

Extras 621

Chapter 621 Lesson On Nature

[Moments Later]

"Horrible! You're so horrible!"

"You really killed them? How disgusting! What a beast you are!"

"How could you do such a terrible thing?!"

Rey was met with reproach from the Elves the moment he stepped inside the barrier, causing his previously good mood to sour instantly.

'The hell...?' He clenched his teeth as he stared at them with stifled annoyance.

Ater had indeed informed him of the culture of the Elves and their no-kill policy. No matter how dire the situation was, Elves would never take another life.

It was a crime against Nature.

They viewed those who engaged in this act to be nothing more than beasts, so humans and the other races fell under this category. The only lives they were commanded to take were those of the Dragons, and the only reason they did so was because it was a declaration from the Oracle.

Everyone obeyed—no matter their disposition.

However, the Monsters that Rey mercilessly slaughtered weren't Dragons. They were an integral part of Nature, and he just prematurely deprived them of their lives.

In Elven Culture, that was unacceptable.

"They would have killed you, perhaps even me, if I didn't strike back. Yet you wanted me to spare them?"

"YES!"

Rey's quizzical expression only grew worse as he was further plunged into annoyance.

"Why?"

"Because Nature ought to be preserved. Those Monsters are unintelligent, like babies, so they have no real idea what they're doing. As the intelligent ones, it is our responsibility to be better."

"The fuck...?" Rey couldn't help but strongly disagree.

"So your excuse for not trying to kill the Monsters who would not hesitate to devour you, if given the chance, is that they don't know any better?"

"I-INDEED!"

"I find that dumb and idiotic." Rey bluntly responded to the group as he walked past them, facing his fortress.

"H-HEY! Those are the rules of the Community."

Pausing, then turning back to look at the Elves behind him, he sighed while giving his answer. "Well, your rules are wrong."

The Elves gasped as they heard his words.

Never before had they heard that their rules were wrong. As a result of that, there was undoubtedly shock mixed in with the anger they felt upon hearing Rey speak so terribly of her people.

Rey noticed this and sighed even harder, shaking his head in the process.

"They really don't get it, huh?"

Elves never took lives, and it was all for the balance of Nature. While this seemed altruistic and good at first glance, it was fraught with too many problems.

This attitude of the Elves would inevitably lead the population of Monsters to keep increasing while they did nothing to stop it. Eventually, the Monsters would overwhelm the Elves in both number and quality.

'And that's even scratching the Surface Level. There's also the major problem of EXP and Leveling UP.'

In this world, there was only one way to Level Up, and that was to get EXP.

Leveling Up granted set Stats that often determined who was stronger, and who was weaker. The problem was that EXP was needed to Level Up, and the higher one went, the more difficult it was to Level Up forward.

'EXP is most popularly obtained by killing things with EXP in them, which allows the killer to Level Up. That's the kind of world we live in.'

It seemed like everyone was able to accept that fact except the Elves.

'Their current Levels fluctuate between 30-50. I'm guessing the higher their Levels are, the older they are. It's why I took Deli, and not any of the other girls, and made Emil disguise as her.'

It wasn't that aging increased the Levels of the Elves, but rather... the EXP accrued over time.

'While it's very hard, EXP can also be gained by learning new things or working hard in a particular field. Even if you've never killed in your entire life, if you participate in enough new activities and obtain fresh experiences from them, your EXP will shoot up.'

The process could also improve Stats without the need to Level Up. In essence, it was a slow-burn, but legitimate means to grow.

'Elves live a very long life, so it isn't strange that they use this method.' Still, Rey considered it to be highly inefficient and a severe waste of resources and time.

'Not only will they be lacking in good combat experience, but they could have become so much stronger if they just actively pursued it.'

This was why he considered the rules stupid!

Esme was a Half Elf, yet the way she was able to grow so strong in such a limited span of time was enough to convince Rey that the Elves were simply nerfing themselves for no good reason at all.

Their rules were simply dumb.

"Your respect for Nature is arbitrary." He said, walking further towards the Tower.

The moment they heard this, all forty-seven of the Elves flared up—though Emil pretended to, since she couldn't do it.

"What do you know?!"

"How dare you say that, ungrateful wench!"

"Why are we even talking to you?!"

As he heard them call him all sorts of names, Rey was tempted to once again cause them to tremble and beg before him, but he chose not to.

By using Zone Layering on himself, he could prevent his smell from traveling beyond the close range himself. Using Sound Magic, he could still convey his words to the Elves, so the layered effect didn't affect his ability to communicate.

As a result of this elaborate method, none of the Elves fainted even when they were so close to him. "Look, if you respect Nature, then grow stronger. That's how Nature truly operates." He told them with cold eyes.

As his gaze pierced theirs, beads of sweat formed on their faces and they immediately fell silent.

"Unless you grow strong enough... you will lose everything." He began, his tone grim as his voice remained solemn. "That is a promise."

It was only a matter of time that the Monster Horde overflowed and made it to their Community. Perhaps they had ways to deal with the incursion of Monsters, but with the Dragon War at hand, the number of disposable Elves had to be considered.

Sooner or later, they would be ransacked by the monsters.

"The reason you all lost to me is because you're weak. It's because of that very reason that those Monsters would have killed and eaten you."

The faces of the Young Ones paled as Rey told them the harsh truth, though many of them shook their heads as he spoke.

They didn't agree.

"Nature is dog eat dog. Monsters kill people and other Monsters, so you are permitted to kill Monsters."

If no one did, the Monsters would only grow stronger—until they devoured everything.

"N-no... no I don't agree..."

"Y-you can't be right!"

"We believe Big Sis! The Elders are correct!"

"The rules are never wrong!"

The Elves seemed to be reciting something as they all objected to Rey's words.

"Monsters don't know any better. We have to be better... we are Elves, servants of Nature. We aren't savages..." Rey shook his head and sighed. Clearly, this was a waste of time for everyone.

Yet... YET...!

'I don't want to let this one go!'

Chapter 622 Resource Contemplation

Deep in the forest, beneath the bright surface of the world lay the Floors of a certain structure-a Dungeon.

It was a realm shrouded in perpetual darkness and teeming with monstrous life.

As one descended deeper into the depths, the air would grow thick and heavy, carrying with it the musty scent of ancient stone and the faint tang of decay.

The lower floor was a vast network of twisting tunnels and cavernous chambers, hewn from solid rock by unknown hands in a time long forgotten. The walls remained rough and uneven, their surfaces marred by the passage of time and the claws of countless creatures that called this place home.

Throughout the Lower floors, the sound of dripping water echoed through the cavernous spaces, a constant sign of the subterranean rivers that flow unseen beneath the earth. Pools of brackish water gathered in the low points of the floor, their surfaces rippling with the movements of unseen creatures lurking within.

