

Strongest Necromancer Of Heaven's Gate

Chapter 41-64

Chapter 41.1: Â Fishing In Troubled Waters [Part 1]

As everyone ran for their lives, the ground under their feet trembled and several monsters joined their exodus.

Ants, ground beetles, bees, flies, ladybugs, wolf spiders, butterflies, and several other insects—that Lux was seeing for the first time—all fled in the opposite direction of the approaching swarm.

A single Red-Striped Predator Mosquito was a monster that was far from being a threat. However, a swarm that numbered in the thousands was a different matter.

It would only take ten bites to paralyze a Dwarf for an hour. In the face of thousands of mosquitoes, no creature in the Figaro Garden, no matter how strong and whether they were alone or in a group, would be able to resist their inevitable demise.

For now, the Dwarves and beasts ignored each other and focused on looking for a safe place to hide.

"Follow the Ants!" Lux shouted. "Maybe we can hide in their nest or something."

Colette and her party subconsciously followed Lux's orders, with the exception of Robin. Even so, after seeing that his friends were now following the Half-Elf's orders, he decided to not say anything and ran after them.

Shrieks and screeches could be heard in the surroundings, mostly from the insects that had been overtaken by the mosquito swarm. Although the Dwarves were small, they were one of the fastest runners in the world of Elysium. Sometimes, they were even faster than Beastkins at running away!

As chaos ensued, the group of Ants headed South East to return to their nest. Lux's party and several other Dwarves, who had realized what they were planning, followed behind them.

Fifteen minutes later, they arrived at the Ant Nest where several Ant Guards were patrolling the area.

"Diablo, Skeleton Warrior, come forth!" Lux ordered and his two Undead Warriors appeared beside him. The Half-Elf had thought of an idea while they were fleeing the mosquitoes and decided to give it a try.

Colette and the others looked at Lux strangely, but the Half-Elf only told them to follow the Ants inside the nest.

Surprisingly, none of the Ant Guards stopped them and allowed the Dwarves to enter their colony.

After giving his two Undead subordinates orders, Lux also entered the safe area, Ant Nest, alongside the other fleeing Ants that were coming from other places of the garden.

Only after the last Ant had entered the nest did the Guard Ants close the entrance, which made the Dwarves and a certain Half-Elf breathe a collective sigh of relief.

"Damn, I thought I was a goner." Andy pressed his palm over his chest to calm his wildly beating heart.

Axel nodded his head in agreement. "Still, it's a bit of a shame. If the mosquitoes didn't come, that graduating party would have been able to beat the Red-Eyed Terror Mantis without a problem.

Colette, Matty, Helen, and Robin nodded their heads in agreement.

The Dwarves that had followed their party inside the Ant Nest shared the same thoughts. Only the Half-Elf didn't because he was not paying attention to their discussion. On the side, he silently sat cross-legged with his eyes closed.

Right now, he was testing something that he had never done before.

In his mind's eye, he looked at a gray world with no other colors in it.

Suddenly, a group of mosquitoes appeared in his vision. Diablo stopped moving, and the mosquitoes flew past him without even bothering to give him a second glance.

Clearly, a skeleton deprived of blood was something that they were not interested in.

It was at that moment when a smile appeared on Lux's face. After testing to see that his theory was correct, he ordered Diablo and the Skeleton Warrior to look for traces of the Red-Eyed Terror Mantis.

He shared a special connection with his Named Creature that allowed him to communicate with the other party on a deeper level.

It allowed Lux to see and hear what Diablo could see and hear, which made his personal bodyguard the perfect chess piece to take advantage of the chaos that was currently happening inside the garden.

Lux saw several dried up corpses of insects littered in the surroundings, which made him realize just how devastating the sudden mosquito attack was.

Fortunately, he still hadn't seen any Dwarf corpses, which gave him some peace of mind. The Half-Elf wasn't fond of seeing dead children, whether they were Dwarves or Humans.

Suddenly, a loud shriek reached Diablo's ears. Lux immediately ordered his Named Creature to run in the direction where the shriek came from, and take a look at what was happening.

As soon as Diablo arrived in the area, he heard an intense buzzing sound in the surroundings.

Giant flowers were strewn across the ground alongside countless mosquitoes that had been sliced in half.

In the distance, he saw a weakened Red-Eyed Terror Mantis that was being swarmed by the mosquitoes.

The Terror Mantis' exoskeleton was very hard, so the mosquito bites couldn't make it past its defenses. However, that didn't stop the mosquitoes from trying to find an area they could penetrate with their blood suckers in order to incapacitate the strongest creature in the Figaro Garden.

After letting out a resounding shriek of frustration, the Red-Eyed Terror Mantis opened its wings and flew upwards. It then created powerful gusts of wind, which blew the mosquitoes away.

Within the dense swarm of mosquitoes, a dozen black mosquitoes, that were two times larger than the normal Red-Striped Predator Mosquitoes, appeared.

The Half-Elf had read all the monsters living in the Figaro Garden from the Elysium Compendium and quickly recognized what they were.

"Obsidian Spite Mosquitoes," Lux thought as he observed the Rank 1 Monsters from afar.

Their bloodsuckers were very sharp and strong enough to penetrate the Red-Eyed Terror Mantis' exoskeleton.

After seeing them, the Red-Eyed Terror Mantis immediately flew away. Its berserked state had already ended just a few minutes ago, and it was now in a weakened state. In addition to its poor condition, the Red-Eyed Terror Mantis also had a wound on its chest, which had been caused by the spearman of the party that had fought against it earlier.

When the mosquitoes were attacking its body, it made sure to cover its wound with its bladed claws, to prevent any of the mosquitoes from targeting a part where they could penetrate with their bloodsuckers.

Naturally the mosquitoes didn't let their prize get away and chased after the Terror Mantis.

On the ground, Diablo and the Skeleton Warrior followed them persistently.

The chase lasted for ten minutes, until the weakened mantis finally crashed into a giant flower to help it break its fall.

Knowing that it was backed into a corner, the Terror Mantis screeched and raised its bladed claws to fight to the death.

The Obsidian Mosquitoes didn't attack it right away. Instead, the Red-Striped Predator Mosquitoes swarmed towards the Alpha Beast who was about to fall on its last legs.

Chapter 42.2: Fishing In Troubled Waters [Part 2]

"Big Brother, what are you doing?" Colette asked. "Are you tired from running?"

Lux opened his eyes and smiled. "A little bit. Let's stay here for now. The Mosquito Swarm is still active outside. I'm using Diablo to check the current situation. Once the coast is clear, we will leave immediately and return to the Leaf Village for the time being."

"Un!" Colette nodded her head in agreement.

After reassuring his party members, Lux once again closed his eyes and strengthened his connection with Diablo.

The fight was currently getting more intense. The Obsidian Mosquitoes encircled the Terror Mantis and applying hit and run tactics, using the ordinary mosquitoes as cannon fodder.

Their goal was to leave a paralyzing venom inside their prey until it no longer had the ability to resist.

After cutting over a hundred mosquitoes, the Terror Mantis' movements gradually turned sluggish due to exhaustion. The stack of mosquito venom was starting to spread inside its body.

The Obsidian Mosquitoes didn't waste the opportunity and embedded their sharp suckers into any unprotected area of their prey.

Several more minutes had passed when the Red-Eyed Terror Mantis screeched for the last time. Its screech was filled with unwillingness and frustration as its body collapsed to the ground, paralyzed.

After sending a few more ordinary mosquitoes to probe the fallen mantis, the Obsidian Mosquitoes finally went in to claim their prize.

Lux watched as a dozen Obsidian Mosquitoes impaled the Alpha Monster's body with their sharp suckers and began drinking its blood.

Their bodies glowed as they absorbed the high-quality blood of their prey, similar to how the Dwarves leveled up after reaching the limit of their experience bars.

After who knows how long, the feasting of the Obsidian Mosquitoes finally ended. They then issued a series of buzzing sounds and flew Northwards, followed by their underlings.

Only after Lux was certain that all the mosquitoes had left did he order Diablo to move towards the corpse lying on the ground.

Lux gazed at the once proud Apex Monster of the Figaro Garden, which was now only left with a dried up husk, bereft of blood. The Half-Elf didn't feel any pity for the Alpha Beast's demise. Instead, what he felt was excitement. He hurriedly ordered Diablo and the Skeleton Warrior to drag the corpse back to the Ant Nest where they were currently hiding.

Since the Mantis no longer had any blood on its body, it had become much lighter and the two Undead didn't have any problems dragging it back to the nest in accordance to Lux's wishes.

When the two faithful Undead arrived at their destination, the entrance of the nest opened and Lux hurriedly came out to claim his prize.

Colette and the other Dwarves, who had followed the Half-Elf outside, gasped in shock when they saw the Alpha Beast's body laying in front of them.

"B-Big Brother, isn't this the Red-Eyed Terror Mantis?!" Colette wasn't able to contain her surprise as she poked the dead Alpha Monster with her finger.

"Yes," Lux replied. "The mosquitoes killed it a while ago, and I asked my Undead to drag it back here."

Lux couldn't hide the smugness on his face as he approached one of the strongest monsters in the Beginner's Zone.

As he gazed at the dead beast in front of him, he had a feeling that if the Alpha Monster wasn't injured and in a weakened state, the Mosquitoes wouldn't have dared to fight it head-on.

Fortunately, it was. Lux even got its corpse, which was filled with treasures, for himself.

The Dwarves that had been with them weren't able to hide the envious looks on their faces as they stared at the Terror Mantis on the ground. The Bladed Claws of the Terror Mantis could be given to a Blacksmith and crafted into a Pseudo-Unique Weapon.

Its exoskeleton could also be used to create an extremely rare armor that was durable enough to withstand most attacks from most of the existing beasts that could be found in the Beginner's Zone.

The true prize, of course, was its Beast Core, which gave people additional Stat Points and a chance to acquire one of the Red-Eyed Terror Mantis' skills.

The Alpha Beast had three skills, which were Fury Slash, Gust, and Berserk.

Any of those skills would prove useful even in the late Apostle Ranks. This was why most Dwarves performed the Graduation Ceremony before leaving. It would be helpful for their future journeys to acquire the Beast Cores of the Alpha Monsters in their respective Beginner Zones.

Seeing the envious and greedy looks coming from the Dwarves around him, Lux decided to use the ring that his Grandma Vera had given him before he left Wildgarde Stronghold.

The ring was called "Enchanted Beast Ring", which allowed him to store the corpses of monsters of any size. The only downside was that it could only store ten monsters at a time.

Even so, it was still a wonderful item that allowed its owner to carry their quarry back home, without worrying about hiring manpower for transport.

Lux pressed his hand over the monster's corpse and activated the ring. Immediately, the Terror Mantis disappeared, leaving nothing behind.

The Half-Elf was quite satisfied because he was able to take advantage of the current situation and even profited a lot from it.

This reminded him of what his Grandma Vera had told him about fishing in troubled waters.

Although he felt a little bad for the party that had challenged the Red-Eyed Terror Mantis earlier, he didn't feel guilty about taking the Alpha Monster for

himself. After all, he wasn't the one responsible for the mosquito swarm, nor was he the one that killed their prey.

He was merely a bystander that happened to find the corpse, pick it up, and take it back home. No one could find fault in what he did because if other people were in the same shoes as him, they would have done the same.

Unfortunately, things didn't go the way Lux had planned after returning to the Leaf Village.

The Dwarves that had seen his exploits had spread the news to their friends. Naturally, this reached the ears of the Dwarf party that had fought tooth and nail with the Alpha Monster before the mosquito swarm invaded, which gave Lux a headache. After all, he now had to think about how to deal with the aftermath.

Chapter 43.1: Let's Get This Duel Started [Part 1]

In the Plaza of the Leaf Village, Lux stood still as he faced the group of six that fought against the Red-Eyed Terror Mantis.

Their leader, Frederick, had his arms crossed over his chest as he looked up at the Half-Elf who was taller than him.

"I heard that you brought back the corpse of the Red-Eyed Terror Mantis after it was killed by the Red-Striped Predator Mosquitoes. Is this true?" Frederick asked.

"Yes," Lux answered. "However, the ones that dealt the killing blows were the dozens of Obsidian Mosquitoes which were all Rank 1 Monsters."

Frederick nodded his head in acknowledgement. "I know that you were not in the wrong, and simply took advantage of the situation, but it still didn't sit well with us. We can only stay here in Leaf Village for a little more than four days, but the Red-Eyed Terror Mantis might not spawn again before we leave this place."

"You can keep the Beast Core if you like, but we need the Terror Mantis' bladed claws and its exoskeleton. Can you give this to us as a sign of friendship?"

"And, if I refuse?" Lux asked.

He didn't mind giving them the Terror Mantis' bladed claws and exoskeleton because he was sure that he could farm these items before he left the Leaf Village. However, the hateful glares that Frederick's party members were giving him, which made it seem as if he was someone that had killed their family members, were ticking him off.

"Hah? You dare refuse?" the Shield Warrior of the group shouted. "We are being civilized with you even though you stole our prey. If you are really an upstanding individual, you should hand the Beast Corpse over to us along with an apology!"

"That's right!"

"Augustus is right. The Terror Mantis is rightfully ours, you thief!!"

"Give us back what is rightfully ours!"

Although Frederick didn't say anything, he still didn't stop his party members from voicing their complaints. His gaze remained calm as he just stared at Lux, waiting for his answer.

Because of the commotion that had happened in the Figaro Gardens, some of the Dwarves who were in Leaf Village turned to look at the disturbance in the Plaza. Soon a crowd formed and watched this scene with great interest.

Dwarves were known to be a rowdy race, especially when it came to drinking. They were also not afraid of a brawl, so the other races had learned not to tick off the stubborn Dwarves, who were known to raise their war hammers at the first sign of conflict.

"How about you buy them from me?" Lux asked. "I'll give you a fifty percent discount on the market price. How about it?"

Before Frederick could give his reply, the Shield Warrior, Augustus, immediately raised a ruckus.

"You've got guts I'll give you that!" Augustus shouted with a sneer. "Selling something that originally belonged to us? Is this how Half-Elves operate?"

"Bastard!"

"Scum!"

"Thief!"

The Dwarves in the crowd that had encircled them were starting to murmur to each other.

Colette's group had also arrived at the scene and looked at the Half-Elf and Frederick with frowns on their faces.

"Frederick, are you bullying my Big Brother?!" Colette immediately stepped forward and stood between Lux and the party leader of the Shadow Tempest with her arms crossed over her chest. "Although you were the ones that fought against the Terror Mantis, the ones that killed it were the mosquitoes. Meaning, it no longer belonged to any of you! How dare you gang up on Big Brother like this?"

"Oi, little girl from the Goldenslayer family, it is best if you stay out of this!" Augustus didn't back down as he glared at Colette.

Both of them were children of Ducal Families in Solais. Although their territories were far from each other, the World of Elysium allowed the dwarves from Solais to appear in the Dwarven Lands ruled by the Dwarven Kings.

This allowed these families to get to know each other, and form strong connections even though their territories were far apart.

"Hmp! You think you can scare me, you pig?!" Colette shot back. "Come. I'll smash your face with my mace!"

Lux hurriedly grabbed the little girl who had already taken out her weapon and was raring to fight against the Shield Warrior who was looking down at her in disdain.

