gory sight of Billy's death.

The way the monstrous beast—whatever it was—easily destroyed Billy with the sleight of its hand... Rey let it all burn into his mind.

He saw Adonis and the rest of his classmates scattered all around. Eric was nowhere in sight, but the current situation was so overwhelming that Rey thought he would be around somewhere. Lucielle and Brutus were also present.

'They're all unconscious. Except...!' His eyes widened as he laid eyes on Alicia, watching as the Beast raised its hand to strike her.

'No...!'

~ZZTZZ!~

'... No way!'

~KKZZZTTZ!~

Rey pushed past the layers of energy and focused his energy, more than he had ever done before.

'[Domain Of The Lord]'

In that instant, space shifted, and he found himself instantly appearing right where he desired; holding Alicia in his arms as he stopped the Beast from completing its task.

'Haa... haa...!' His thoughts echoed in relief as he glared at the monstrous creature in front of him.

"Hey..." With a deep tone, and the powerful aura that he exuded, Rey furrowed his brows and gave a deep frown.

"... Back off!"

[System Notice: Enemy stronger than you has been detected]

~[Natural Enemy] will now be activated~

{Effect: When facing someone much stronger than you, your Stat Points will double}

~Good Luck!~