Monstrous denizens roamed the lower floor, their forms distorted by the perpetual darkness. From the hulking shapes of the more gigantus creatures to the lanky statures of the smaller critters.

The Ecosystem of this place was quite intricate and diverse -as expected of one of the Great Dungeons that existed in the world.

Just like every day, the Dungeon would continue its internal activities without interruption.

At least, that was what was supposed to happen.

~VWISH!~

In a sudden display of light, several figures suddenly appeared within the Dungeon. Their silhouettes were easily masked by the darkness that the Dungeon offered, and their presence surprisingly went unnoticed by the several creatures that called this place home.

A total of fifty intruders just entered the jaws of death-the lair of monsters.

Fifty-eight of them were pointy-eared ladies who looked confused as to their surroundings and what they were doing in such a space.

One of them was within a bubble-still unconscious-as she floated with the rest. She too was pointy-eared, but since she was still fast asleep, there was no expression on her perfectly clear face.

Then, there was the odd person among the others.

Not only was he the only male among the group, but he had no pointy ears, neither did he look anything like them. Also, unlike the anxious and shocked reactions of the ladies that surrounded him, his reaction to this was nothing short of absolute calmness.

He had a smile on his face as he looked around-almost satisfied with what he was taking in.

"So this is the Great Dungeon that exists in the Land of the Elves..." He mumbled, ignoring the cries and shrieks of the girls around him.

They were panicking so much despite his previous assurance that everything would be fine.

'Sigh... they're no different from kids.'

At this point, Rey was beginning to wonder if he made the right choice bringing the Elves along with him. However, after going over his lines of reasoning, he reassured himself of the validity of his choice.

'I wanted to come here myself, but after the unexpected incidents with the Monsters, my plans had to be tweaked a little.'

Rather than visiting the Dungeon himself, he decided to let the Elves tag along-partially because he wanted them to observe him more, but also because he wanted them to see for themselves how nature operated.

"They strike me as little kids who have no real idea about how the world operates. Exposing them to places like this should make them grow up quickly!"

Of course, this wasn't his primary motivation for coming to the Dungeon. However, since it was practically like killing two birds with one stone, Rey didn't think of it as a loss in any reasonable way.

'While they see what I show them, I'll take my time looking through the resources here. He smiled to himself.

[Perfect Divine Appraisal] was going to come in really handy.

After going over a few more things in his mind, Rey finally had the luxury to give a proper response to the Elves who kept screaming and freaking out amidst the danger they were surrounded by.

"Calm down. We are within my barrier, and I have also put a Cloaking Spell on us, so we should be undetectable here."

Monsters beyond the Grand Tier Class did not exist, and since Rey's Magic was in the Divine Tier-two Tiers above the limit of Monsters-he was pretty confident in his statement.

Besides, even if a variant or mutant existed, he found it difficult to believe they would exceed the Absolute Tier.

'If a Divine Tier Monster exists here, things could get really bad. Still, I can't allow my fear of the highly improbable to prevent me from taking action!

He already spread out his senses to his limits, and he chose to remain vigilant in the Floor they were currently on despite the Monsters being of no real danger to him.

"The goal here is to observe the Minerals and prospects of the materials that can be found here..."

Plunder was not his goal-at least, not for now.

Until he obtained sufficient information regarding the Oracle, he had to be careful about his approach to the resources of the Elven Community.

'But, in strict terms, these resources are absolutely useless to the Elves. Not only will they never conquer this Dungeon, but they have no refinement or production method to make proper use of these materials!

Hence, Rey didn't really see any reason to hold himself back.

'The Dungeon even exists in the forest, outside their immediate area of civilization.'

Not only was it surrounded by Monsters, which the Elves constantly avoided engaging-unless absolutely necessary -but there was no motive on the part of the Elves to venture so far into the territory of the Dungeon.

'If I took everything I wanted here, who could blame me?' Absolutely no one could!

'I think I've had a change of heart! Rey thought to himself with a smile as he looked behind him, noticing how the Elves were still scared out of their minds.

An idea entered his mind, and he couldn't help his grin from widening.

'Not bad. Not bad at all...'

Chapter 623 Deepest Depths

The Elves witnessed it all.

The sight of nature in its purest form was burned into their minds.

They saw how Monsters devoured fellow Monsters, and how cruel the entire process could be. The world within the Dungeon was unforgiving-certainly not for the faint of heart or weak in spirit.

It was a complete nightmare.

Rey took them through paths, traversing various Floors so they could see even more of the calamity occur right before their eyes.

Some of them protested, desiring more than anything to leave the horrid place, but they were all ignored.

"You can leave if you want." They were told, but none of them dared to step a foot outside the only shroud of protection that they currently had.

They also couldn't attack Rey. If they did, and the barrier collapsed, they were pretty much done for too. As a result, they all followed him obediently-like sheep in a herd.

Finally, after reaching the entrance to the Bottom Floor of the Dungeon, they finally halted their long and frightening journey.

"C-can we go back now?"

"I'm so tired... and hungry..."

"My legs hurt. This place stinks. I want to go home."

Rey tuned out their whinings and focused on the door that stood in front of him. It was a double door, one he had to push from both sides to open. The thick stony surface showed just how strong of a barrier it was-and how heavy the doors were.

Still, this level of obstruction was no match for him.

'Before I go in, though...' Rey closed his eyes and sent his senses across the door one last time, doing his best to confirm the contents within.

In the black and white world, he couldn't see all the details, but as long as the outlines were revealed to him, he could anticipate what to expect.

Surprisingly, there was only one creature there.

'The Boss... but with no footsoldiers?' Rey found it a little difficult to believe, but his eyes had never deceived him before.

'There doesn't seem to be a Boss Room either. Just one large expanse that stretches for too long!

After contemplating things a little longer, he decided to proceed.

"Let's go." In an instant, the double doors swung wide open, granting easy entry to Rey and his companions.

There were lots of groanings and complaints among the Elves, but he ignored them yet again. They weren't particularly his primary concern.

'I've pretty much accomplished what I set out to do. The Minerals that Ater spoke of... they're all incredible!'

If it wasn't for the fact that he had to keep his emotions in check, Rey reckoned he would be jumping for joy at the moment. Not only were the materials he found in the Dungeon at least a dozen times purer than those of the Western Continent, but there also seemed to be more variety here.

He saw Mana Crystals that were as tough as Adanantite, or Orichalcum that had a tougher build than the strongest metal in the Western Continent. Mythrill was commonplace too, among other well-known as well as obscure Minerals.

Other than those, though, Rey found even more interesting discoveries.