Clearly, Colette wasn't a match for the Shield Warrior, but she still made her stance known because she couldn't just sit and watch on the side as Lux got bullied by other Dwarves.

"Calm down, Colette," Lux said as he tried to pacify the adorable girl whose cheeks were puffed up like a hamster. Deep inside, he felt very touched because the other Dwarves in the crowd were looking at him as if he was their common enemy.

After spending some time with Colette and the others, Lux had almost forgotten that he was the only Half-Elf in this Beginner Village that was filled with Dwarves. In a conflict between two races, it was only normal for every race to back their own.

"How do you want to settle this?" Lux asked Frederick who had kept his silence from the start of the conflict.

Frederick gazed at him with a serious expression as he unsheathed his sword. "A duel. If we win, you will give us the Terror Mantis' bladed claws and exoskeleton."

"And, if I win?" Lux asked.

Frederick didn't answer right away. Instead, he looked at his party members to see if they had other opinions. All of them nodded their heads at the same time. Actually, he had already told his party about his plan to duel Lux if the negotiations didn't turn out the way they wanted.

Naturally, since this was a duel, they also needed to give something in return to make it fair in front of everyone.

"A favor," Frederick replied. "We will owe you one favor that you can ask of us when you meet us again in the future."

According to his Grandma, Dwarves were known to honor their promises. This was why, when dealing with other races, most people would use Dwarves as intermediaries in negotiations. They knew that the Dwarves would uphold their part of the bargain.

"A favor? What if I ask you to explore a dungeon with me and I get all the loot, you're still willing to do that favor?"

"We are Dwarves. We will honor our word without fail."

The Dwarves who were watching from the side all nodded their heads in acknowledgement of Frederick's words.

"Fine," Lux said as he patted Colette's head. "Since you want a duel, I will give you one. What are the rules?"

Frederick smiled. "All you need to do is defeat me..."

"And me!" Augustus interjected. "I also have a say in this. So you need to defeat me too!"

Frederick and Augustus were both Apostles now, which meant that among the Dwarf children in Leaf Village, they were the strongest. They also did an investigation about Lux's history and background and found out that he had only recently arrived in the Beginner's Village.

Since that was the case, there was no possible way for Lux to win against them in a one-on-one battle. After all, they were stronger than him.

At least, this was what they believed, so they decided to go with a duel to make it look fair to everyone. Also, they were technically on the moral high ground, so no one would bat an eye and call them bullies.

"Big Brother, you can't beat them," Colette grabbed Lux's hand and looked up at him. "They are already Apostles. They're way stronger than you."

Lux smiled as he crouched down and whispered something in her ear. "Don't worry. I fought the Dark Draugr, remember? I can handle them just fine."

Colette's eyes widened in shock because she had almost forgotten about Lux's bodyguard, Diablo.

Although the Skeleton wasn't as strong as an Apostle, a two-versus-one battle would still prove difficult for someone that had just become an Apostle.

"Okay!" Colette nodded as she returned to where her party members were. "Don't lose to them, Big Brother!"

Lux gave her a thumbs up as he stood up. He knew that the majority of the Dwarves didn't like him, but that was fine.

Duels that were held in town were quite safe because there was a universal law that prevented deaths from happening. This was one of the safeguards that the God of Games, Eriol, had made to settle disputes over disagreements that might lead to brawl.

Of course both parties must accept the duel for this feature to work.

Anyone who started a fight in any of the villages, towns, and cities without declaring a duel, would be treated as a criminal and captured by the guards that patrolled these territories.

Frederick declared a duel invitation directed to Lux, and almost immediately, a small orb of light appeared in front of him.

The young swordsman pricked his fingertip with a dagger and dropped a drop of his blood on the floating orb to signal his intention to start the duel. After receiving his blood, the orb flew towards Lux.

Summoning Oathbreaker, Lux did the same and dropped his blood on the orb, signaling his agreement to the duel.

"I recognize this duel," a voice filled with Divinity said. "The fight will begin in thirty seconds. Make your preparations."

A countdown timer appeared on the surface of the orb signaling that the duel was about to start.

Lux equipped his Relentless Warrior Armor, which made Frederick and Augustus arch their eyebrows. They had not seen this set of armor before.

When the countdown reached ten seconds, Lux pointed Oathbreaker towards Frederick and smiled.

"Don't get surprised when you lose, okay?" Lux said with confidence.

"I won't be surprised," Frederick replied as he pointed his own weapon at Lux. "That's because I won't lose."

Chapter 44.2: Let's Get This Duel Started [Part 2]

"Duel Start!"

As soon as the glowing white orb declared the start of the duel, both fighters swiftly clashed against each other.

They exchanged exactly three strikes before backing away, as they appraised the ability of their opponent.

'How can this be!?' Frederick was shocked after exchanging blows with Lux. 'He's almost as strong as me!'

Just like everyone else, the leader of the Shadow Tempest thought that since he had already stepped into the Apostle Rank, the battle would easily end in his favor.

However, after gauging the strength of his enemy, he realized that although he was still stronger than Lux, the gap between them wasn't that big.

'As expected, I can fight him head-on.' Lux smiled as he scanned the Dwarf in front of him. 'This kid needs to be taught a lesson!'

The Half-Elf stomped his right foot on the ground, preparing to charge at his opponent. However, before he could even take another step, he felt a magical fluctuation coming from Frederick's left hand, seemingly aimed at him.

"Stone Bullet!" Frederick shouted as a fist-sized stone flew towards Lux, which forced the latter to dodge to the side at the last second.

Having his attacking stance broken, the Half-Elf had no choice but to evade the barrage of stone bullets that Frederick fired in his direction.

'Crap! He is a Magic Swordsman!' Lux cursed internally as he was left with no other option but to equip Dawne to block one of the Stone Bullets that he was unable to dodge.

A resounding metallic sound spread across the plaza as Lux skidded a few meters away from where he stood.

"Sorry I underestimated you earlier," Frederick announced as more magic circles appeared around him. "I will now fight you seriously, so be prepare—."

Just before Frederick could finish his words, Lux picked a random rock on the ground and threw it at Frederick to stop his chanting.

"Stone Bullet!" Lux shouted.

Frederick tilted his body to the side to dodge Lux's unexpected attack. This also interrupted him from casting the spell "Stone Bullet Barrage" which was

the machine gun version of Stone Bullet, firing bullets continuously at a rapid pace.

"You're not the only one who can cast magic," Lux declared as he pointed his thumb at his chest. "I can do it too!"

The lips of the Dwarves watching the duel twitched as they looked at the Half-Elf who was feeling proud of himself.

'Bruh... you just picked up a rock and threw it. That's not how magic works. Aren't you feeling embarrassed for yourself?'

That was the general summary of everyone's collective thoughts in the plaza.

Colette, and her party members, on the other hand, covered their faces in embarrassment except Robin.

He only glanced at his party mates and purposefully took a few steps back as if telling the other Dwarves that he didn't know any of them.

Frederick shrugged off Lux's words and decided to close the gap between them. He only used a ranged attack earlier to test and see if his enemy had any long range spells that could be used against him.

Of course, he already knew that Lux was capable of summoning the Undead thanks to the Dwarves that were on the site the day. They all said that it was how he retrieved the body of the Alpha Monster.

The only thing that confused Frederick was that the other party wasn't using any of his summons. Although he wasn't afraid of the other party's summoned monster, the lack of it made Frederick think that his opponent wasn't taking him seriously.

The two fighters once again clashed against each other at close range. This time, each of their strikes sent sparks flying in the air.

"Tempest War Art First Form...", Frederick shouted.

"Kaizer Sword Art Second Form...", Lux declared.

"Whirlwind Slash!"

"Crescent Slash!"

A powerful gust of wind erupted at the center of the plaza, creating a thick dust cloud which blocked everyone's views from the two combatants.

However, Lux and Frederick didn't falter and unleashed several lethal sword strikes that could seriously injure their opponent.

Within the dust cloud, the sound of weapons clashing could be heard. Several flashes of light could also be seen as both fighters fought toe-to-toe at point blank range.

Both combatants were losing their Health Points at a rapid pace every time their attacks grazed each other. With one powerful slash, Lux sent Frederick a few meters away from him, after the Dwarf had blocked his attack.

What Lux didn't know was that the Leader of the Shadow Tempest had planned this all along. He used the strike of Lux's slash to gain momentum in order to distance himself from his opponent.

Switching his grip on his weapon, Frederick stabbed his sword to the ground and shouted.

"Stone Spikes!"

Lux's sixth sense kicked in, prompting the Half-Elf to summon his Skeleton Warrior in order to deal with the Dwarf's unexpected move.

Several two-meter spikes jutted out of the ground around where Lux had initially been standing a moment ago, piercing their target from all directions.

As the dust cloud settled, Frederick saw the Skeleton Warrior's body collapse in front of him, but the Half-Elf was nowhere to be found.

Augustus, who used his detection skill, immediately located Lux and shouted to warn his leader where the enemy was.

"Frederick, above you!" Augustus hollered.

Unfortunately, it was already too late. The Skeleton Warrior had propelled Lux high up in the air before the Earth Spikes hit it. This allowed the Half-Elf not only to escape the attack, but also initiate a counter attack of his own.

'Kaizer Sword Art Fourth Form!' Lux pulled his sword back in order to prepare his family's special attack that he had practiced, while jumping off the tree on their property.

He had practiced this move so many times when he was twelve years old, to the point that he fainted every one out of three attempts.

Now that he was no longer worried about fainting, Lux unleashed the attack that had made his Grandma Vera spank his bum numerous times for repeating this move over and over again until he fainted.

"Phoenix Descent!"

A screeching sound that was similar to that of a phoenix, spread across the plaza as Lux's sword shone brightly.

The crowd watched as the Half-Elf brushed through the Dwarf's body and skidded across the ground with his sword at his side.

Phoenix's Descent was the only attack that his Grandma Vera had taught him that could be used while he was mid-air.

It was also an attack that put great stress on the body due to the difficulty of its execution. But, the current Lux was now strong enough to execute this move without fail.

Frederick knelt on the ground clutching his chest with his hand. He didn't expect that not only would someone survive his Earth Spikes, but also manage to counterattack against him.

Although they didn't actually receive any injuries when Duel Mode was activated, they could still feel the pain of each attack. Lux's last strike made the dwarf feel as if his body was sliced in two.

"Duel Over!"

"Winner, Lux!"

The Orb of Light announced the victor of the duel before fading away.

Colette, who intently watched the battle, immediately ran towards Lux and jumped into his arms. The Half-Elf stored his weapon and caught the ever-

lively little girl with both hands, and swung her around, and around, making Colette shout in joy.

The Dwarves stared at the Half-Elf in disbelief because they hadn't expected this outcome. As soon as the dust cloud settled, the battle had also come to an end.

Augustus clenched his fist, because he couldn't believe that Frederick had lost against the Half-Elf. Now that his leader had lost the battle, it was now his turn to fight.

"You did well, Half-Elf," Augustus said as he stepped forward. "Now, it's my turn. Don't worry, I'll give you a few minutes to rest."

Lux put Colette down on the ground as he looked at the Shield Warrior who had a serious expression on his face.

"There's no need to rest," Lux said. "I don't want to waste time. Let's just duel now."

This time, Lux was the one that initiated the duel and summoned the Orb of Light.

After giving it a drop of his blood, the orb flew towards Augustus.

'Although I'm not as proficient as Frederick in fighting, I am confident in my defense,' Augustus thought as he dropped a drop of his blood on the Orb of Light, signaling his acceptance to Lux's challenge. 'No matter what kind of attack he makes, I can block them all!'

"I recognize this duel," a voice filled with Divinity said. "The fight will begin in thirty seconds. Make your preparations."

Augustus smirked at Lux, and the latter smirked back at him. When the timer ended, Augustus raised his shield and held his ground.

As a Shield Warrior who specialized in defense, he had decided to use the counter-attack strategy on Lux, believing that he would be the last one standing between the two of them.

However, the smile on the Dwarf's face stiffened when Lux raised his hand and summoned Diablo and his Skeleton Warrior to fight by his side.

He had completely forgotten that his opponent was a Necromancer who didn't need to fight one-on-one battles with him!

Chapter 45.3: Let's Get This Duel Started [Part 3]

Augustus had equipped his full-plate armor that covered his entire body.

He couldn't afford to lose, so he decided to go all out and prove to the Half-Elf that he was a tough cookie to crack.

Diablo summoned the Forest Wolf, making it a four versus one battle. Even so, Augustus wasn't worried. In his eyes, the only threat was Lux. Once the other party fell, the others would follow, so he decided to focus all of his attention on the Half-Elf.

Lux charged at the Shield Warrior as he brandished Oathbreaker to check how tough the little Dwarf was.

After executing Slash, a metallic ring reverberated in the surroundings after Augustus successfully blocked his attack.

Diablo, the Skeleton Warrior, and the Forest Wolf also took this opportunity to attack the Shield Warrior from all sides.

Aside from the shield in his right hand, the dwarf also had a peculiar looking short sword in his left hand, which he used to block Diablo's strike.

For some reason, Augustus' instinct told him that Diablo was a creature he couldn't afford to look down on.

After successfully blocking Lux's and Diablo's attack, the Forest Wolf's jaws clamped down on the Shield Warrior's head. At the same time, the Skeleton Warrior slashed at the Dwarf's body.

The Forest Wolf's teeth weren't able to penetrate through the helmet it had bitten on. The Skeleton Warrior was no different as its attack didn't even put a dent on Augustus' armor.

One mighty roar suddenly sounded from the Shield Warrior, causing Lux and his subordinates to get blown a few meters away. Augustus unleashed his AOE Skill, Shield Warrior's Roar, which had a knockback effect.

Although it didn't deal great damage, it was effective when it came to pushing enemies away especially when the user was getting mobbed.

"No matter what you do, you can't pierce my defense!" Augustus declared.

Lux smiled as he took a fighting stance. "We'll see about that."

This was the first time that the Half-Elf had seen a Shield Warrior in action, so he was quite curious about its abilities. From what he could tell, the Forest Wolf and the Skeleton Warrior practically did no damage to Augustus because of his full-plate armor.

Lux was sure that this armor was something that couldn't be obtained from Leaf Village, so there was only one explanation. It was an armor that was given to the Dwarf before he entered Elysium.

Seeing that Augustus focused on blocking his attacks, Lux knew that there was only one tactic he could use in order to breach the dwarf's solid defenses.

Lux took a fighting stance and the sword in his hand glowed as he prepared to unleash one of his family's sword arts.

"Kaizer Sword Art First Form...", Lux shouted as he charged at the Shield Warrior who had already raised his shield up to meet him. "Piercing the Heavens!"

Augustus shifted his body in order to deflect Lux's attack and weaken its momentum. However, just before he could properly block the Half-Elf's attack, a moan of pain and pleasure escaped his lips.

Diablo had positioned himself behind the Dwarf and stabbed Augustus' bum. Although the Dwarf was wearing a full-plate armor that covered his entire body, Diablo's attack dealt Ethereal Damage.

It was an elemental damage that was similar to a spiritual attack that ignored all defenses.

Diablo's attack had penetrated Augustus' weak spot, which made the latter cry out in pain and pleasure.

Lux didn't continue his attack because the Dwarf had already collapsed on the ground, with his hands covering his backside.

"I concede!" Augustus said as he rolled on the ground towards his party members.

"Duel Over!"

"Winner, Lux!"

All the aspiring Shield Warriors, who were watching the battle, unconsciously covered their backside. For some reason, they could feel Augustus' pain. All of them shuddered as they looked at Diablo, who was looking at his sword in a weird manner.

Augustus had already unequipped his plate armor and returned to his normal attire. Beads of sweat could be seen in his forehead as he endured the pain that persisted in his backside.

It was at that moment when a black shadow covered his body.

The shield warrior looked up only to see Diablo looking down on him. This made Augustus' body unconsciously shudder as he backed away while shielding his backside with both hands.

"The battle is already over!" Augustus stated in shame and embarrassment. "What do you want?!"

Diablo ignored him and simply walked toward the panicking Dwarf who was frantically hiding behind Frederick.

Without another word, Diablo reached out to touch Augustus robe and did the unthinkable.

To everyone's surprise, the Skeleton who was wearing a Black Armor used the Shield Warrior's robes to wipe its sword.

Although it was hard to tell the facial expression on the skeleton's face, everyone could vaguely feel the trace of disgust in Diablo's face, as he wiped Tranquility's tip zealously.

Lux didn't know if he should laugh or cry at his Named Creature's actions. Just like everyone else, he was also caught off-guard by Diablo's act, which showed that it was a very intelligent creature.

After making sure that his weapon was now clean, Diablo patted Augustus' head before walking towards its Master, Lux.

The Half-Elf knew that he had to diffuse the situation, so he decided to settle things in a peaceful manner.

"That was a good fight," Lux said with a smile. "Although we all started off on the wrong foot, everything can be settled if we all sit down and talk in a civilized manner. Since you want the Bladed Claw and the Exoskeleton, I am willing to sell it to your party at a 90% Discount of the market price.

"You can buy the Bladed Claws for five gold coins and the Exoskeleton for three gold coins. How does that sound?"

Frederick knew that Lux was trying to settle things peacefully, so he readily agreed to his condition. Although they still had to pay a total of eight gold coins, it was already a very low price considering that these materials could be used to craft a high-quality weapon and set of armor.

"You have a deal," Frederick said as he extended his hand for a handshake.

Lux held the Dwarf's hand and shook it firmly. For him, the Terror Mantis' Bladed Claws and Exoskeleton were not a big deal to give up. Anyway, he could simply hunt the Terror Mantises at his leisure when Diablo, and his other summons, achieved a higher rank.

Making the Dwarves his enemies for materials that he could hoard in the future was simply not worth it. This was why he decided to take a step back and give Frederick and the Shadow Tempest Party a way to resolve the issue without escalating things.

After the successful trade, Lux took Colette and her party members to the inn to eat.

Robin politely declined, using the excuse that he still had things to do, and left without waiting for anyone's reply. Colette and the others watched him go with a sigh because they were used to Robin always doing things at his own pace.

Lux didn't think much about it and herded the Golden Slayers off to eat and drink to their heart's content.

In a house located inside Leaf Village...

"Find any information that you can about the Half-Elf," Robin ordered the Dwarves who were kneeling in front of him. "I want to know everything about him. Now, Go!"

"Yes, Sir!"

All the Dwarves left the house and headed in different directions. Since their master had given them an order, they would fulfill it to the best of their abilities.

"Lux Von Kaizer...", Robin muttered. "Just how did you arrive here in the Kingdom of Gweliven? Just what is your goal?"

Robin was very wary of Lux because his father had warned him that associating with children from other races would just lead to trouble. Of course, he didn't believe this advice completely because he hadn't met any other races in the Dwarven Kingdom of Gweliven.

But although he didn't know if other races could be trusted or not, he was still very curious about the Half-Elf who had suddenly appeared out of nowhere.

"I'll find out your true colors soon," Robin said softly. "If you are a threat to this kingdom... I will make sure that you will never be heard from again."

Chapter 46: Lux's Business Partners

Three days had passed since the duel between Lux and Shadow Tempest Party. A commotion happened in the Figaro Gardens, which made all the Dwarves leveling in the area abandon it completely.

According to the report of those who managed to flee in time, the Red-Striped Predator Mosquitoes and the Obsidian Spite Mosquitoes were regularly conducting swarm raids in the Figaro Gardens.

Because of this, most of the Dwarves decided to boycott the North Zone of the Beginner Village in fear of getting themselves surrounded by thousands of bloodsucking mosquitoes.

The Adventurer's Guild had also issued a Class B Extermination Mission to clear the pests that were becoming a threat to the outer area of the Beginner's Village.

The Village Chief, Cedwyn, was also worried that if things continued to get out of hand, another Monster Outbreak would occur and, this time, they would be fighting against swarms of mosquitoes that thirsted for blood.

The Elders of Leaf Village believed that the threat the Mosquito Swarm posed had even surpassed that of the Undead Army that had raided their village not long ago.

Grandma Annie, the old woman that had fought alongside Lux during the Monster Outbreak, had a grim expression on her face as she voiced her opinion.

"I think we need to stock more food in our underground shelter," Grandma Annie proposed. "Unlike the Undead Army, these mosquitoes can get past our defenses because they can fly. Also, the paralyzing effect of their bites can cause countless casualties on our side. It is best to not fight them, and just wait until they leave the village."

Cedwyn and the Elders of the village nodded their heads.

"Fortunately, all the houses and other establishments of our village have underground basements," Cedwyn said. "If going to the shelter is impossible, hiding in the underground basement is also an option. As long as the mosquitoes don't see any live targets, they will leave on their own."

One of the elders rubbed his beard as he made his concern known. "Has there been any news from the Stronghold of Norria? We sent someone to inform them of the current threat we are facing a day ago. We should have gotten an answer from them by this time."

Cedwyn sighed. "I'm afraid the Stronghold is busy right now. Our neighboring village, Lindow, was attacked by a notorious bandit group. The Warriors of Norria are scouring the nearby areas to find their main camp, but the bastards

are like slippery eels that couldn't get caught. It will take a while before they can spare us some manpower to handle this threat."

Grandma Annie shook her head in disappointment after hearing the news, but there was nothing that they could do about it. They were not the only villages that were under the protection of the Stronghold of Norria. Other people needed help from them as well, so they needed to handle the situation on their own for the time being.

"Tell the Adventurer's Guild to issue an announcement to the villagers, as well as the Foreigners, that going to the Figaro Garden is forbidden," Grandma Annie stated. "Although it is impossible to close off the entire area, giving a warning to everyone should at least have enough effect."

Everyone in the room nodded their heads as they concluded their meeting. They set out to do their assigned tasks to ensure that their village would not suffer many casualties if another Monster Outbreak were to happen.

East Zone, Aspiration Plains...

"It's too bad. We can't go to the Figaro Gardens," Colette said. She was sitting on top of a carriage.

"I heard that there have already been two casualties due to the Mosquitoes Mob Strikes in the garden," Matty commented from the side. "It is better to stay away from that place for the time being."

Helen, the Cleric of the group, nodded. "Let the adults handle this matter. This is something that is beyond our abilities. By the way, where is Big Brother?"

Helen had started to imitate Colette, calling Lux Big Brother as well. It didn't seem wrong either since he was the oldest and tallest in their party.

"Big Brother said that he still has other things to do, so he can't accompany us on this escort mission." Colette pouted. "I wonder what he is up to..."

The Goldenslayer Party had taken an escort mission to protect a merchant caravan from bandits and wild monsters. They were headed to a village called Lindow Village, which was one of the trade partners of Leaf Village within the territory of Norria.

Robin, who was also seated in the carriage, had his arms crossed over his chest as he looked outside the window.

The investigation about Lux's identity was not proceeding smoothly because they couldn't gather any information about how he appeared in Leaf Village.

Although Foreigners could visit the Kingdom of Gweliven from their homeworld of Solais, all of them were Dwarves. There had not been a single instance where a different race had appeared in the Dwarven Lands, which was why Lux's case was being investigated critically.

Even the Stronghold of Norria had been keeping an eye on the Half-Elf's movements through the men that they had stationed in Leaf Village.

As Colette's party continued their journey, the Half-Elf who didn't accompany them was busy getting chummy with the Ants inside the Figaro Garden.

Using the Elysium Compendium as a translator, Lux communicated with the Ants while he hid in their underground colony. He asked them of the latest news of what was happening inside the garden.

According to the information he gathered, the number of Obsidian Spite Mosquitoes was growing at a fast rate. This was due to them drinking the blood of stronger monsters as they terrorized the ecosystem that had lost their Alpha Beast.

According to the Elysium Compendium, it would take a week for Alpha Monsters to spawn after they were killed. This prevented newly ranked Apostle Parties from hunting them indiscriminately.

Also, the Ants told him some information that made him frown.

The dozen Obsidian Spite Mosquitoes that had feasted on the Red-Eyed Terror Mantis had all evolved into Iron Scaled Torment Mosquitoes, which were Rank 2 Monsters.

In the Beginner's Area, the strongest monster was the Field Boss, Forest Wolf King, followed by the Alpha Monsters.

The tiers below them were Rank 1 and Rank 2 Monsters.

For a party that had just arrived in the Beginner's Village, they could at most handle common monsters like Horned Rabbits, Skeletons, Lady Bugs, and Forest Wolves.

After they became stronger, they could then challenge Rank 1 Monsters.

After they get used to fighting strong monsters, they could then challenge the Rank 2 Monsters, which would help them level up faster.

This would also allow them to gain enough stat points in order to deal with the Alpha Monsters in each zone of the Beginner's Village.

In the absence of the Alpha Monster, the current big boss of the Figaro Garden were now the Mosquitoes. No creature within it would dare to poke their noses out while these bloodsuckers were becoming more and more active in their territory.

While Lux was chatting with the Ants about mundane things, Diablo gave him a mental message which made the Half-Elf grin.

'I knew it!' Lux thought as he gave an order to his Named Creature. 'This is the perfect opportunity to farm points!'

Lux was different from the Elysians and Solaians.

He didn't get experience points through killing monsters. He received points directly after absorbing Beast Cores and finishing quests. Right now, no Dwarves were loitering in the Figaro Gardens, which made this the perfect spot for him to loot the goods that the mosquitoes left behind.

The mosquitoes only cared about blood. They would immediately leave the body of their prey once all of its blood had been sucked out of its body.

What did this mean? It meant that Lux could get Beast Cores without having to do anything!

Diablo and the Skeleton Warrior would scout the areas where the Mosquito Swarm had just passed through. He got the information about the monster raids from the Ants, who shared information through their colony.

With such a powerful information network, which covered the entirety of the Figaro Garden, aiding him, Lux could collect Beast Cores without any problems, even if the mosquitoes were still active in the area.

After all, Diablo and the Skeleton Warriors were just walking bones. As long as they didn't actively attack the Mosquitoes, the Swarm would just leave them alone.

This created the perfect opportunity for Lux to collect Beast Cores and materials which he could sell back in Leaf Village to earn coins.

Of course, the Ants also got some benefits from cooperating with Lux. They had agreed into a seventy-thirty split.

Seventy percent goes to the Ants, while thirty percent goes to him.

The Figaro Garden was a very big place, and Lux understood that he couldn't cover them all. This was why he had made the Ants his business partners for a win-win scenario.

His Skeletons would scout the area to tell them if the coast was clear. After that, the Ants would then send their scavenging parties to haul the dead bodies of the Monsters back to their colonies.

This partnership allowed the Ants to safely stock up on their food sources, without worrying about being targeted by the troublesome Mosquitoes that could poke them to death.

Lux would then get thirty percent of the Beast Cores of Rank 1 and 2 Monsters, as well as their materials after the Ants had collected their bodies.

Although the number of Rank 1 and 2 Monsters only numbered about a dozen or so, having two to five Beast Cores a day was something that Lux wouldn't dare pass up.

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(A/N: In case I haven't mentioned it before, the people in Solais that go to Elysium can level up to become stronger. Likewise, the people of Elysium also level up by fighting monsters and using Beast Cores.

Once their combined stat points reached a certain threshold, they would be able to break through the Rankings.)

Chapter 47: I Just Did What Was Needed To Be Done

A week had passed since Lux had holed himself up in the Figaro Garden and he was still conducting his business with the Ants.

Although the Adventurer's Guild had announced that going to the Figaro Gardens was forbidden, some stubborn Dwarves would still secretly go there to kill monsters and collect herbs and other ingredients.

Due to the decrease of people visiting the place, the Dwarves didn't have much competition in herb collecting, monster killing, and foraging.

This made them bolder, so most of them decided to go deeper inside the garden, which was a big mistake on their part.

"Run!"

A party of Dwarves had ventured too deep in their exploration, and came in contact with one of the mosquito swarms that were active in the area.

The buzzing sounds of the mosquitoes' wings became louder as they closed their gap between the Dwarves who were rich in blood.

While they were running away, the healer of the party suddenly tripped on one of the roots of the plants that was on his way.

"Help!" the healer cried out, but his party members only gave him a side-long glance before running away.

"Nooooo! Stay away!" The healer screamed as the mosquitoes pierced his body with their bloodsuckers.

His blood curdling screams spread across the garden, which scared those who heard it increase the pace of their running.

The ranger of the party, a girl with long brown hair, had been enduring the sudden pain in her ankle as she ran with all of her might, but she had finally reached her limit.

She fell face first on the ground as tears streamed down her eyes. The Dwarf girl knew what fate awaited her, but there was nothing else she could do.

"No, I don't want to die!" the girl shouted. "Mama! Save me, Mama!"

It was at that moment when her body was grabbed by something, making her scream with all of her might. Her screaming only lasted for only a brief moment, before it disappeared completely.

'Sh*t! We shouldn't have come!' the Leader of the party cursed internally. 'We should have only stayed on the outskirts. I have been too greedy!'

No matter how much he cursed himself, it was already too late. Another scream echoed in the garden which made the Leader subconsciously shudder. He had asked his teammates to spread out in order to increase their chances of survival.

However, the screams he just heard sounded close to his location. It only meant one thing and that was that the Monster Swarm was hot on his trail.

Using everything he had, the Dwarf ran as fast as he could like there was no tomorrow. Even though he could already feel a stinging pain in his chest, he ignored it and only ran as fast as he could. This allowed him to widen the gap between him and the Mosquito Swarm.

A few hours later, he would come to discover that he was one of the only three survivors of his party of six.

The Dwarf girl, who had sprained her ankle earlier, hung limply in Diablo's arm.

He had discovered her crying when he was exploring the area where the mosquitoes were currently active. Naturally, Lux ordered Diablo to save her, as well as one of her companions that was nearby.

After running for a few minutes, Diablo saw the Skeleton Warrior carrying an unconscious Dwarf boy in his arms.

The two immediately headed to one of the Ant Holes that were scattered around the Figaro Gardens to hide from the Mosquito Swarm that was still hunting the members of the Dwarf party.

Although they wanted to save more Dwarves, there were only two of them, and the things they could do were limited.

After running in the underground tunnel for half an hour, the two Undead Finally arrived at a wide cavern where Lux was waiting for them.

Unlike the unconscious Dwarf boy, the ranger was awake and saw everything that had transpired.

After arriving at the cavern, Diablo handed the ranger to Lux, while the Skeleton Warrior laid the unconscious boy to the ground.