'The Water here is really dense in Mana. Even unrefined, it can serve as a Mana Recovery potion. If it's refined, it can turn even more potent. Like a cleanser of sorts...'

There were so many possibilities that Rey had to explore with the Minerals in sight, but he didn't do anything at the moment.

He didn't even slay any of the Monsters despite being curious about how their Mana Cores would look like.

'I accidentally destroyed the Monster Cores of those previous Monsters. I really should stop being careless...'

His eye flickered, and he chose to keep his gaze on the world before him.

'Beautiful...' His thoughts trailed as he laid eyes on the untouched garden that was the Final Floor of the Dungeon.

And it was just that-in every literal sense of the word.

The multi-colored flowers were almost as tall as an adult human being, and they decorated the entire space. Some were bright yellow, while others a dull purple. Some had various colors on their

petals, and
some had colors that seemed to change within moments.

The 'garden' that was this Floor seemed serene, with flowers like this growing in all areas of the room.

All areas but the very center, where a certain creature lay. As Rey stepped into the Final Floor, he felt the effects of gravity diminish almost instantly. Slowly, his body began to float in the air, and the same applied to all the girls who remained in his barrier.

All of them left the ground and found themselves swimming in the air.

'I see. This is similar to what Lucielle told me, and what I confirmed myself. The Mana Saturation of the Lowest Dungeon Floors, and the strange effects it can have on the environment.'

The last time he experienced this was in the last Floor of the Royal Dungeon-when the Dragon Commander appeared.

'Time flowed a lot faster down there than on the surface. It seems like this time it's gravity that's being affected. Or could it be the Boss' Skill?' Upon having this thought, Rey cast his gaze on the sleeping creature.

The beast looked like a dog, but it had five heads, with horns attached to each head-as if numbering them. The head at the center had the highest number of horns, five of them twisted and gnarled as they stiffly stood in place.

The Monster's snoring ruined the serene atmosphere, though Rey didn't see much of a difference with it's noise and the constant ramblings of the Young Ones.

'I'm beginning to understand why all the Elders I've met always seem grumpy!'

He had only met two, but the similarities were clear.

"In any case, it's time for a bit of an experiment." Rey smiled as he looked at the Elves behind him.

'I have all my specimens here. Might as well begin!'

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Chapter 624 Experiment Proposal

'Status Window.'

STATUS WINDOW]

- Name: Surebrec
- Race: Monster - Class: Dungeon Boss (A-Tier)
- Level: 300 (Max) - Life Force: 1,500 (+500)
- Mana Level: 2,000 (+100) - Combat Ability: 1,500 (+500)
- Stat Points: 0
- Skills (Exclusive): [Myriad Breath]. [Pure Shield]. [Grand Energy Pulse].

- Skills (Non-Exclusive): [Mass Stun]. [Territorial Sense]. [Greater Mana Recovery]. [Danger Perception]. [Final Cry]. - Alignment: Lawful Evil

[Additional Information]

Guardian of the Dungeon. Those who interfere with the natural order of things here are hunted down and punished by this Beast.

It remains in its abode if it is undisturbed, though.

[End Of Information]

'I see now. If I had started mining, it would have definitely come after me...' Rey grinned as he looked at the sleeping creature.

It was a good thing he decided to be patient. Though, looking at the Boss' Stats, he didn't think it would have made much of a difference to him anyway.

The creature was far weaker than him, and he knew that well enough.

'What's more interesting are the multiple Flowers here.' Looking around him while using Appraisal, he realized how different they were and how they could be used for multiple purposes.

'Some can be used for Life Force Recovery, some for Mana. Some are poisonous, while others improve Stats temporarily. Some are psychedelics, others cause sleep and fatigue. They're so many!'

Rey could distinguish the flowers and their effects due to the colors they had, but he still wondered how dangerous things would be for someone who had no idea which plan did what.

'They would probably have to go through the rigorous process of testing. Appraisal really is useful...' He smiled.

Returning his gaze to the Boss Monster, though, he went through its Status Window once again—even going as far as studying all of its Skills.

'Some look promising. I should be able to test out my [Perfect Divine Growth] here, especially in terms of Skill acquisition and evolution.'

What he wanted to see, more than anything, though, was the effect of another Skill of his.

"[Divine Weapon Creation]." He stretched out his hand, and a glimmering golden sword appeared in it.

It had runic designs on it, and every part of it seemed carved to perfection.

'It's funny how I only need to roughly think about the form I want the weapon to take, and the Skill spits out these intricate designs.'

Still, he paid that no mind. Instead, he called for one of the Young Ones, beckoning for her to come to his side.

"Eeek!" She shrank back instantly, causing him to sigh in exasperation.

~FWUSH!~

In just the blink of an eye, she was right beside him with his unoccupied hand placed on her shoulder. The Elf shivered the moment this happened, but Rey couldn't help but be further disappointed.

'They already know how strong I am, and that I have this ability, yet they keep acting up every time. These girls...'

With the way the Elves acted, Rey was beginning to question the distaste for Half Elves. Esme was naive, sure, but she was nowhere as bad as these ones.

That had to be because of her human side, right?

'If that's the case, then Half Elves are better. Or maybe this is my bias because it's Esme we're talking about.'

It wasn't like he had met any other of her kind.

'In any case...' He brought the golden blade closer to the Elf, causing her to tremble even further, squeaking in fear.

"P-please forgive me...!" She begged, sobbing as loudly as possible.

Her Elven sisters began to plead on her behalf to, and all of their annoying cries began to overwhelm Rey. He couldn't take any more.

"Just be quiet and listen!"

His emotions were not suppressed, much to his chagrin, most likely because he was addressing the Elves. Still, he intentionally calmed himself.

"I'm not going to kill you. I just want to test out the effects of the weapons I make using a Skill. If this experiment works out well, it'll cut costs exponentially and generate more profit. It's also a cleaner way to produce weapons, so that's a win-win for everyone."

The Elves didn't understand most of what he said—especially towards the end—but upon hearing that they would be spared, their crying sounds began to vanish.

It happened so quickly that Rey wondered if they were just acting the whole time.

"S-so we won't be killed?"

"No, you won't be killed. It's simple, really. Just wield the weapons and use them for a while. I'll be observing the whole thing."

The goal was to see just how much of a buff the weapons he created would grant to those who wielded them. Before he got to this point, he had to be sure that his weapons could be wielded, which he tried out with Esme and Kara.

It turned out that, for Kara, she couldn't wield the Divine Weapons. Since his Skill, [Divine Weapon Summon], allowed him to summon from the lower Tiers as well, he decided to go even lower in the list.

Still...

'Kara couldn't wield anything higher than a C-Tier Weapon.' Rey sighed.