"Are you alright?" Lux asked.

The ranger nodded. "Just a sprain, but I'm mostly alright. Thank you for saving me."

"You're welcome," Lux replied as he gently laid her on the ground to tend to her injuries.

The Half-Elf deftly removed the ranger's boots from her feet, before taking out a healing potion from his storage ring. He poured half of the bottle's contents on the swelling ankle before checking the other Dwarf's condition.

The Dwarf girl watched Lux tend to her companion and felt gratitude welling up in her heart. Deep inside, she felt relieved that she was able to survive this incident. If Diablo hadn't come to her rescue, she might have already turned into a dried husk right about now, and would never see her mother ever again.

After delivering the two Dwarf children, Diablo and the Skeleton Warrior once again left the Ant Nest. They would look for the girl's other party members and bring them here to see if they could still be saved.

Even if they were dead, Lux ordered them to bring their corpses back inside the Ant Nest, so that he could return them to Leaf Village. Later, they could be taken back home to Solais, to be given a proper burial.

A few hours passed, before Diablo and the Skeleton Warrior returned.

The ranger girl turned pale after seeing the remains of her companions, who were bereft of blood.

She covered her face with her hands and sobbed.

Lux watched this scene with a sigh. The Figaro Gardens was currently an off-limit zone, and this Dwarf party thought that they were strong and smart enough to survive it.

Unfortunately, they thought too highly of themselves, which led to this tragic ending.

Half an hour later, the unconscious boy awoke from his slumber. What followed next was a screaming fit after he saw what remained of his companions. It took a while for Lux to calm the panicking Dwarf. Fortunately, in the end, he regained his composure.

"Stay here for the time being," Lux said to the two surviving Dwarves before placing the remains of their companions inside his Black Coffin.

The coffin could store dead and dying humanoid creatures inside them, but Lux couldn't use its main ability because he hadn't met the necessary requirements.

Also, he didn't want to do it as well. If he were to turn the Dwarves into Undead, he was sure that every Dwarf in Leaf Village would hate him, even if his intentions were good. Since that was the case, the least he could do was bring their bodies back to the village and let their friends return them to Solais to get buried.

"A swarm is currently active near the exit of the Garden," Lux said to the two Dwarves after receiving Diablo's report. "We will return to the village once they decide to return to their nest."

The two dwarves could only nod their heads as they sat and hugged their legs while staring at the small fire that Lux had made to cook some barbecue skewers made from horned rabbit meat.

"Thank you for saving me," the Dwarf boy said after a while. "My name is Glenn, thirteen years old. I am a third son of a viscount in the Dwarven Empire of Evarith. I will do my best to repay your kindness in the future."

The Dwarf girl raised her head as she stared at Lux with an embarrassed expression on her face. She had completely forgotten to introduce herself to the Half-Elf after he had saved her.

"My name is Megan. Fourteen years old." Megan bowed her head. "I'm only of commoner birth, but I thank you for saving me. I can't give you a reward because my family is poor, but if there's any way I can repay you, just ask. I will do my best to return the favor."

Lux nodded as he also introduced himself to the two Dwarves who were looking at him with grateful expressions on their faces.

"Lux," Lux said. "I don't need any repayment. I just did what needed to be done. I'm sure that if you were in my shoes, both of you would have done the same."

Glen and Megan lowered their heads. They felt ashamed because back then, they only thought about saving themselves, and didn't care if their comrades were going to die or not. After all, they were just a temporary party that was made out of necessity.

Lux didn't know what the two Dwarves were thinking as he took two skewers from the fire pit and gave them to the two of them to eat.

"Eat first," Lux stated. "Both of you will need your strength when we leave this place."

The two dwarves thanked Lux for his generosity and ate the barbecue in silence.

The Half-Elf was about to give them more when his sensitive ears picked up a buzzing sound coming from one of the tunnels leading to their cavern.

Seeing the look of concern on Lux's face, the two Dwarves frowned. They couldn't hear what the red-headed teenager was hearing, so they were not aware that the Mosquitoes had discovered one of the hidden entrances that led into the colony.

"Both of you stay here," Lux said as he ran towards one of the tunnels to help the Ants resist the invaders.

Right now, he and the Ants were allies, so it was only natural for him to extend his help during their time of need.

Glenn and Megan glanced at each other before nodding their heads at the same time. They stood up and ran after their savior. Although they didn't know what had caused Lux to have that anxious look on his face, they were sure that it was not something good.

Chapter 48: Skirmish Inside the Ant Nest

As soon as Lux arrived near one of the entrances leading to the colony, he could see several Ants and Mosquitoes already fighting against each other.

Dozens of Mosquitoes led by an Iron Scaled Torment Mosquito (Rank 2 Monster), and four Obsidian Spite Mosquitoes (Rank 1 Monster) started to clash against the defenders.

Fortunately, the Ants weren't pushovers. Although they were pacifists, when push came to shove, they were willing to fight back against any invaders.

The Guards of the Ant Nest, which were the Horned Army Ant (Rank 1) spat formic acid at the mosquitoes that attempted to enter their domain.

The Red-Striped Predator Mosquitoes shrieked in pain after their bodies were drenched in acid.

The Obsidian Spite Mosquitoes, on the other hand, received minor injuries, but they were still capable of battling.

Only the Iron Scaled Torment Mosquito was unaffected by the acid sprays that fell on its body.

It boldly impaled one of the defender Ants with its spear-like bloosuckers and started to suck its blood.

The Ants screeched in anger as they called for backup within their colony. Soon, more Horned Army Ants emerged and started to bombard their foes with formic acid.

Due to the overwhelming difference in numbers, the numbers of Mosquitoes decreased drastically. Even the Obsidian Spite Mosquitoes couldn't escape the army's advance. The only problem was the Iron Scaled Torment Mosquito, whose body was resilient to the acid sprays that the Ants were shooting at it.

After seeing that all of its bodyguards had died, the Iron Scaled Torment Mosquito planned to make its escape, but the Ants were adamant to prevent it from getting away. They had blocked the entrance leading outside of their nest, effectively trapping the last invading monster within.

The Ants had climbed the walls and the ceiling of their nest, and lunged at the invader who was trying its best to remain in the air. However, after several ants had taken hold of its body, it lost its ability to fly, and fell to the ground.

It was at that moment when the Ants showed their superiority as they mobbed the Scaled Torment Mosquito like a bunch of gangsters out for blood.

Shrieks and screeches emerged from the cavern as the ants bit, pulled, and tore the mosquito apart. When the helpless mosquito had lost its ability to fly, three ants that were two-meter tall emerged from the depths of the Ant Nest.

Lux knew the name of this Ant Species because he had seen them while traversing the countless passages of the underground maze that had been built by the Ants.

"Armored Jaws," Lux muttered as he saw the Rank 2 defenders of the Ant Colony.

The bodies of these ants were as hard as steel. Using their powerful mandibles, they grabbed hold of the Iron Scaled Torment Mosquito's body and tore it apart.

Lux watched this scene unfold with a calm expression on his face. The reason why he was confident in having the Ants become his business partners was due to the fact that they were the true Overlords of the Figaro Garden.

The Mosquitoes were scary because they numbered in the tens of thousands, but it didn't mean that they could beat the Ants which numbered in the hundreds of thousands. When talking about superiority between the two races, the ants were clearly the winner.

If not for their pacifist attitude, they would have long become the true rulers of the Figaro Garden.

After the battle, the Ants carried the bodies of the Mosquitoes back to their Queen so she could feast upon them. They also carried off the bodies of their fallen comrades, which they would bury at a specialized location called the graveyard of the ants.

Earlier, Lux wanted to help, but when he saw that the Ants didn't need it, he held his hand and simply watched the battle unfold.

Glenn and Megan looked at the dead Mosquitoes with lingering fear because they knew that if it weren't for Lux's help, they would have died a very painful and horrific death.

Lux approached one of the Guard Ants and took out his Elysium Compendium to communicate.

After getting the information he needed, he bid the Ant goodbye and signaled for Glenn and Megan to follow him.

"This tunnel will lead us to the surface. It is also the entrance that the Mosquitoes used to infiltrate the Ant Nest," Lux explained. "But you don't have to worry, the Mosquitoes in this area have all been killed, so it is safe to use this passage to return to Leaf Village."

The two Dwarves nodded in understanding.

"Diablo, come forth!" Lux ordered. "Skeleton Warrior, you come here as well!"

Immediately, a black knight, and a skeleton warrior appeared in front of them.

"Check the entrance and the surrounding area for any Mosquitoes." Lux commanded. "Make sure to extend your search, to ensure that the path towards Leaf Village doesn't have any danger."

Diablo and the Skeleton Warrior nodded their heads as they ran towards the surface. Several Horned Army Ants walked past Lux and the two Dwarves to resume their duties in guarding their nest.

The three followed behind the Ants because it would be safer that way.

After a quarter of an hour of scouting, Diablo informed the Half-Elf that the coast was clear, and no threats were in sight.

Hearing his trusted subordinate's report, Lux led the two Dwarves back to Leaf Village without encountering any monsters along their path.

"Thank you for saving me again," Glenn bowed. "I promise to repay this favor in the future."

"Me, too," Megan said firmly. "I will return this favor."

Lux nodded. "Please, take care of the bodies of your comrades and return them to their families."

Glenn and Megan sadly nodded their heads because this was the least that they could do for their party members that had fallen in battle.

"Glenn! Megan! Thank goodness you are alive!" a Dwarf shouted as he ran in their direction.

Glenn and Megan looked at their party leader, Oman, with sad expressions on their faces. When the latter had told all of them to separate, they knew that it was the only way to increase the number of survivors in their party.

They simply couldn't fight against hundreds of Mosquitoes at the same time. Doing so would only lead to a pointless death.

As the Dwarf neared their location, Lux unloaded the bodies of the three Dwarves that he had placed inside sacks to be brought back home in Solais.

"Oman, this is Lux," Glenn said after the three had their reunion. "He is the one who saved us, and brought the bodies of our friends back to us."

Oman's face paled after seeing the three sacks on the ground. After having escaped the Mosquitos' pursuit, the Dwarf had kept on blaming himself for what happened to his party members.

He really thought that he was the only one that survived and was ridden with guilt.

Before seeing Glenn and Megan, Oman had already resolved to go back to the Figaro Garden to find the bodies of his party members and give them a proper burial.

"Thank you, Sir Lux," Oman bowed his head. "If there comes a time that you will need my help, just say a word. Even at the cost of my life, I will help you to the best of my ability."

Oman tapped his chest three times with his closed fist. This was a gesture that Dwarves did when they made an absolute pledge to someone with their life on the line.

Lux looked at the Dwarf who had blonde hair and brown eyes who was looking at him with a serious expression on his face.

"Understood," Lux replied. "If there will really come a time when I will need your help, I will not hesitate to call you."

After spending time with the Dwarves, the Half-Elf already understood how serious they were when it came to pledges. Because of this, he accepted Oman's promise because it was the right thing to do.

"Just return the bodies of your friends to their loved ones, and do not step into the Figaro Gardens again for the time being," Lux stated. "The environment there is too dangerous for you kids. Also, do not throw your lives away because of greed. We only have one life. Treasure it and live it to the fullest."

Lux bid the Dwarves goodbye and returned to the inn. He had stayed in the Figaro Gardens for a week, and he hadn't had a good sleep for the past few days. Also, he needed to take a bath badly, so he decided to take the rest of the day off.

As he walked towards his inn, he thought about his own party mates that had accepted an Escort Mission. He kinda missed the rowdy bunch of Dwarves, especially Colette who was always brimming with positivity.

"If I'm not mistaken, they will be back in another two weeks," Lux muttered as he made his way towards his room. "When they return, I think I'll ask them to help me hunt the Carbuncle in the Aspiration Plains."

The Carbuncle was the Alpha Beast of the Aspiration Plains. Although it was a Rank 3 Monster, it didn't specialize in attacks. Instead it was a support type monster that had the power to heal and buff the minions that fought for it.

It was the weakest among the three Alpha Beasts in the Beginner's Village. Lux was confident that if they all worked together, they would be able to hunt it down without any problems.

"All of you, please be safe," Lux said softly as he looked to the East where Lindow Village was located. "I can't wait to go adventuring with you guys again."

Chapter 49: Lux's Dilemma

Twenty-six Beast Cores.

That was the total number of Beast Cores that were currently in Lux's possession. One of these cores belonged to the Alpha Beast, Red-Eyed Terror Mantis.

The Half-Elf looked at these cores, not with happiness, but with a serious expression on his face. He was torn whether he should use these cores to upgrade himself or to upgrade his summons.

If Lux chose to use these Beast Cores for himself, he wouldn't be able to add any points to his existing stats anymore because it would kick him out of the Beginner's Zone.

The Half-Elf knew this, but there was one more thing that was making him hesitate and that was not knowing what skills could be learned from the Beast Cores.

If he used the Cores for his Summons, he would no longer have the chance to learn the skills from them. Although the chances of learning a skill from a Beast Core was small, the possibility still existed. This was why he was hesitant to not use them to strengthen himself.

"Soul Book," Lux muttered as he raised his hand.

Immediately his Soul Book appeared.

The Half-Elf then checked his stats to see what he could do about his current predicament.

Name: Lux Von Kaizer

Age: 16

Race: Half-Elf

Rank: (None)

Health: 960 / 960

Mana: 940 / 940

Strength: 46 (+3)

Intelligence: 46 (+1)

Vitality: 31

Agility: 34 (+3)

Dexterity: 31 (+3)

Free Stat Points Available: 35

Special Abilities: Skill Evolution [EX], Mana Drain [EX]

Active Skills: Power Shot, Slash, Dark Arrow,

Passive Skills: Enhanced Fortitude

Elysium Copper Coins: 170

Elysium Silver Coins: 24

Elysium Gold Coins: 8

< Immortal Conqueror's Legacy >

Rating: F+

Progress: (56/100)

Conquest is not all about claiming lands, and expanding your Domain. True conquest is conquering the hearts of people. Once you gain their loyalty, the path to Dominion will open its doors for you.

Upgrade Rewards: +5 to All Stats, +200 Health Points, Mana Drain [EX]

Note: Upgrading your special constitution will allow you to unlock its abilities.

< Diablo >

– Named Skeleton

– Skeleton Fighter

– Rating: D

– Mana: 10

– Progress (40 / 100)

< Skeleton Warrior >

Rating: F+

Mana: 5

– Summons one Skeleton Warrior to fight for you

– Summon duration: 1 hour

– Skill Cooldown: 5 minutes.

Progress (0 / 100)

Lux gazed at this status page as he held the Rank 3 Beast Core of the Red-Eyed Terror Mantis in his hand.

'I need 44 Points to upgrade my Body Constitution to its next stage,' Lux thought. 'With a Rank 3 Beast Core, I can get 15 free Status Points, and 15 Body Constitution Points.'

The Half-Elf had long decided that he would be using the Alpha Beast Core on himself, because the Terror Mantis had three skills and they were Fury Slash, Gust, and Berserk.

Right now, his Slash skill was on its way to evolving into Fury Slash. Among the three skills that could be learned from the Beast Core, Fury Slash was not something he wanted to acquire.

Gust was a Wind Elemental Skill that created powerful gusts of wind that dealt damage and blew away one's enemies.

Berserk, on the other hand, was a very useful ability that doubles one's stat points for a brief period of time.

However, it had a downside.

When the berserked state faded away, the user would have their stats halved as they fell into a weakened state for a period of time. This was also why the Red-Eyed Terror Mantis fell to the Mosquito Swarm. After losing half its health points, the backlash of the weakened state made it unable to resist the Mosquitoes and died under their suppression.

'Okay, I will upgrade my Body Constitution then focus the remaining upgrades on Diablo and the Skeleton Warrior.' Lux clenched his fist as he made up his mind to upgrade his Body Constitution.

When he upgraded his Body Constitution for the first time, the overall upgrade to his body was fantastic. Also, the Half-Elf was hoping that the free options that would be available to him after his upgrade would include the War Cry skill.

Last time, he was forced to choose Mana Drain in order to last longer during battles, which had been a great boon. Now that another upgrade was on the

way, Lux wanted to choose the skill War Cry so that his subordinates would have increased bonus damage that would make their attacks stronger.

'Okay. Let's do this!' Lux held the Beast Core with both of his hands and willed his thoughts to consume it.

< Ding! >

< Do you wish to consume the Rank 3 Beast Core? >

< Yes / No >

Lux naturally chose yes and picked the Upgrade Stat Points option.

Obtained 15 Free Stats Points

Obtained 15 Body Constitution Points

You have acquired the Fury Slash

The corner of Lux's lips twitched when he saw that the skill that he acquired was the skill that he didn't want to learn!

The Half-Elf was about to curse out loud when a series of notifications appeared in his Soul Book.

< Skill Evolution [EX] detected that the skill Slash was on its way to evolving into Fury Slash. >

< Forcefully upgrading Slash to Fury Slash. >

< Upgrade Successful! >

< Skill Evolution [EX] has detected that the skill Fury Slash can be upgraded one more time. >

< New Skill Unlocked! >

< Double Fury Slash >

Active Skill: Requires 10 Mana to use

– Slash the enemy twice forming an X dealing Heavy Physical Damage with a very high chance of dealing critical damage.

– Deals +100 Damage with high chance of dealing critical damage.

– If your target has less than half of its health remaining, it deals an additional +100 damage to your attack with a high chance of dealing critical damage.

– Requirements to upgrade: Use Fury Slash 10x

Progress: (0/10)

– You can use Fury Slash and Double Fury Slash anytime once the requirement has been met.

Lux blinked at the information in front of him before his initial annoyance turned into happiness.

"Not bad!" Lux grinned after seeing the new skill that was added in his collection.

The Half-Elf then used three more Rank 1 Beast Cores and successfully upgraded his Body Constitution to the next level.

< Ding! >

< Congratulations! Your Body Constitution has been upgraded! >

< Choose one from among these three options as your bonus reward! >

(Option 1) – +50 permanent points to Vitality

(Options 2) – Warcry: +30 Physical and Magical Damage to you and your allies

Duration: 5 minutes

Cooldown: 10 minutes

(Options 3) – Item Transmutation

– Transfer a skill from one item to another. Once the skill has been successfully transferred, the item will be immediately destroyed.

As expected, the skill War Cry was available after Lux had upgraded his Body Constitution. However, a new skill had caught his interest and it was none other than Item Transmutation.

After using the Elysium Compendium, Lux found out that the skill "Item Transmutation" was a Pseudo-Mythical Tier Skill that could only be learned by Grandmaster Alchemists, Grandmaster Blacksmiths, Grand Master Jewelers, and other Grandmaster Artisans that specialized in creating items.

In a nutshell, if Lux were to sacrifice Tranquility and transfer its ability to summon a Forest Wolf to Oathbreaker, the Unique Sword would gain a "bonus skill".

But, it wouldn't end there. If Lux could acquire other items with special abilities then he could transfer all of them to his equipment, making them more powerful.

"... Damn! Why must you make things difficult for me?!" Lux was both happy and frustrated at the third choice that appeared after he had upgraded his Body Constitution.

His initial choice was to get War Cry. But now that the skill Item Transmutation has appeared, he was having a hard time deciding between the two.

Right now, Lux was in a dilemma. Just like last time, he wasn't sure if the skill Item Transmutation would still be there after he upgraded his Body Constitution again.

For him, a Pseudo-Mythical Skill like Item Transmutation would allow him to have Overpowered Equipment if he played his cards right.

Lux could see the skill's potential. He even thought of buying cheap equipment with special skills so he could attach them to his own equipment.

Simply put, this was a money burning skill with great payoff.

Chapter 50: A Fun Thing To See

"Fine," Lux muttered after an intense internal struggle. "So be it. I choose you, Item Transmutation!"

< Skill Evolution [EX] detected a new Skill. >

< Since the Skill is learned from your Body Constitution Upgrade and not from a Beast Core, evolution requirements will be waived. >

< Item Transmutation [EX] >

– Transfer up to two skills, or weapon attributes, from one item to another. Once the skills or attributes have been successfully transferred, the sacrificed item will immediately be destroyed.

< Immortal Conqueror's Legacy >

Rating: E

Progress: (0/200)

Conquest is not all about claiming lands, and expanding your Domain. True conquest is conquering the hearts of people. Once you gain their loyalty, the path to Dominion will open its doors for you.

Upgrade Rewards: +1000 Health Points, Item Transmutation [EX]

Bonus Reward: +1 Summon Skeleton Skill

– You will be able to summon two more skeletons to fight for you.

Note: Upgrading your special constitution will allow you to unlock its abilities.

"Yes!" Lux raised his hand in excitement after seeing the bonuses that he got after upgrading his body constitution. "This is so freaking awesome!"

He already expected that the Item Transmutation skill could evolve to its next form, but the thing that he didn't expect was that he would get a bonus reward for his summoning skill.

Before, he could only summon one Skeleton Warrior, but now he could summon three. Counting Diablo and his other Skeleton Warriors, he now had a total of four summons he could use to fight along his side. This greatly increased his manpower in one fell swoop.

"Twenty Four Beast Core Remaining." Lux eyed the Beast Cores in his possession.

Twenty of those Beast Cores were from Rank 1 Monsters, while four were from Rank 2 Monsters.

Lux opened up Diablo's page in the Soul Book to check the points he needed to upgrade his trusted partner.

< Diablo >

– Named Skeleton

– Skeleton Fighter

– Rating: D

– Mana: 10

– Progress (40 / 100)

Diablo had the title Firstborn.

As Lux's first Named Creature Diablo had gained the special ability to increase the number of skill points he would get when upgraded by a Beast Core.

Normally...

A Rank 1 Beast Core would give 10 Skill Points.

A Rank 2 Beast Core would give 20 Skill Points.

But if Lux were to use a Rank 1 Beast Core on Diabale, the latter would gain 15 points. With a Rank 2 Core, the latter would gain 30 points.

Without batting an eye, Lux used two Rank 2 Beast Cores to upgrade his Named Creature, raising Diablo's overall performance.

< Diablo >

"Finally a worthy opponent. Our battle will be Legendary!"

– Named Skeleton

– Skeleton Fighter

– Rating: D+

– Mana: 10

– Progress (0 / 300)

Health: 1,275 / 1,275

Mana: 840 / 840

Attack: 70 - 95 (+20 Damage from Tranquility)

Attack Type: Ethereal Damage.

Strength: 43 (+1)

Intelligence: 42

Vitality: 41 (+2)

Agility: 42 (+2)

Dexterity: 42 (+2)

Defense: 75 (+100 Defense) (New!)

Title: Firstborn, Squad Captain (New!)

Active Skills: Slash, Heavy Slash (New!), Bone Spear (New!)

Passive Skills: Parry, Tactician, Improved Dodge

Note: This Skeleton is going to be the next Pirate King!

Lux nodded his head in satisfaction. With the upgrade, Diablo's strength had officially broken through the Apostle Grade, which was equivalent to a Rank 1 Monster.

Not only that, Lux's Named Creature also acquired several bonuses like increased defense, a new title, two active skills, and one passive skill.

< Squad Captain >

– Increases the attack and defense of any unit under the Named Creature's Command by 20%

< Bone Spear >

Mana: 10

– Throws a spear made of bones at a target.

– Deals +100 Damage to target

– Has a medium chance to deal Critical Damage

– Skill Cooldown: 30 Seconds

< Improved Dodge >

– Enhances the chance to dodge any attack during battle.

"The title, Squad Captain, came at the right time," Lux said as he rubbed his chin. "Without War Cry, I have no way of increasing the damage of my Undead Summons. This skill will have to do for the time being. Now, it's time to upgrade my Skeleton Warriors."

Lux preferred quality over quantity, but since his Body Cultivation had given him additional manpower free of charge, he would use it to his full advantage.

Lux consumed ten Rank 1 Beast Cores, bringing his stash of cores to twelve.

< Choose which path of Evolution you wish to take. >

Option 1: Summon Four Skeleton Warriors to fight for you instead of three.

Option 2: Upgrade Summon Skeleton Skill to Summon Skeleton Fighter.

"Um? Skeleton Fighters? Isn't this Diablo's current class?" Lux muttered as he looked at the two options available to him. "I need to make them stronger, so Skeleton Fighter it is!"

< Summon Skeleton Fighter >

Rating: E+

Mana: 5

Max Summons: (0/3)

- Summons one Skeleton Fighter to fight for you
- Summon duration: 1 hour

Progress (0 / 100)

After upgrading the Skeleton Warrior to Skeleton Fighter, it had also gained the Passive Skill Parry, which allowed it to deflect attacks then follow up with a counter attack.

Lux used ten more Beast Cores to upgrade his Skeleton Fighters one more time, bringing his stockpile of Beast Cores down to two.

< Choose which path of Evolution you wish to take. >

Option 1: Summon Four Skeleton Fighters to fight for you instead of three.

Option 2: Allow Skeleton Fighters to use Basic Tactical Formations in battle, allowing them to effectively fight as a team.

"Option two it is." Lux chose the second option without batting an eye. Teamwork was important in any battle. The Half-Elf understood this concept. With Diablo as the Squad Captain of the group, they would be able to launch effective attacks against their enemies, and use their numbers as an advantage.

< Summon Skeleton Fighter >

Rating: D

Mana: 5

Max Summons: (0/3)

Progress (0 / 200)

– Summons one Skeleton Fighter to fight for you

– Summon duration: 1 hour

Health Points: 250

Attack: 20 - 35

Active Skills: Slash

Passive Skills: Parry

Note: Your Skeleton Fighters will gain great improvements on their next upgrade.

Lux sighed after looking at his Soul Book. He already knew that being a necromancer would require him to use many resources.

Unlike most of the other Job Classes which only required others to strengthen themselves, Lux needed to constantly upgrade his skills which allowed his minions to become stronger separately. He knew that this path would be a difficult road to travel, but he had already made up his mind to go through with it until the end.

"Perhaps a month or two from now, I will have enough Skeleton Warriors to challenge the Hell Mode of the Bronze Crypt even if I am alone." Lux pondered. "When that happens, I will be able to constantly farm Rank 2 Beast Cores without needing to share them with anyone."

Lux chuckled as an ingenious idea appeared in his mind. "I wonder how Colette will react if I manage to break her Big Sister's record in the Bronze Crypt? That will be a fun thing to see."

The Half-Elf grinned while thinking of the not so distant future. Now that he and his Summons had undergone an upgrade, he would be able to farm more Beast Cores in the Figaro Gardens, while waiting for his Dwarf friends to return from their escort mission.

He was sure that the next time they saw him, they would be surprised at how much he improved while they were away.

Chapter 51: There Is No Coincidence In The World

A day after Lux finished upgrading his Soul Book, he went to visit the Blacksmith in Leaf Village.

His goal was to purchase cheap weapons that had skills imbued in them, so he could transfer the skills to make his own equipment stronger.

"Sir Randolph, good morning!" Lux greeted the Blacksmith who was taking a break from his smithing.

"Oh, it's you, Lux," Randolph greeted the Half-Elf who had become his regular supplier of Beast Parts that hailed from the Figaro Garden. "Are you going to sell me some materials today?"

Lux shook his head. "No. This time, I am here to buy weapons and armor."

Randolph chuckled as he gestured to the weapons and armors that were on display in his shop.

Lux held the Elysium Compendium in his hand and the detailed information of the items in front of him materialized in his sight.

The Elysium Compendium could also work as an appraising tool. After all, its main feature was access to detailed information about almost anything in Elysium.

The Half-Elf looked at the War Axe in front of him and immediately saw the information he was looking for.

—

Axe of Onslaught

Weapon Type: Axe

Rarity: Rare

Damage: 40 - 75

Durability: 300/300

Required Strength: 30

Skill: Critical Strike

– Each attack has a 10% chance to do critical damage.

Price: 20 Gold

Lux scratched his head as he looked at the price of the Axe of Onslaught, and the coins he had in his possession.

Elysium Copper Coins: 200

Elysium Silver Coins: 50

Elysium Gold Coins: 12

Even after selling all of those valuable monster parts to Randolph, his current funds still weren't enough to buy the Axe in front of him. With a heavy heart, Lux could only force himself to look at the other weapons beside the Axe and wondered if they would fit his budget.

Sting

Weapon Type: One-handed Sword

Rarity: Rare

Damage: 20 - 32

Durability: 200/200

Required Strength: 15

Required Dexterity: 15

Skill: Envenom

Mana: 10

– Has a low chance to poison your target.

Price: 10 Gold

Fanged Kris

Weapon Type: Dagger

Rarity: Rare

Damage: 15 - 25

Strength Requirement: 10

Dexterity Requirement: 20

Durability: 200/200

Skill: Thorn

– has a 5% chance to apply the Bleeding effect to your target with every strike.

– Bleeding effect reduces your target's Health Points by 1% of its Maximum Health Points every 2 seconds.

– Bleed Effect Duration: 10 seconds.

Price: 15 Gold

Lux checked all the items in Randolph's shop. In conclusion, all of them were pretty expensive. Some of them had skills imbued to them, while others didn't have any. But the thing that made him depressed the most was how pretty darn expensive they all were.

The normal weapons were obviously cheaper, but since they didn't possess any Skills whatsoever, it was useless to buy them.

Only superior weapons and sets of armor in Randolph's shop had skills, but aside from being expensive, there was only a limited number of them. It was at that moment when Lux understood how much of a money burning skill the Item Transmutation [EX] was.

Without any item in hand, he wouldn't be able to maximize the skill that he had gained after his upgrade.

While Lux was having a dilemma, a sudden idea popped inside his head.

"Um, Sir Randolph, do you have any defective products for sale?" Lux asked. "Even scrapped weapons will do."

Randolph frowned as he looked at the Half-Elf who had just asked him something unreasonable.

"Boy, I don't sell defective products in my shop," Raymond replied with a snort. "No Dwarf Blacksmith that cares about their name and reputation would do such a thing. If you ask me something like this again in the future, I'll hit you with my Smithing Hammer to knock some senses into you!"

Lux hurriedly apologized to the fuming Dwarf and explained that it wasn't his intention to belittle him or anything.

He made an excuse that he was very interested in Blacksmithing and he wanted to see what defective products looked like, so when he forged his own weapons and sets of armor, he would have an idea on what was defective or not.

"You want to learn Blacksmithing?" Randolph sized up the Half-Elf half and down. "Well, I guess anyone can learn it as long as they are passionate about the craft. Do you want to become my apprentice then?"