He thought it was all about Class Boundary, since Kara had a C-Tier Class, but after trying the same experiment on Esme, he was met with pleasant surprise.

She was able to wield a Divine Weapon well.

The problem, however, was that the Stat Boosts she got from the weapon seemed a little too low for his tastes—almost as if the weapons were nerfed in her hands.

'That means one of two things. It's either the weapon was automatically downgraded in her hands, due to her Class limitation, or that the Divine Weapon itself is defective and doesn't give much of a boost.'

He found the latter to be unlikely, which was why he desired to test out his theory on these young ones before him—especially in an environment fraught with danger.

'I'll have them test out all of my hypotheses to my satisfaction.' His smile widened.

There were 48 Active Elves here, with Classes ranging from D to B Tier; perfect specimens for his purposes.

'And what better way to do that than to fight a Boss Monster and win?'

Chapter 625 The Perfect Test

"Hmm..." Rey looked at the Young One before him with an intense gaze. It was so intense that the young Elf was trembling as she wielded the blade he summoned earlier.

"Just as before... she can wield it well, but the effects aren't as high as they should be. The Stat Increase is even worse than Esme's..." He mumbled to himself as he went through her Status Window.

This was a B-Tier Specimen, the most mature of the Young Ones known as Deli. Rey had already swapped out Emil ever since abandoning the plan, so the real Elf was returned to the group.

Of course, he used Magic to make it seem like she had always been a part of the group, though since he didn't really have a Mind-Related Skill, he didn't have the ability to rewrite her memory or make her remember things in detail.

She just believed everything he told her due to his Hypnosis Spell.

As for her performance as his Test Subject, she wasn't doing poorly at all. In fact, she did better than his initial specimen.

'It seems like the higher the Class, the better the effects of the Item. But I don't understand. Why wouldn't they just be restricted from using Divine-Tier Weapons altogether?' Rey rubbed his chin as he stared at the girl beside him.

'It seems like the higher the Class, the better the effects of the Item. But I don't understand. Why wouldn't they just be restricted from using Divine-Tier Weapons altogether?' Rey rubbed his chin as he stared at the girl beside him.

Humans could not wield items beyond their means, but the Elves could. The Item's effects would be nerfed, sure, but that didn't make it less unfair.

'I only made this Divine Weapon to be a strengthening Item. What if I imbued it with special properties... like Magic? What then? Will the Elves have access to that Magic—even if it's in a lesser form—while humans wouldn't be able to conjure anything at all?'

It was indeed an unfair scenario.

'Ultimately, the Elves have the advantage here. It's just so strange that they are such pacifists when they have most of the benefits associated with this world.'

If they chose to be conquerors, like the Dragons did, then perhaps the world would have already been under their control. 'When I think about their extreme views on humans and other races, I fear for what would happen if they were ever violent.'

Rey shrugged those thoughts aside and decided to run more experiments.

[Moments Later]

'Alright. Looks like I've figured out how this works.'

Right now, Rey and the Elves were floating in the air, within the confines of the barrier he created. Naturally, the Boss couldn't detect them, but that was the least of his concerns at the moment.

Each Elf had a Divine-Tier weapon on them—ranging from bow and arrows, to swords, spears, twin daggers, staffs, and many more—and each of those weapons also had effects assigned to them.

Some amplified Magic Spells, while others produced certain kinds of Magic, or effects that appeared like it.

They essentially functioned like Enchanted Items.

'The effects are indeed nerfed in proportion to their Class, but they're usable nonetheless. That means the Elves can pretty much use any Item without restriction, including their powers, but it'll just be downgraded.'

He even served as target practice for the Elves, letting them fire all sorts of attacks at him to test their intensity. For example, fire blasted from a weapon wielded by a C-Tier Elf wasn't the same as the fire blasted from the same weapon, but wielded by a D-Tier one.

After studying them to his satisfaction, Rey was impressed by their performance. 'Yes, it's a bit disappointing that they get weaker in the wrong hands, but this is still a big step up. After all, the boosts are still legitimately good.'

Plus, he couldn't downplay the effects of some of the Divine-Tier weapons.

'They're ready.' He smiled to himself, nodding a little as he stared at the forty-eight.

With a single snap of his finger, the effects of the low gravity around him and the girls vanished, and they descended to the ground.

"KYAAAAAAAAAAA!!!" The Elves all screamed, but their loud bawlings were cut short when Rey activated a Spell to make them all land safely.

Once he did this and they were safe from the horrid fate that would have awaited them otherwise, they heaved sighs of relief as he shook his head.

'They could have easily used Magic to save themselves, but they're just so clumsy.' He was beginning to worry that he made the wrong assessment.

However, he shook his head and strengthened his resolve regardless.

"Alright, listen up everyone. This is what will happen." Rey raised his voice, folding his arms as he looked at the frightened women.

"First of all... I'll be taking your Elder hostage." Within a second, the floating bubble that held Gratiana appeared by his side.

"W-WHA—?!"

Before the Elves could respond and jump at Rey for his treachery, they felt their entire body grow weak.

The sweet, irresistible smell from before had returned.

"Second of all, I'll be abandoning you here. When you wake up, you'll have to face the Boss Monster by yourselves."

The Elves tried to resist, but they all fell on their knees, shivering as drool fell from their mouths and their eyes were rolled up.

'Ater told me of their custom, and how it works. I never realized I would smell so good to them, but after seeing their reaction that time and referencing it with what I already know, I suppose it makes sense.'

Rey wondered why Esme never went crazy like the rest of them, but he chalked it up to her being a Half Elf.

"Finally, you must do your best to survive and return to save your Elder. The clock is ticking, and I'm not a very patient man." He said to them.

'Ultimately, this is the perfect final test for the viability of my weapons, as well as a way to observe how they'll operate when faced with such pressure.'

With the Divine Tier Weapons—even in their nerfed states—they were indeed more than capable of taking down the Boss Monster.

They could even kill it.

'But will they? Well, I won't be sticking around to find out...'

After all, this was the perfect moment for him to begin his plan to harvest all of the resources for himself.

Chapter 626 Dog Eat Dog

~THUD!~

The Elves all collapsed before Rey, and he watched them with barely any emotion in his eyes. He simply turned away from them and looked at the room's entrance.

He seemed to be the only conscious person in the room, at least until he uttered some words.

"So, are you done?"

As he said this, a purplish black slime appeared from among the flowers, hopping towards Rey with what appeared to be excitement.

The moment it jumped at him, however-

-SPLAT!~

Its gooey form splashed on the barrier that surrounded Rey and the Elves.

"What do you think you're doing? Your job isn't finished yet."