Beads of sweat formed in Lux's forehead because he couldn't believe that Randolph had taken his excuse seriously.

He didn't plan to learn Blacksmithing at the moment because he was still planning to monopolize the loots in the Figaro Gardens and collect as many monster parts and Beast Cores as possible while the mosquitoes were still at large.

However, before he could politely reject Randolph's offer, a notification materialized in front of him.

< Special Quest: The Art of Blacksmithing >

– Randolph is currently looking for an apprentice to pass his craft on to. If you decide to accept this quest, you will gain the Blacksmith Subclass as a reward.

– This is an optional quest. You can choose to decline his offer if you don't want it.

< Rewards >

– Blacksmith Sub Class

– Title: Apprentice Blacksmith

< Would you like to accept this Subclass Quest? >

< Yes / No >

Lux's body stiffened because he didn't expect that he would gain a special quest out of the blue. He was not new to the Subclass option in games because most games had this feature.

According to his understanding, his Main Class was Necromancer, allowing him to summon the Undead, use curses, and other abilities connected to his profession.

A Subclass, however, would allow him to use the abilities of other Job Classes without any conflict with his Main Class. Meaning, Lux could become a Necromancer and an Apprentice Blacksmith at the same time.

Lux weighed the pros and cons of accepting Randolph's offer inside his head.

'If I became an Apprentice Blacksmith, I will be able to learn how to create weapons and armor,' Lux thought. 'If in the process of Blacksmithing, I happen to make an exceptional weapon with an attached skill, I can transfer it to my weapon without any problem.'

'The only downside is that I will need to constantly craft weapons in order to raise the rank of my Blacksmithing Skills.'

The Elysium Compendium in Lux's hand had supplied him with information about the Artisan Classes in the world of Elysium. These craftsmen who pursued different fields couldn't raise their Skill Proficiencies by using Beast Cores.

They needed to pursue their passion devotedly in order to gain a higher understanding of their craft.

In Elysium, people could have up to a maximum of three Subclasses. If they were to exceed that number, they would have to acquire special tokens from the Adventurer's Guild to increase the number of Subclasses up to five.

However, earning these tokens would require them to achieve an unbelievable feat that would be recognized by the ruler of the territory that they were staying in.

'There are no coincidences in the world,' Lux thought. 'Maybe this is a blessing in disguise. All I need to do is take a leap of faith and see where this road will take me.'

After finalizing his decision, Lux faced the Dwarf who was looking at him with a serious expression.

"If you're really fine with me then I gladly accept your offer to become your apprentice," Lux replied. "However, I can't always be with you, Sir Randolph, because I am an adventurer."

"That's fine," Randolph replied. "I was also an adventurer like you in the past but I took an arrow to the knee and decided to retire and become a Blacksmith."

"We can focus on your training on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. I don't care what you do on the other days, but you have to be here on the days I mentioned."

Lux nodded his head in agreement. "Understood, Master."

"Master...", Randolph played with his beard as he looked at the Half-Elf with a satisfied expression. "I like the sound of that."

The Dwarf then extended his hand for a handshake, and Lux accepted it with a smile.

When their two hands clasped each other, Lux immediately felt the hidden strength in Randolph's grip.

The calluses on the Dwarf's hand made the Half-Elf realize that he couldn't take this apprenticeship half-heartedly. Doing so would be the same as ridiculing Randolph's passion for his profession, and this was something that was against Lux's principles.

After the two shook hands, Randolph happily closed his shop and took Lux to the tavern to celebrate his apprenticeship.

Although he didn't know if he would become a successful Apprentice Blacksmith in the future, he was sure that he would definitely do his best, not only for Randolph's sake, but for his own sake as well.

Chapter 52: Big Brother! Please, Help Us!

After accepting Randolph's proposal, Lux spent his days practicing blacksmithing, as well as going to the Figaro Gardens to help the Ants retrieve the bodies of insects slain by the Mosquitoes.

The Half-Elf's blacksmithing apprenticeship wasn't going smoothly. Until now, he still hadn't managed to forge anything decent. All of his attempts ended up in failure, but Randolph said it was all normal.

Seven days later, Lux returned to Leaf Village carrying some monster parts that he had obtained through the partnership he had with the Ants.

All in all, he earned sixteen new Beast Cores, bringing his total number to eighteen.

Just as soon as he arrived at the Plaza, he noticed a crowd of Dwarves, making him curious about what was happening.

Since he was taller than them, he effortlessly saw through the crowd and noticed a wounded Dwarf who was begging and clinging to Aron, the Guard Captain of Leaf Village, to help save her comrades.

At first, Lux didn't recognize her, but after hearing her constant pleading, her voice finally registered in his head.

"Helen?!" Lux shouted. "Please, let me through! That is my friend!"

The Dwarves made a path for him and the Half-Elf hurried over to the Dwarf girl who had turned her head to look in his direction.

"Big Brother!" Helen cried out. "Please! Help us! Colette and the others had been captured by the bandits!"

The little Dwarf tried to stand in order to run to Lux's direction, but she was seriously injured, so she was only able to take a few steps before her legs lost their strength, causing her to fall down on the ground.

However, just before Helen could completely fall, a pair of strong hands grabbed her and supported her body.

"Big Brother! Wuwuwu!" Helen cried out with snot and tears streaming on her face. "Save Colette and the others. Please! I beg you!"

Lux hurriedly took out a healing potion and poured it over Helen's body.

The little Dwarf ignored her injuries because the only thing on her mind was to go and seek help from Leaf Village in order to save her companions.

"Calm down," Lux said as he poured another health potion on the wounds on her body. "Tell me everything right from the start."

Helen gradually regained her clarity of mind as her injuries started to recover. She immediately told Lux about what had happened to the members of the Golden Slayer Party.

According to Helen, after their group left Lindow Village, the caravan traveled to the next village called Millwood Village.

Everything was going smoothly, but they were suddenly ambushed by dozens of Kobolds while they were camping to rest for the night. The bandit group was led by a Kobold Chieftain with Draconic Blood.

The leader's strength was the reason why the bandits managed to overwhelm the defenders. The Chieftain's strength was on par with an Alpha Beast's. The Kobolds heavily injured the defenders and killed a few of them.

Colette and her party mates were mostly injured, but their lives weren't in danger. Since Helen had been given a special teleport scroll by her family, she immediately used it to return to Leaf Village to ask for help.

After hearing the details of the incident, Aron frowned because this was not within the scope of his duties. First and foremost, he was the Guard Captain of Leaf Village. His duty was to ensure the Village's safety, not travel several miles to aid the Foreigners completing their rescue mission.

Suddenly, several Dwarves appeared and surrounded Lux and Helen.

"Was Master Robin also taken by those bandits?" a middle-aged Dwarf with blonde hair asked.

Helen nodded her head. "Robin was knocked unconscious by the Kobolds, but he wasn't killed by them. I used the teleport scroll when I was about to be captured by the Kobolds, so I don't know what happened after that."

The middle-aged Dwarf's expression became grim as he continued pressing Helen for more details.

"You were attacked between Lindow Village and Millwood Village, right?" the middle-aged Dwarf asked.

"Yes," Helen answered. "Please! Help save them! I beg of you!"

The middle-aged Dwarf nodded his head. "Don't worry. We will save Master Robin without fail."

The Dwarf then turned to one of his comrades and whispered something in his ear.

The middle-aged Dwarf's subordinate nodded his head and ran towards the North where the Goat Riders were stationed.

After getting all the details from Helen, the Dwarf and his subordinates left the scene, leaving Lux and the crying Helen behind.

"Big Brother! Please help us!" Helen sobbed in Lux's chest as the Half-Elf held her tight.

"I will," Lux replied. "I need some time to prepare. For the time being, come with me and rest at Grandma Annie's place. We will leave at sunset to rescue Colette and the others."

Helen nodded. Even though the healing potion had allowed her body to heal, her mental and emotional injury from what she had just experienced made her exhausted. For this reason, she completely lost all of the strength in her body and Lux had to carry her all the way to Grandma Annie's shop.

Fifteen minutes later, Lux laid the sleeping girl on the bed and sighed.

"I'm sure that Aron will not send any help for the little ones," Grandma Annie said as she sat on a chair. "This is outside of his duties. I'm sorry Lux, but don't expect any help from the Village."

"I understand, Grandma Annie," Lux answered. "Please, look after Helen for me. I will go and speak with Master Randolph for the time being."

"Okay." Grandma Annie nodded. "Leave her to me."

"Thank you."

"This is just a small matter, but are you really going to go and save those kids? A Draconian Kobold Chieftain is no easy opponent. Besides, he would definitely have strong lackeys that are all Rank 1 and Rank 2 Monsters."

Lux already knew about this, but he didn't care. Colette, Matty, Andy, Axel, and Helen, were his friends. He would be damned if he left them under the mercy of the kobold group.

Seeing his determined gaze, Grandma Annie only shook her head because she already knew the answer to her question.

Actually, she had already expected this to happen, but still felt sad because, in her eyes, Lux was merely going to throw his life away if he faced the bandit group alone.

Chapter 53: Randolph's Mythical Weapon

"You're going to save your friends from a Kobold Bandit Group?" Randolph rubbed his chin. "That is not an easy task, my boy. Are you sure of this?"

Lux nodded. "Yes, Master. This is also why I would like to ask a favor from you."

"Favor? Very well. What do you want from me?"

"Please, let me borrow the sword in your basement."

Randolph's casual expression immediately turned serious upon hearing Lux's request. After accepting Lux as his apprentice, he had shown the latter his greatest creation, which was the Mythical Sword that he had kept hidden from everyone's eyes.

In fact, this was the only Mythical Weapon in Leaf Village. No one knew about its existence except Lux, who had become Randolph's apprentice.

"You want to borrow Blood Moon?" Randolph asked with his arms crossed over his chest.

"Yes, Master." Lux bowed. "Please, let me borrow your Named Weapon."

A minute of silence descended inside the smithy as Randolph gazed at his apprentice whose head had remained bowed.

"Even if I let you borrow it, your stats are not enough to wield it," Randolph replied. "Blood Moon requires all of your stats to be at least fifty, which is impossible for anyone who is still here in Leaf Village. It is simply out of the question for you to use it with your current strength."

Lux raised his head. "Master, I may not be able to wield it, but Diablo can. Please, let me borrow it to save my friends. I swear upon my name and honor that I will return it to you without fail."

Randolph sighed as he leaned on the wall of his smithy.

"Without fail? I've heard that the leader of the Kobolds is a Rank Three Monster at its peak," Randolph stated. "Even if Diablo can wield Blood Moon, he will still fall short against that Monster. Aside from that, the Kobold Chieftain has plenty of subordinates to back him up. My weapon alone will not be enough to turn the tide of battle."

"Master, don't worry about that. I have a plan."

"Oh? Let me hear it then."

Lux told Randolph that he had a way to locate the location of the Bandit Group. He added that the Riders of Norria were also riding for the Bandit Group. If he were to give them the information about where their headquarters were located, he would have many strong helpers to fight alongside him.

"This will certainly work, but there is just one problem, Lux," Randolph stated. "You said that you have a way of finding their location, but will the Riders of Norria believe you?"

"... To be honest I don't know."

"Then how about this? Once you convince Boreas, the Rider Captain, to take you with them, I will lend Blood Moon to you. This is the only way that I will allow you to take Blood Moon from my treasury."

Lux nodded his head in understanding. "Understood. I will go and talk to Sir Boreas now."

The Half-Elf didn't even wait for Randolph's reply and hurriedly left the Smithy to look for the Guard Captain.

When he arrived at the Rider's temporary barracks, the riders were already mounted on their Goat mounts and were about to depart.

Lux saw the middle-aged man who had come to interrogate Helen earlier. He was already sitting on a goat mount beside Boreas. Clearly, if the middle-aged man managed to mobilize the Riders of Norria to help save Robin from the bandits, he was no ordinary Dwarf.

"Sir Boreas, please wait!" Lux ran towards the Rider Captain.

Several of the mounted riders blocked Lux's path and drew their weapons towards him.

"Boy, we are on an important mission," an annoyed looking dwarf said. "We don't have time to listen to your nonsense."

"That's right," another dwarf commented. "We have more pressing issues to address, and we obviously have no time to play with a Half-Elf."

Lux ignored the two Dwarves as he shouted towards Boreas who was also looking in his direction.

"I know the location of the Bandit Group!" Lux shouted. "Take me with you and I'll lead you to them!"

"You brat! Stop spouting nonsense!"

"That's right. If you keep on interfering with our mission, don't blame us for not being merciful!"

The two mounted Dwarfs that had stopped Lux from approaching their Captain raised their weapons in anger. They had always disliked everyone from other races and had long thought of Lux as an eyesore in Leaf Village.

If not for the fact that their Captain had ordered them to not harm the boy, they would have already taught him a lesson or two.

"Halt!"

A dignified shout stopped the two from hitting the Half-Elf who didn't even make any effort to defend himself.

The two Dwarfs immediately ceased their hostilities and reluctantly lowered their weapons.

It was at that moment when Boreas, one of the Captains of Norria, urged his mount to walk towards Lux and eyed him from head to foot.

"Are you telling the truth?" Boreas asked. "This mission is of the utmost importance to us. Failure is not an option. If you are lying to us, I will make sure that you suffer a fate worse than death."

Instead of answering them, Lux summoned his Elysium Compendium and opened its pages.

Immediately, a projection appeared in front of everyone showing them a map of Norria. In a place between the Village of Lindow and Village of Millwood village, a golden dot blinked on the map.

"Before my friends left to do their escort mission, I put a special tracking spell on them that allows me to know their location," Lux answered. "I am not familiar with the topography of this land, but as you can see, I can pinpoint their location using my ability."

"If you don't take me with you, the chances of you finding Robin are very slim. However, that will be solved if I come along. So, what do you think, Sir Boreas? Can you take me with you? I also want to save my friends."

All the Dwarven Riders looked at their Captain and waited for his decision.

Boreas was the strongest Warrior in Leaf Village. He was a Grade B Apostle, which was equivalent to a Rank 3 Monster. With him around, their chances of winning against the Draconic Kobold would be higher.

"Understood, you can come with us," Boreas answered. "However, if you are lying to us, I will make you regret it."

Lux breathed a sigh of relief after hearing Boreas' answer. With this, he would be able to borrow his Master's Mythical Weapon to make Diablo more formidable.

"Sir Boreas, I have a favor to ask," Lux said with a serious expression on his face. "Can you come with me to the Smithy and tell my Master, Randolph, that

you will be taking me with you on your expedition. He said that he won't allow me to go unless I get your permission to let me go with you."

"You are Randolph's apprentice?" Boreas widened his eyes in shock as he looked at the Half-Elf in disbelief. "That old coot actually accepted you as his apprentice? Is the world going to end?"

"Who are you calling old coot, you f*cker?!"

Randolph barged inside the barracks with a flushed face as he glared at the Rider Captain, Boreas.

"Bastard, since you are taking my apprentice with you, I expect you to bring him back safely!" Randolph shouted at Boreas, making the other Dwarf Riders look at the Blacksmith in disbelief.

Boreas was a very stern Dwarf, and not even their Commander dared to shout at him like the Blacksmith of Leaf Village was doing.