-Uwaaaah! Master, you're so mean!~

Emil's whining voice was something Rey hadn't particularly missed. However, compared to the cries of the Elves, this was music to his ears.

"I'll grant you your reward if you can pull this off well. I'll be taking my leave now, but before that there are a few things to do."

-Yeah, I remember the plan.~

"Good." He smiled, nodding at her intently.

His gaze went to the sleeping Boss, as well as the giant flowers around him, and his grin grew much wider than ever before.

"This should be fun."

[Moments Later]

"U-urgh..."

The Elves groaned as they slowly gained consciousness. They held their heads, chests, and other parts of their bodies while acclimating to the world around them.

It was all fuzzy at first, with the only concrete thing they could feel being the Divine-Tier Weapons in their grasps.

However, before they could fully even understand their predicament-

"ROOOOOAAARRRRRR!!!"

-The loud roar of a terrifying beast echoed within the vast room, waking all of them from whatever remnant grogginess they were experiencing.

All of them, without exception, were now fully awake.

"EEEEEEK!" Their annoying screams responded in a chorus, as all of their tear-filled eyes rested on the source of the explosive roar.

It was the five-headed giant dog that stood at the center of the garden-the same place they were also standing in at the moment.

The creature was awake, and it was glaring at them with sheer killing intent.

To call the Elves terrified would be an understatement.

They simply clung to their weapons as they huddled together in fright. More screams filled the air as the creature roared at them.

"We're going to dieeee!"

"Help us! Someone help us!"

"Save us! Pleaaaseeeee!!!"

All of their screams fell on deaf ears as they all begged whatever invisible figure in the expanse with them to deliver them.

But there was no one present.

No one knew where Rey went, or how long had passed since his disappearance.

All they knew was that they were currently in mortal danger-one that would kill them if no deliverance arrived. -BOOOOOM!~

The mere stomp of the five-headed Monster sent all the Elves flying in multiple directions, separating them from one another.

"Uwahhhhh!!!"

"Hiaaaaaaaa!!!"

"U-uuuuuuuu!"

They all scrambled for their lives like little children, flinging their weapons in any direction as they continued their confused dance for survival.

The Monster watched them without doing anything- perhaps confused or amused by their display of sheer incompetence.

It was a truly a pitiful sight to see.

Then-

"GRRRRRRR..." Seemingly fed up with their nonsense, the Monster stretched out its hand to one of the flailing Elves who had a spear.

Its massive hand neared her, and the moment she saw this, she screamed in fear.

"Arghhh! Stay away! Stay away from meeee!" She fumbled her weapon and began waving it in the air as she closed her eyes for the fear of certain death.

But, death did not come.

In fact, what happened next served as a surprise to both her and the other girls who were also running for their dear lives.

-SQUISH!~

The Divine-Tier weapon cut through the skin of the Monster like a hot knife through butter, easily slicing most of its gigantic paw clean off.

"E-eh...?" The Elf in question noticed this, stunned by what she had just done. All the other Elves also saw this and gawked at the shocking sight.

As the Monster's hand fell to the side, creating a light tremor in the room, the mood within the room slowly began to change.

The wide eyes of the Elves stared at their dear sister, who was now looking at her weapon with child-like wonder.

They cast their gaze on the beast, and on the limb it had lost.

Then-

-SWOOSH!~

One of the Elves sliced at the creature's tail, easily cutting it off with even sharper proficiency. Lightning crackled as she did this, electrocuting the Monster who now bellowed out in severe pain.

"Huh..."

Sounds of curiosity began to echo from the lips of the Elves as they now started to stare at their weapons, and at each other.

Something similar to instinct took over, and they began to feel their legs move without them even realizing it.

-SWOOOSH!~

~WHISH!~

-WHUUUM!~

In clean strikes, they were able to cut the Monster from several ends, making it completely incapable of standing upright.

At that moment, the Elves realized that they were no longer in danger.

Their minds were clear as they all tightly held onto their weapons. They further closed in on the wounded Monster, who was now whimpering and staring at them in horrified shock.

"Kill or be killed..." One stated.

"Law of Nature must be obeyed..." Another echoed out.

"This is how Nature operates." Yet another mentioned.

They all seemed to be of one mind as they chanted together, allowing their voice to permeate the entire room.

"Nature is dog eat dog. Monsters kill people and other Monsters, so we are permitted to kill Monsters."

They marched forward with those words oozing from their lips, making everything they ever said and believed in until this moment a complete lie.

[Meanwhile...]

"W-where are the girls? What do you want? W-why... what do you want from me?"

Gratiana, now conscious, was on a chair right in front of the man who caused her to reach a new realm of pleasure that she never thought was possible.

She fidgeted on her sofa as she studied the interior of the fortress' living room, where they both occupied at the present moment.

The man, who sat opposite her, was smiling calmly as he stretched out a hand to her.

Gratiana still shivered anytime she saw him... anytime she thought of what happened with him in the past, and how she had lost herself entirely.

Yes, she was worried for the Young Ones.

Yes, she was concerned about her people, as well as wary of the one before her.

But, more than any of those emotions, she couldn't help but also feel an overpowering sense of curiosity about the man who casually stood before her.

"How about we make a deal?" He suddenly spoke, causing her body to quiver in his presence.

It seemed every ounce of her being already recognized him for what he was to her-and what he could do at any moment.

"W-what deal?" She stuttered as she spoke.

Gratiana no longer had the confidence and grace she once possessed; not in front of a man like this.

"Your girls... why don't we bet on what they will do to escape their current predicament?"

*

Chapter 627 A Bet Laced With Cruelty

"Y-you... you're so cruel."

Gratiana was left at a loss for words as she looked at Rey with shocked eyes. It would have been filled with nothing short of disgust in the past, but right now it showed nothing but downright confusion.

She didn't know what to think.

"H-how can someone... of your stature... I don't understand..."

All her life, she had been taught of how sacred the Divine territory was. The Oracle was in that realm, and they guided the Elves on the path of Nature.

No other entity of such a stature was a member of H'Trae, and that was the truth.

And so, the emergence of an entity that oozed divinity was something that discombobulated Gratiana and altered a lot of her perceptions of reality. She wouldn't have believed it if she didn't feel it in her body and soul.

... Especially in her body.

Even though she now recognized this individual as a higher entity than she was, she could not understand why he was acting in such a cruel and fiendish manner.

"Why would you go that far? Why punish those girls like that?" She murmured, unable to grasp the process of his mind.

"Do you really consider it to be a punishment?" His response was so nonchalant, almost as if was completely detached from the severity of what he had just proposed. Did he truly not implications of his actions?

"Yes. Life is sacred for us Elves. Placing those girls in a situation where they have to take a life, even if it is staged, is tortuous for them."

"Is it, really? I can't help but wonder about that..." Gratiana couldn't help but be further confused about his response. Surely, he had to have a reason for his confidence.

"I've been observing them for some time now. They're a bunch of bumbling idiots who have no idea what they're doing. That's because they've always been told what to do all their lives." He began, his voice smooth as silk.

Gratiana fell silent as she listened intently.

"Even with those qualities, I can see what they really are inside. They're curious and inherently sadistic in nature. They've been deprived of violence their whole lives that, after being exposed to it for such a short period, it has become so intriguing to them."

"W-what are you trying to say?"

"That taking a life will be easier for them than you realize. It isn't punishment, but release from their ever-growing thirst for it." He smiled at her.

Gratiana didn't know this, but when Rey was testing out the Divine Tier weapons with the Elves, using himself as their target practice, he could see the looks on their faces as they sent all manner of normally lethal attacks to him.

He was certain that they had never been exposed to such power before.

"Their wild grins, widened eyes, and amused expressions as they sent volley upon volley of assault to me... I could tell that they enjoyed it."

It was reminiscent of how Esme suddenly snapped and killed so many people during the Dark Undertaking Arc—at least, that was what Rey thought.

"I-I don't believe that. They're not like that..."

"Then you have no problem making the bet with me." Rey threw his arms in the air as he chuckled amusedly.

"I could always be wrong, you know? If you have such faith in them, then surely you don't mind being on the winning end."

Gratiana gulped as she looked at Rey, who was now waiting for her response.

Normally, she would have taken the bet with such confidence in her Little Sisters, but... after hearing some of the things he observed, she was beginning to panic.

"When I was a Young One, I remember the sinful cravings I felt. It was a secret struggle for me, but I managed to hold it in and only fantasize about it... until the day I became an Elder."

After meeting the Oracle, those urges of hers vanished, and she never again desired to take any life.

"What if some of the girls are also going through similar struggles?" She couldn't help but wonder.

No one spoke about such things in the Elf Community, so she thought it was a problem only she had to deal with. But what if she was wrong?

What if some of the Young Ones were secretly being tempted by the allure of violence?

"If you agree to the bet, I'll let you sniff me. I'm sure you're curious about—"

"F-fine. I agree. I'll believe in my girls."

Rey smiled as she said this, and Gratiana looked away with blushing cheeks. She couldn't even look him in the face.

"Let's... let's just get it over with. I'm just curious, a-and... it's only because you insisted." Gratiana didn't know who she was trying to convince with her murmurs—the man before her, or herself. She fidgeted more on her seat as she braced herself for the reward of the bet.

"Ready?"

She gulped hard as soon as she heard those words, preparing herself for what would hit her next.

'My dear girls... please be strong.' Shutting her eyes tight, she swallowed her saliva once again.

The bet she made with Rey was simple:

If the Young Ones executed the Boss Monster, rather than finding another way to escape, then it would be his victory.

However, if they preserved their dignity and the rules of Nature, escaping without sullyng their hands, it would be his loss and her victory.

'If he loses the bet, I'll be able to have access to more Items that'll aid us in the war against the Dragons, and they will leave this land.' Gratiana thought it was a very generous offer, especially considering the simple reward for his victory.

'If he wins, I will have to lead him to the Community myself, and I will personally guarantee his safe passage—as well as an audience with the Esteemed Elders.'

It wasn't that difficult to do, but it was also too big a risk.

Still...

Gratiana couldn't help but take the risks, given what was placed on the line.

"Aaah..." She moaned slightly as she began to feel the aroma he emitted reach her nostrils. Even though she sat a considerable distance from him, she could feel its intensity permeate her body.

"I'm only letting it leak out in small doses, so I don't overdo it. Tell me if you want—"

"More." She whispered, feeling her legs go weak.

"Alright. Tell me when to stop."

"M-more..." She fell to her knees, her hands clasped, as if in prayer. Gratiana's shiverings continued as tears slowly began to leak from her eyes and her body grew accustomed to the sensation.

Her mental faculties began to get overwhelmed, and she slowly began to lose all sense of reason. 'I feel it... I... I feel it...!' Her tongue was out now, and her body arched forward, moving towards the source of her pleasure.

She could feel herself so close to the new peak she so desperately craved.

Then—

"Ah! It seems the girls are here already." —The sensation suddenly stopped, and Gratiana was deprived of a climax she had nearly attained.

"A-ahh... n-no..." She mumbled, her face fully distraught as she watched Rey rise from his chair with a sinister smile on his face.

"Why don't we go out to meet them?"

Chapter 628 Change Of The Youngs

Gratiana gritted her teeth as she walked behind Rey Skylar.

She had her head somewhat lowered, as it hung shamefully on her shoulders while she contemplated everything that just happened.

"Haa... haaa..."

Steamy breaths escaped her lips with every step she took, and every second or two, she would lift her gaze to look at the man who walked a couple of inches from her. She desperately wanted to close the gap and access what she was denied, but—

'No! What am I thinking? Why am I... what would the girls think?!

Gratiana tried her best to hide the immense guilt that was bubbling up within her, but it was getting too much to bear. A few moments ago, when Rey told her about the return of the Young Ones, she was disappointed.

It was only for a split second, but she certainly thought:

'Why did they have to return now?!'

As an Elder, she should have been elated by their safe return. Yet, she selfishly indulged in a bet that put so much on the line. Instead of rushing to rescue them, she instead conversed with the perpetrator of all these evils.

Gratiana felt awful beyond measure.

'They're my responsibility... yet I abandoned them.' Her thoughts trailed as she watched Rey exit the Fortress. She felt reluctant to do the same.

'How can I even face them?'

She simply wanted to stay back and hide herself in the shadows; at least, until she had worked up the courage to face her little sisters.

Unfortunately—

~VWUSH~

—She had no choice in the matter.

In a fraction of a second, she stood right beside Rey, who placed his arm around her as he smiled confidently at the Elves who were fast approaching, right outside the barrier's boundary.

The sudden change in scenery stunned Gratiana so much that it was difficult for her to render a single word or action in reaction to it all. She could only take everything in with a gasp and widened eyes.

"Do you see now?" She heard Rey whisper to her, and instantly her body shivered.

Her heart sank even lower than ever as she looked at the incoming girls and the menacing expressions on their faces.

Their bodies were stained with blood, and they were dripping with all manner of entrails. Still, they remained unfazed by it all.

The way they tightly clung to their lethal weapons as they approached with a battle-hardened glare proved just how ready they were for combat—perhaps something even more.

"Do those eyes look innocent to you now?"

Gratiana saw it—even felt it within her—but she didn't want to accept it.