"I am not his nanny," Boreas replied in an indifferent tone. "We're not going on an excursion. If he can't even protect himself then he should just stay here and play house with you."

"Hmph! Fine. Since you want my apprentice to play house with me then so be it. Come, Lux. Let these eggheads handle this mission without you. Let's see if they find that Robin brat on their own."

Randolph didn't even wait for Lux's reply and dragged the Half-Elf away from the barracks.

"M-Master, I want to go and save my frie—"

"Hush! Let's talk when we're back in the Smithy. Don't worry. Knowing Boreas, he will come knocking on my door sooner or later."

Little did the Half-Elf know that Randolph was doing this for his sake. The Blacksmith wanted the Riders of Norria to officially ask his apprentice to be their guide, so that he would receive compensation from them.

Also, he didn't have any plan to let the Dwarves see the Mythical Weapon in his possession. He needed to pass it to Lux secretly in order to avoid any future problems.

After the two arrived at the smithy, Randolph hurriedly locked the doors and made a gesture for Lux to follow him into the basement.

"I originally planned to bestow Blood Moon to a person that had the bearings of a hero," Randolph grumbled. "Who would have thought that the first one who will wield it is not even a Dwarf, but a Skeleton?! Fate sure knows how to play with my heart."

Lux endured Randolph's ramblings until they arrived at his hidden treasure house, which was buried deep under the Smithy.

A few minutes later, the Master and apprentice pair arrived at a small altar where a sheathed sword was held on a silver pedestal.

It was Randolph's greatest creation, the Mythical Sword, Blood Moon.

Blood Moon

Weapon Type: One Handed Sword

Rarity: Mythical

Damage: 225 - 350

Requirement: All stats must be fifty or above.

Additional Requirement: Only those recognized by Randolph could wield this weapon.

Passive Skills: Sharp Blade, Swift Blade, Life Steal, Thorn, Indestructible

< Sharp Blade >

– The blade of this sword will always be sharp and will never dull.

< Swift Blade >

– The sword feels very light which helps its wielder brandish it with ease. Able to strike very fast in quick successions.

< Life Steal >

- Each attack heals the user with 5% of their Max Health Points.

< Bleed >

- has a 5% chance to apply the Bleeding effect to your target with every strike.
- Bleeding effect reduces your target's Health Points by 1% of its Maximum Health Points every 2 seconds.
- Bleed Effect Duration: 10 seconds.

< Indestructible >

- This weapon is indestructible. It cannot be destroyed.

The reason why Randolph decided to show Lux the mythical weapon in the first place was to encourage his apprentice to do better. He believed that once Lux realized how amazing being a Blacksmith was, the more serious the latter would be in his studies.

Although this was already Lux's second time seeing Blood Moon, his admiration for the weapon never waned.

On the contrary, the more he looked at it, the more determined he became to increase the proficiency of his smithing skill, so that he would be able to create his own Mythical Weapon.

Randolph took the weapon from the pedestal with both hands before presenting it to Lux.

"Take it," Randolph said. "Remember, I'm only loaning it to you for a short while. Go and save your friends and make sure that you return in one piece."

Lux accepted the sword with both hands and looked at his Master with a grateful expression.

"Thank you, Master," Lux replied. "I will not let you down."

As he held the Mythical Weapon in his hand, Lux believed that once Diablo equipped this weapon, his Named Creature would be able to easily handle Rank 1 and 2 Monster with ease.

'Wait for me, Colette,' Lux thought as he gripped the sword firmly in his hands. 'I am coming to save you guys!'

The adorable little Dwarf was Lux's first friend in Leaf Village. Even without the help of the Riders of Norria, he would still do his best to go and save her, as well as the other members of the Goldenslayer Party.

Right now, Diablo was still unable to wield Blood Moon as he still needed to be upgraded one more time before he could do so.

Fortunately, Lux had acquired more than enough Beast Cores to upgrade his Named Creature. As the Half-Elf was about to return to the room in his inn to make preparations, Boreas appeared in Randolph's Smithy to formally invite the Half-Elf to join them on their rescue mission.

An hour later, Lux, Helen, and the Riders of Norria, left Leaf Village together in haste. Their destination was the bandit hideout, which was located somewhere in the mountainous region between Lindow Village and Millwood Village.

Chapter 54: The Real Protagonist

Lux and Helen were seated in a carriage pulled by two horses. They were procured by the middle-aged man who had asked Helen about Robin's whereabouts.

They all traveled non-stop and, according to Lux's estimate, with this speed, they would arrive at their destination within two days.

Although he was very worried about Colette and the others, there's nothing he could do but pray to the Gods that they were safe.

For the time being, Lux shifted all his attention to his Soul Book.

He had eighteen Beast Cores in hand, and half of them were Rank 2 Beast Cores. The Ants had been very generous in giving him these Beast Cores because his scouting massively helped them to forage safely in the areas where the mosquitoes had just finished feeding.

Now that he was dealing with an emergency situation, he immediately used the Rank 2 Beast Cores to upgrade Diablo's progression to the next stage.

After using nine Rank 2 Beast Cores, Lux managed to upgrade Diablo's Progression Bar, but it still fell short of his target.

Progress: 270/300

Left with no other alternative, Lux used two Rank 1 Beast Cores which gave him exactly thirty additional Skill Points, bringing his stockpile of Beast Cores to seven.

< Ding! >

< Your Named Creature, Diablo has reached a milestone! >

< Please, choose two options from the bonus upgrades available for him! >

- Option 1: Increase Health Points by 3,000
- Option 2: Learn Active Skill: Whirlwind Slash
- Option 3: Learn Active Skill: Duel [EX]
- Option 4: Learn Passive Skill: Guts
- Option 5: Upgrade Skeleton Warrior to Skeleton Knight
- Option 6: Upgrade Skeleton Warrior to Skeleton Rider

Lux ignored option one because a mere three thousand Health Points since it wouldn't change anything at this point.

After checking the Elysium Compendium, he found the information he was looking for about the skills that appeared in the list of Diablo's Bonus Upgrade options.

'Whirlwind Slash is an AOE skill that hits multiple targets. This is good if Diablo is surrounded by enemies,' Lux thought as he rubbed his chin. 'Duel [EX] is similar to taunt skill, but this skill would force your opponent to exchange one blow with you no matter what. It has a one minute cooldown, which is a good option, since I don't have any taunting skill at the moment.

'Guts will allow Diablo to survive One-Hit Attacks that could instantly kill him. This skill is useful, but only at the higher levels.'

The Half-Elf then eyed the two Job Upgrades that became available for Diablo. His Named Creature had only become a Skeleton Fighter recently, but due to the milestone, Diablo could once again upgrade his profession to a higher class free of charge.

Skeleton Knight is a balanced Job Class similar to Skeleton Fighter, but stronger,' Lux mused. 'As for Skeleton Rider, it is a mounted unit that specializes in mobility, and has many other advantages.

'The only problem is that it's not very useful when raiding dungeons because of the cramped space. However, it is good for open world exploration because it allows Diablo to tame Monsters as his mount.'

Lux scratched his head when he realized that his Named Creature was more of a Protagonist than him. Diablo kept on getting more powerful with each upgrade he got, even faster than the Master.

After a long internal struggle, the Half-Elf chose the third and fifth option.

< You have chosen the skill, Duel [EX], and Upgrade Skeleton Warrior to Skeleton Rider >

< Is this your final answer? >

< Yes / No >

Lux chose yes, and immediately several more notifications appeared on Diablo's Soul Page.

< Job Change Bonus >

- All stats +20
- Skill Union of Skeleton and Beast has been acquired.
- Skill Tame Mount has been acquired
- Title Relentless Charger has been acquired.

Union of Skeleton and Beast allowed Diablo to effectively fight while riding on a mount. This passive skill allowed him to remain seated even if he received attacks that should've been able to dismount him.

Tame Mount, as the name suggested, allowed Diablo to tame a Mount that he could ride in battle. The chances of taming a Mount would depend on how strong it was. If the creature was weaker than Diablo, the latter would be able to tame it without a problem.

However, if the creature was stronger, the chances of taming it would be lower, which made it extremely difficult. Also, Diablo couldn't tame creatures that were two ranks higher than it. These limitations were to prevent the Named Creature from obtaining strong mounts that exceeded its current strength.

Relentless Charger, on the other hand, gave Diablo an additional 30% damage and increased chances of dealing critical strikes, while mounted.

< Diablo >

– Named Skeleton

– Skeleton Rider

– Rating: C

– Mana: 10

– Progress (0 / 500)

Health: 2,500 / 2,500

Mana: 1,240 / 1,240

Attack: 125 - 170 (+20 Damage from Tranquility)

Attack Type: Ethereal Damage.

Strength: 63 (+1)

Intelligence: 62

Vitality: 61 (+2)

Agility: 62 (+2)

Dexterity: 62 (+2)

Defense: 75 (+100 Defense)

Title: Firstborn, Squad Captain, Relentless Charger.

Active Skills: Slash, Heavy Slash, Bone Spear, Duel [EX]

Passive Skills: Parry, Tactician, Improved Dodge, Union of Man and Beast.

Note: Sh*t just got real!

'Diablo has 317 Combined Stat Points. He is now in the middle stages of Grade D Apostles.' Lux thought as he started to feel slightly envious of his Partner in Crime, but he couldn't do anything about it.

Diablo didn't have to follow the laws of the Beginner Village because he was a Summoned Creature, but Lux couldn't.

After sighing internally, he equipped Blood Moon in Diablo's Equipment Page. The blood-red sword, which was Randolph's greatest creation, shone with an eerie glow.

With the Mythical Sword in hand, Diablo was a menace and had more than enough leeway to fight against Rank 2 Monsters without problem. It was also possible to fight Rank 3 Monsters because of the Mythical Weapon's attributes.

As long as Diablo could hit the target, his Health Points would be replenished without problem.

Now that his preparations were complete, Lux checked Colette's Condition in the Elysium Compendium.

According to the information he could access, Colette had received minor injuries, but there was no danger to her life.

Matty, Robin, Andy, and Axel, had more serious injuries, but their current status told Lux that they were far from kicking the bucket. With the safety of the children confirmed, Lux was able to gain some peace of mind, as he coordinated with Boreas to lead the group in the general direction of where his friends were.

"If all goes well, we will arrive at our destination faster than we expected," Boreas said as he looked at the place Lux had pointed out on his map. "Now I understand why the patrollers can never seem to find the bandits, they are hiding inside the mountain. This will be a bit tricky..."

At the moment, their current forces were composed of Thirty Goat Riders, twelve Warriors (including the middle-aged Dwarf), Lux, and Helen.

Their combined forces were only forty-five in headcount and they didn't know how many enemies they would be facing. Even so, they had no choice but to

deal with the current situation as quickly as possible. Boreas had also sent a messenger bird to the Stronghold of Noria asking for backup.

The Dwarf Captain had shared the information that Lux had given to him to his superior, and he hoped that reinforcements would arrive by the time they reached their destination.

Lux could only see the location of his friends. He didn't know how many enemies there were, but he was confident that if they all worked together, they would be able to save everyone without any casualties on their side.

Chapter 55: Time Waits For No Man, Nor Dwarf

"So, this is why we can't find them," Boreas said with a serious expression on his face. "These Kobolds chose this place to build their nest."

They were all looking at the entrance of a cave that was guarded by three Kobold Warriors.

They were just Rank 1 Monsters and didn't pose a threat to their team. However, the problem now was that they didn't know how many Kobolds they were going to deal with.

Kobolds' nests usually consisted of thousands of individuals. Among the humanoid creatures, these demonic looking dogs reproduce at a very alarming rate.

Legend has it that they also had Draconian blood flowing through their bloodlines, which sometimes led to a birth of a Draconic Kobold whom they treated with reverence.

The middle-aged dwarf, who went by the name Nevreal, was the assigned leader of this expedition, which caught Lux by surprise.

Lux already had a feeling that the Nevreal was someone important, but he never expected that the Rider Captain of Norria would give the middle-aged man full authority over this rescue mission.

Nevreal played with his beard as he weighed their options. Right now, the reinforcements of Norria were on their way. According to his estimates, they would arrive after a day.

He was only concerned about Robin's safety. Although waiting was the best option right now, he didn't know Robin's current condition. He was afraid that if they waited another day, the Kobolds might do something to the boy.

If Robin died on this mission, the consequences were something that Nevreal, and the Stronghold of Norria, couldn't afford to shoulder.

No matter what, they had to save Robin at all costs!

"Using our mounts inside is not possible," Nevreal said after careful consideration. "We have no choice, but to engage them on foot. The only problem is that the Kobold's nest is very big. It will take us some time to find Robin's location."

The Dwarves nodded their heads in unison.

Lux on the other hand frowned. He understood that their priority was to rescue Robin, but they seem to forget that he was not the only one that needed saving.

For him, his priority was to rescue Colette, Matty, Andy, and Axel. He would prioritize the lives of those little Dwarves over Robin any day.

Lux opened his Elysium Compendium and used it to scan the location of the children in the Kobold's nest.

Colette, Matty, and Axel, seemed to be in the same place, while Robin and Andy were in another location.

Colette's group was in the Northeastern part of the nest, while Robin's was on the Northwestern side. Lux knew that if he told the rescue party that he knew where Robin was located, they would not hesitate to prioritize him over the other Dwarf children.

While he was thinking about what to do next, he noticed that Robin's status had changed. Right now, the information about Robin stated that he was seriously injured. A few seconds later, Andy's condition had also changed to seriously injured.

It meant that they were currently being harmed by the Kobold, which left Lux no choice but to come up with a crucial decision on the spot.

While the Dwarves were arguing on what to do next, Lux cleared his throat and made his presence known.

"I know where Robin is inside the nest," Lux said.

Immediately everyone stopped talking and looked in his direction.

"Right now, he is seriously injured," Lux continued his explanation. "If we don't hurry, we might not be able to arrive in time."

"Then what are we waiting for?!" Nevreal replied with urgency. "Boy, if Robin is rescued you will be able to gain great merits. So, let's hurry up and save him."

However, Lux shook his head as he stared back at Nevreal with a serious expression on his face. "I will help you on this mission on one condition. All of you will swear to the Earth Goddess that you will also save Colette and the others."

Nevreal narrowed his eyes. He was a veteran and, looking at Lux's expression, something was telling him that this wasn't as simple as it seemed.

"Are they not in the same location?" Nevreal asked. This was the only conclusion that he could come to as to why Lux was asking them to make an oath to their Goddess.

Lux nodded. "Colette and my friends are located at the deepest part of the nest. Robin and Andy are in the middle area. However, I will not tell you their location if you don't make an oath to the Earth Goddess to save my friends."

"Oi, boy, do you think we are your hired goons or something?" one of the Dwarves asked in an intimidating tone.

"Do you really think we don't have ways to make you talk?" another Dwarf glared at Lux. "If you refuse to cooperate, I don't mind skinning you alive."

Lux remained unfazed as he stared at Nevreal. Although he didn't know what Robin's real identity was, he could tell that the person in front of him and the

riders of Norria, seemed to place Robin's safety above all else. This meant that he was a very important person to them!

Using this as leverage, the Half-Elf faced them head on with a devilish smile.

'Since you're threatening me, don't think that I can't threaten you back,' Lux thought. 'You're not the only one who knows how to play dirty.'