"N-no... I don't believe this." She whispered, staring at the group that now reached the forefront of the barrier.

"You don't believe it even if it is right in front of you?"

"I... I can't..."

She saw Rey smile as he turned back to look at her. His glowing red eye made her body react accordingly—almost as if it completely knew what to do with just a single glance.

"I figured as much. Which is why I'll show it to you—right here and now." Gratiana didn't know what he meant by that, but he simply stood still, allowing the girls to approach even further. They walked through the barrier like it was nothing, approaching him and Gratiana with unchanging expressions on their faces.

"W-what are you planning? Girls! My sisters! Are you oka—?"

The Young Ones walked past Gratiana without uttering as much as a single word. They didn't even glance at her—or Rey for that matter—but kept walking straight towards the Fortress.

It puzzled Gratiana instantly.

"They can't see or hear us. I wouldn't want you to interfere with what you're about to witness with your own eyes." He narrowed his eye as he watched them.

Gratiana gulped as she joined the spectating; observing as her little sisters stopped short of the Fortress and then stretched out their expensive-looking weapons.

For a moment, they were still.

Almost as if choreographed, they all stopped moving, and Gratiana didn't understand why. She was able to know every little thing that went on in the minds of her Youngs, but this time she was completely confounded.

"What are they doi—?"

~BOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOM!!!~

Before she could conclude her question, bright bursts of energy in many forms—fire, lightning, light, or sheer explosions—charged from the weapons of these girls as they fired their attacks at the same time.

The result was a deafening eruption, as well as the utter obliteration of the towering construct that both Rey and Gratiana previously occupied.

"They didn't know we had left that place, yet they blew it up. Shouldn't their first thoughts be to save you through non-lethal means?" Rey spoke in a low tone as Gratiana covered her mouth with both hands.

She trembled at the horror she was seeing.

Despite seeing entrails on the girls, and observing their expressions, she didn't want to believe her girls had gone that far yet. After all, the entire test was staged by Rey.

But this? What excuse could she have for them?

"T-they know you're powerful! You won't die so easily from that attack!"

"But you would..."

"What are you trying to say? That they wanted to hurt me? There's no way!"

"I'm not saying anything, Gratiana..." Rey slowly turned to her again, causing her body to freeze up.

"But maybe their desire to kill me has overshadowed their intent to save you."

She gulped as she watched the girls continue to fire their energies at the crumbling building—using elemental abilities, Skills, Magic, anything that would let them continue their display of destruction.

And the strangest part of it all? They were cackling all through the experience.

The innocent faces of the Elves were now marred by ugly laughter that seemed to spread to the corners of their faces.

It was horrifying.

"Ah, I forgot to mention something." As Rey said this, a flapping sound began to echo, and a figure in white emerged from the debris.

"There was someone else in the building."

The figure had long white hair and bright blue eyes. She remained unharmed by the attack, so her skin was as fair as ever. With her beauty untainted, she descended on the sandy ground—a small distance from the Elves and the crumbled building—while wearing an annoyed expression on her face.

"What the hell have you done now, Rey?"

Chapter 629 Esme Vs The Elves [Pt 1]

"You might have to fight a few people later today!"

Those were the words that Rey told Esme earlier that day, and she figured that would be the case- considering how Rey had been having some deep thoughts on planning and strategy since they settled in the Eastern Continent.

That was also why he was talking more with Kara and less to her.

'I understand all of that. It's all for the mission. Esme constantly told herself, so she didn't particularly mind.

She spent most of her time trying to connect with the 'Oracle' figure that Ater mentioned, so she was busy meditating while the others did whatever concerned them.

It wasn't safe outside thanks to the discrimination against Half Elves, and her companions were really too busy to consider her.

Kara was running an errand for Rey somewhere, and Emil had her own business to attend to. Rey was also occupied with his whole plan. That left her all alone, pretty much the most useless in the bunch.

'Should I not have come?' She even began to wonder to herself.

Objectively speaking, there were many other alternatives to Esme tagging along which made sense, so her presence in the group wasn't very vital. The only reason she was here was due to Ater's endorsement.

'I don't even know why he did that. Maybe he has something in mind...' Either way, the only way she could prove useful was to connect to the network that all Elves seemed to share.

But, while she was busy with that, she couldn't help but notice Elves approaching the fortress.

Esme didn't pay them any mind at first. After all, there was no way they would get past the barrier, so she could just continue with her meditation.

But-

"T-they got in?!"

-Much to her surprise, she was wrong!

It was at that moment that she gave them a lot more attention. Of course, she wasn't seeing the Elves or anything. It was more of a sensory interaction with their presence.

'Also... this feeling. Are they wielding Rey's Divine-Tier weapons? Is this the further experiment he wanted to run with it?' She sighed and shook her head.

She could understand his rationale, using them to test out the holes in his theory until he arrived at a satisfactory conclusion, but wasn't it risky to give the Young Ones such weapons?

At this point, Esme could no longer continue her meditation.

She simply sat in her room and waited for what the Young

Ones would do next. She could even make a guess on what their next course of action would be.

'Do I need to use Magic to block my ears from all the screaming and shouting that will soon follow the-?'

~BOOOOOOOOOOOOOOMMM!!!~

The buildup of energy caused Esme to cease her thoughts, but it was the explosion that truly made her stop the line of logic completely.

'Hold on... what?!'

She swiftly reacted to the falling building by creating a barrier around herself, while also flying with Magic. Of course, she was in no danger whatsoever.

Except that of shock, of course.

'Why in the world are they attacking out of the blue?!' She didn't understand it, but she knew the best way to do so.

~WHOOSH!~

In one swift motion, she exited the falling building and landed away from it before everything finally crumbled.

Now a small distance from the Elves, who were staring at her with nothing but purely murderous intent, while dripping blood and entrails, she couldn't help but leak out her thoughts.

"What the hell have you done now, Rey?"

The forty-eight Elves were pulsating with power at the moment.

After killing the Boss Monster, they went on to kill everything else within the Dungeon on their way out. At some point, they all lost count of how many lives they had taken, as well as the consequence of their action.

They now understood that this was the course of Nature, so they became free from the guilt or significance that came from taking the life of an enemy.

Their lust for battle-or rather, death-was yet to be satiated, though.

Merely finding the Half-Breed vermin present was more than enough to set them off again, and they directed all of their murderous intent towards her.

She was unscathed by their attack, which meant she was clearly strong. Still, she was only one Half Breed, while they were forty-eight true Elves, with Divine-Tier weapons to boot.

All in all-both in terms of quality and quantity-they were the superior ones.

"What's going on with you people? Your Alignment seems to have changed too. I see, so this is what Rey's plan was from the start."

The Elves heard her speak, but none of them listened to her.

Instead, they fanned out and began to take formation. Like predators who were after a single prey, they kept their eyes on her as they prepared themselves.

"Haa... so it looks like I'll have to fight you people." As she said this, sighing in the process, she summoned a staff from seemingly nowhere.

"I won't kill you, but it'll hurt a good deal. Then again, that seems fair considering what you're about to do to me."

Once again, they weren't paying any attention to her.

Instead, their eyes were wide open, same as their mouths, displaying their teeth as they grinned.

"Half Breeds are an abomination."

"Nature dictates the rules."

"Death to the Half Breed vermin..."

They all began to chant, making their voices echo into the air, and throughout the beach.

"DEATH TO THE HALF BREED VERMIN! DEATH TO THE HALF BREE-!"

-BZZZZTT!~

In a sharp flash, bolts descended from the sky and struck about half of the Elves who faced Esme. The blast of lightning that rained down covered the entire area in an overpowering blue hue, and the surrounding vibrated in response to its descent.

The Elves who were struck by the crackling attack instantly fell to the sandy ground, darkened and unconscious.

The rest stared in shock.

"Don't worry, that wasn't enough to kill them." Esme's still voice reverberated as she tightly held her staff and gazed upon the Elves. "Still, since I don't appreciate being called a Half Breed, the next person who says that will be killed for real."

Silence and tension mixed into the air, and an aura of dread began to emanate from her.

"So... who's next?"

Chapter 630 Esme Vs The Elves [Pt 2]

~Zzztttzzz~

As traces of electricity still buzzed in the air, Esme stood firmly with her staff as she watched the twenty four remaining Elves who gawked at her power.

It seemed she was waiting for them to make whatever move they desired, but at the moment no one was moving. They were merely engaged in a staring contest.

As Gratiana saw all of this by Rey's side, even she couldn't help but be shocked by what had just happened.

"T-that Half Bree—" The moment she said this, a chill descended down her spine, and it came from the man who stood beside her. His hand was placed on her shoulder, and a gentle smile spread on his face as he stared at her.

"You heard the lady. Don't call her a Half Breed again."

The smile on Rey's face was so scary that the Elder quickly looked away, nodding obediently as she muttered, "Y-yes..."

"Good. Now sit back and enjoy the show." He removed his hand while placing it in his pocket. "I've been curious about how well she fights for some time now."

"She looks strong. How powerful is she?" Gratiana murmured as she looked at Esme's unmoving figure.

Upon hearing the question, Rey shrugged.

"Based on pure Stats alone, you should be stronger than she is. However, her Items really boost her to another level. Also, she has pretty useful Skills, and that makes all the difference. I should know..." Gratiana was surprised to hear Rey say that.

She was one of the strongest Elves in the Continent. Not counting the Esteemed Elders, she was definitely among the top ten fighters.

Yet, a Half Elf had managed to reach her level? How was that even possible?

"How old is she?" Gratiana asked, swallowing a little.

"Why do you ask?"

"Because Half Elves usually have the lifespan of humans, since they take on more features from them. Even though she looks more similar to an Elf, I doubt she has the same kind of lifespan that we do."

Once or twice, Gratiana had seen Half Elves that resembled her Race to a degree—though Esme's resemblance felt too uncanny—but even they did not inherit the lifespan that Elves were born with.

"She also looks familiar, though I can't place it..."

"Well, she's about the same age as me."

"And how old are you?"

"Sixte—" Rey swiftly stopped himself from speaking as soon as he realized what he was about to say.

His eyes twitched a little, and he swiftly tried to salvage the situation.

'I can't tell her I'm sixteen! She's someone who's lived for hundreds of years! How exactly am I supposed to act the way I do if she's old enough to be my ancestor?' Taking deep breaths, Rey thought of a way to save himself from his current predicament. Thankfully, all of that was unnecessary.

"Sixty, huh? Younger than I thought. It still makes no sense, though. She's too young to possess such power..."

Rey swallowed hard the moment he heard her speak. Her conclusion placed him and Esme at too high an age, and even then she thought they were too young.

'I think it's best I keep my true age to myself.' Upon resolving this within himself, he continued talking.

"That's because she has taken lives. By only taking the lives of her enemies, when necessary, she was able to advance in strength quicker than normal Elves would."

"That is an affront to Nature." Gratiana responded with a stern tone. Her face, unlike the looks of the protesting Elves, showed a kind of certainty that couldn't be argued against.

She had her mind made up, and there was no changing it.

"Well, your little girls don't seem to think that."

"T-that's because you corrupted them!" "Did I?"

"Y-yes! It's wrong for Elves to do that! The Oracle commands us with the will of Nature, and we should never do that!"

"I guess we all have to follow The Oracle's decree then..."

"E-exactly!"

Rey's wry smile went unnoticed by Gratiana, who was watching Esme intently—too intently to notice the sarcasm in Rey's tone as well.

'Well, it's not like I'm foolish enough to actually disobey the Oracle now; not when I need them badly...' He thought to himself as he stared at the brewing fight.

~Master, when will you be done? I want to come back already!~

Hearing Emil's voice suddenly pop into his head, Rey shrugged a little before responding.

"Just a bit longer. I want to prove a point. Once it's over, I'll bring you and Kara back from my domain. Is she done with her assignment?"

~Yes! She works very fast!~

Rey chuckled to himself as he nodded, once again grateful to Ater for recommending the girl. He was also grateful to his past self for rescuing her.

'It looks like this whole venture will turn out a lot easier than expected.'

~BOOOOOOOOOOM!~

The resounding echo of battle woke Rey from his reverie, dragging his attention to the battle that was taking place before him.

There, the Elves had begun to attack Esme—and in droves for that matter. Their Divine-Tier weapons crackled with power as they launched their Spells towards her.

None of them were useful against her Skills, though.

Elemental attacks were useless against her due to her [Absolute Elemental Control] Skills and the nature of her new Class [Grand Elementalist].

Not only was she immune to those kinds of attacks, as long as they were at a certain level, but she could also hijack control over the attacks and control them however she desired.

In essence, almost all the attacks that were thrown at her were easily deflected in no time.

As for other kinds of Magic that she couldn't deflect with her Skills, she easily blocked them with a Magic Barrier, while also making sure to read the next moves they would make after she was finished defending against their current attacks.

Compared to the Elves, who were no more than bumbling fools with no real skill in combat, Esme was adept at combat in every facet, causing Rey to smile and Gratiana to gawk throughout her display.

"She's amazing..." The Elder had to whisper as she stared at the young lady who truly seemed no different from a Young One.

No, perhaps there was a difference.

"She's more outstanding than I imagined."