The Half-Elf suffered in both of his lifetimes, so he was already used to pain. Right now, he was the one who had the upper hand, which he could use to his advantage no matter what. If the Riders of Norria refused to help Colette and the others, then he wouldn't help them either!

"Sure, you want to skin me alive? Go ahead," Lux replied. "However, I already told you that Robin is seriously injured. Who knows? By the time you finish skinning me properly, he might be taking his journey to the afterlife."

Lux sneered at the Dwarf whose face had turned beet red from anger. In a battle of wits, the first one to back down was the loser. The Half-Elf had no intention of losing. He had promised Helen that he would save Colette and the others, and he would be damned if he allowed himself to be intimidated by Dwarves who thought they could bully him into submission.

"Oh, no! Robin's condition is now Fatally Injured. I don't think he will survive more than five minutes," Lux said with a serious expression.

Just as he expected, all the Dwarves surrounding him all had grim expressions on their faces. In truth, Lux was lying. Robin's and Andy's status told him that they were still seriously injured. He was merely testing them to see how important Robin was to the Dwarves.

Back on Earth, this whole scenario could be described in one word—
Blackmail.

Yes. Lux was using blackmail to force the Dwarves to make an oath, so that they wouldn't abandon his friends after they saved their precious Robin from the Kobolds.

"Boy, you're lying," Nevreal said through gritted teeth.

Lux shrugged as he gazed at the Dwarf who was looking at him with a deadly stare. "You'll know whether I'm lying or not in five minutes. By then, it will be

too late for all of you. I don't know who Robin is, but judging from your expressions, he must be a very important person."

"Are you all prepared to suffer the consequences if he died in this place? Let me tell you, his life and death does not mean anything to me. Now, choose."

"Swear that you will save my friends to the best of your abilities. You will also swear that you will not harm us in any way and lead us safely back to Leaf Village. If you fail to abide by this oath, not only will all of your souls be damned by the Earth Goddess, the entire Stronghold of Norria, as well as those in your seven generations will also be damned for eternity!"

"Bastard!" one of the Dwarves growled. He was about to smash Lux's head with his hammer when the other Dwarves stopped him from taking a single step from his place.

"This is why I hate other races." another Dwarf spat on the ground. "Bastards, the lot of them."

Lux remained indifferent to the words and the glares of the Dwarves. However, Helen couldn't do the same..

She was still young and inexperienced, so the glares of the adults made her little body shudder.

Lux noticed this and moved to stand in front of her, so that she wouldn't have to see the hateful stares that were being thrown in their direction.

"Aren't all of you ashamed?" Lux said with disdain. "Bullying a child of your own race just because she wants to save her friends? If you don't want to go then we will go on our own. You can stay here until tomorrow if you want, but I will assure you that it will be too late by then. Let's go, Helen."

Lux held the little girl's hand and turned to take her away from the Dwarf's camp. He was serious when he said that he would go alone if he had to. Fortunately, a hand grabbed his arm and held him in place. The Half-Elf breathed a sigh internally because he knew that he had won the gamble he made.

"Fine, I will make an oath," Nevreal said through gritted teeth.

It was quite obvious that he didn't like being forced to do something against his will, but the current circumstance left him with no other alternative. Robin was very precious to the Stronghold of Norria, and one wrong move could send them all to the execution grounds if they failed to bring him back safely.

The Half-Elf turned around and stared back at Nevreal whose eyes screamed of murder.

"Make the oath, and let's start saving people," Lux replied unfazed by the fact that Nevreal's gaze was filled with killing intent. "Time waits for no Man, nor Dwarf."

Chapter 56: Bloody Battle Inside The Kobold's Nest

All the Dwarves that were part of the expedition swore an oath to the Earth Goddess, who they worshiped.

This was the greatest oath a Dwarf could make. Even the Dwarfs in Solais shared the same mentality. Once they made an oath, they had to do it no matter what. Failure to do so would weigh terribly in their conscience because it would mean that once they died, their souls would be cast away, forever banished from the Earth Mother's embrace.

"Keep your word, Half-Elf, or I swear by the Earth Goddess that you will not keep your life," Nevreal said in a threatening tone.

"We'll see whose oath will be broken first," Lux replied with a calm expression on his face. "Now, listen to me. Our first goal is to eliminate the guards as fast as we can and prevent alarming the kobolds inside the nest."

"Of course, this will only work at the early stages of our rescue mission. The moment we encounter a single Kobold in the nest, we will be in for a tough battle. Our plan is simple, strike fast, and run fast. The sooner we rescue the hostages, the sooner we leave."

"I will not interfere with the commands of the Dwarves. I also know that it is unrealistic to think that we will be able to rescue our targets all at once with the current manpower we have. Since your priority is to save Robin then you can go ahead and save him."

"However, once he is safe and sound, you will then coordinate with the reinforcements coming from the Stronghold of Norria to raid the nest, and rescue my friends. Do we all have an understanding?"

Nevreal and Boreas nodded. Deep inside they felt relieved that Lux was still thinking logically. It was simply impossible for their current manpower to fight an entire Kobold Nest on their own.

"If you are all ready, we can begin the operation," Lux stated. "Helen, stay close to me. No matter what happens, stay by my side."

The little Dwarf nodded her head in understanding. Even if Lux didn't remind her, she would still stick to him because the adult Dwarves scared her.

The Kobold Warriors stood in their position in a carefree manner. For them, doing this was a boring job.

Although there were wandering beasts in the mountains that were stronger than them, none of the Kobolds were afraid of being attacked. They always had the mentality that nothing couldn't be overcome by sheer numbers.

As one of the humanoid races that specialized in reproduction, the Kobolds were one of the most annoying monsters to fight due to their quantity vs quality mindset.

While the three guards were casually chatting with each other, several throwing axes flew in their direction. All three guards died almost at the same time as the axes embedded themselves on the kobold's heads, back, necks, and chests.

As soon as the Kobolds collapsed on the ground, several Dwarves sprang up from their hiding places, and dragged the slain kobolds away to hide them.

Just for good measure, Boreas stabbed the chests of all three kobolds to make sure that all of them were really dead.

Once the deed was done, the Dwarf rescue party entered the nest to find Robin as soon as possible.

On the other hand, Lux summoned Diablo and his four Skeletal Fighters to guard the rear of the group to inform them if there were any Kobolds returning to the nest.

Nevreal and Boreas nodded their heads in appreciation because they couldn't spare any of their men to do this job. Fortunately, Lux had enough manpower to do this important job, making the Dwarves' anger from being blackmailed earlier to simmer down a bit.

Unknown to them, Lux had other reasons for letting Diablo and his Skeletal Fighters stay at the rear, aside from keeping a lookout for possible backstabbers that the Half-Elf had kept to himself.

Three minutes later, the rescue party encountered a group of kobolds patrolling the nest.

Immediately a scuffle broke out. Fortunately, the vanguard of the Dwarves, led by Nevreal and Boreas, were all Grade D and C Apostles, which were equivalent in stats to Rank 1 and 2 Monsters respectively.

Normal Kobold Warriors were not a match to them. The true problem happened when they neared the first spacious cavern in the underground pathways.

After checking the surroundings, Nevreal and Boreas knew that it would be impossible to proceed without the Kobolds raising the alarms.

Over a hundred Kobolds stayed in the cavern. Some of them were cooking, some were loafing around, while others were sharpening their weapons.

It was a communal area where some of the Kobold Warriors stayed, while waiting for their Chief to give them orders.

Near the back of the Cavern were three Black Kobolds that were larger than the others. These were the Kobold Leaders, who were tasked to lead their own troops to hunt or participate in banditry depending on the orders of the Kobold Chieftain.

Every Kobold Nest had these communal caverns near the entrance of the nest that served as the main line of defense in case they got invaded. Its main role was to alert the entire nest if there was a need for everyone to move into action, so they could repel the invaders together.

Lux frowned because just like Nevreal and Boreas, he knew that an all-out battle was inevitable.

Boreas raised his hand and made a gesture, signaling all the other Dwarves to get ready.

Half a minute later, the group charged inside and started to massacre the Kobolds that were in their way.

The two Kobold Leaders immediately sprang up in action in order to face them in battle. The other Kobolds then started to make noise, with some of them running deeper inside the nest to raise a ruckus and alarming their brethren that their home was being invaded.

The Dwarves worked quickly and efficiently, killing all of their enemies in less than five minutes.

Nevreal and Boreas didn't hold back, using their Rank 3 prowess to overwhelm the Kobolds who were caught by surprise.

"Where next?" Nevreal asked Lux who had just killed two Kobolds that had tried to attack Helen beside him.

"We go straight and turn left at the third intersection on the way. From there, we just continue heading West until we arrive at the place where Robin and Andy are being held captive."

Nevreal nodded and led the charge alongside Boreas. Lux, Helen, and the other Dwarves followed, leaving the scene of carnage behind them.

A minute later, Diablo, as well as three Skeletal Fighters arrived at the cavern.

Lux had tasked them with an important mission.

A mission that they would follow without fail.

Screams, and shrieks resounded inside the Nest as the Kobolds and the Dwarf Party clashed. Although the Kobolds were not a match for the Dwarves, the Riders of Norria still suffered several injuries to their bodies.

Some of them were unlucky and received serious injuries during the intense battle being fought at close range. Fortunately, Helen was a Cleric. The little

Dwarf healed everyone to the best of her ability, while munching on the honey-flavored-candies that were being provided to her by Lux.

The Half-Elf made sure to visit his Grandma Annie back in Leaf Village to buy all the candies she had in stock for this mission. Naturally, the old lady was more than happy to sell all the candies she had to her regular customer, which helped both of them greatly.

Because of this, the Dwarves' attitude towards Helen changed. Boreas even assigned two of his subordinates to guard the little girl and ensure that no Kobold would put her life in danger.

Lux was quite happy with this arrangement, because it gave an added layer to Helen's security.

The pathway that led to the place where Robin and Andy were being held was drenched with blood.

This was the first time that Lux had witnessed such a bloody battle. His heightened senses, especially his sense of smell, made him feel very uncomfortable because of the heavy smell of blood in the surroundings.

He was also in awe of how the Kobolds fearlessly engaged them without care for their lives. They were like Kamikaze fighters whose only intention was to deal as much damage to their enemies as they could before they died.

When one Kobold died, another took its place.

They came with forty five members, and in that short amount of time, five dwarves had already died in battle, which showed that even if the warriors of Norria were stronger, they were still not a match against the overwhelming disparity in numbers.

Their only saving grace was that the Kobold Nest was large. Even if the Kobolds swarmed in droves, it would still take the rest of their brethren some time before they could reach their location.

"Robin and Andy are over there!" Lux shouted as he pointed at several cages in the distance that were made from wood.

Nevreal broke out of the scuffle, followed by four of his men, and ran towards the cages.

Boreas and his men held their ground and continued to fight against the Kobolds whose numbers kept on increasing.

Lux gritted his teeth as he stood in front of Helen and fought off any Kobolds that had managed to break through the vanguard's defenses.

His arm was already aching from constantly swinging his sword without rest. It was at that moment when he knew that everyone in the rescue team was nearing their limits.

Even Helen who was constantly healing the Dwarves were starting to breathe heavily. Sweat streamed down her face, as she chanted without stopping, to prevent anyone from dying.

"Retreat!" Nevreal shouted as he carried an unconscious Robin on his shoulder like a sack of rice.

Andy was also safe and being carried by another one of Nevreal's subordinates. The group hurriedly made their way back to the entrance with Boreas and the stronger warriors of Norria guarding the rear.

Unfortunately, they encountered a group of Kobolds in the intersection leading to the entrance, and another bloody battle took place.

This time, the Big Shots of the Kobold Race were present, which made the battle more difficult.

Four Rank 3 Kobold Mages cast fireball spells which severely injured four of the Dwarves.

Seeing that they were in a difficult situation, Nevreal no longer hesitated and ordered everyone to break through the encirclement.

Suddenly, one of the Kobold Mages unleashed the skill Earth Tremor. Which made the ground under everyone's feet tremble.

Lux sensed that the ground under his and Helen's feet was about to give way, so he decisively lifted the little girl and threw her towards Boreas with all of his might.

"Sir Boreas! Catch her!" Lux shouted as the ground under his feet collapsed.

Boreas heard Lux's shout and hurriedly caught the little girl who was screaming her lungs out.

That was the last thing the Half-Elf saw before he fell into the deepest part of the Kobold's Nest.

The Dwarves knew that Lux was a goner, and there was nothing they could do to save him.

Right now, even their own lives were in danger. The Dwarves hurriedly retreated with everything they had, while an angry mob of Kobolds ran after them with only one thought in mind, and that was to hunt them down before they managed to escape their nest completely.

Chapter 57: I Ain't Following A Damn Half-Elf

Lux felt his entire body aching, and almost couldn't move a muscle due to the injuries he received from the fall.

Fortunately, he had no broken bones, only a badly bruised body that made him want to scream in pain.

"Diablo, come," Lux ordered and his trusted partner appeared beside him.

The Half-Elf willed the storage ring in his hand to take out a few potions, which Diablo took to spray over his injured body. The rest, he helped Lux drink, which allowed the Half-Elf to recover from his injured state.

Although he fell deeper inside the Kobold's Nest, there were no Kobolds in the vicinity. All of them were busy chasing after the Dwarves, who were running towards the exit with their lives on the line.

Lux summoned his Soul Book to check where he was currently at.

He could see Helen's marker going further and further away from him, which made him breathe a sigh of relief.

"Let's go save Colette and the others first," Lux said as he checked the pathways he needed to take in order to reach his friends.

Diablo nodded his head and soon followed the red-headed teenager as they ran within the underground maze that the Kobolds had built.

Their journey wasn't that smooth since Lux and Diablo had to prioritize their safety. Right now, the Half-Elf was behind enemy lines, and one small slip could end his life in a matter of minutes.

After almost an hour of traversing the nearly abandoned lower levels of the Kobold's Nest, they finally arrived at their destination.

Just like Robin and Andy, Lux found his friends trapped in cages. However, they were not alone. Several other dwarves were also imprisoned there, which caught the Half-Elf by surprise.

'Well, since I'm already here, might as well free them all,' Lux thought as he ordered Diablo to hack apart the wooden planks that kept the other Dwarves imprisoned.

The Half-Elf prioritized freeing his friends, because they were the main reason why he had braved the dangers of the Kobold's Nest in the first place.

"B-Big Brother?" Colette asked in surprise and confusion. "What are you doing here?!"

"I came to rescue you guys," Lux replied. "Shhh, don't raise your voice. We might get discovered if you do."

Colette nodded her head in understanding and kept her mouth shut. After she was freed, she went to the wooden crates in the corner of the room to retrieve her equipment, and storage rings.

Matty and Axel did the same, as well as the other Dwarves whom Lux and Diablo had freed. After distributing Health Potions to everyone, most of their injuries had been treated, making them capable of fighting against the Kobolds that had taken them captive.

A Dwarf who had blonde hair and blue eyes walked towards Lux while carrying an Axe. He thanked Lux for rescuing them and introduced himself as Hans.

He was one of the prominent merchants in the Kingdom of Gweliven, and his base of operations were the villages and towns near the Stronghold of Norria.

The blond-haired dwarf was also the leader of the merchant group that had hired Colette's and several other adventurer parties as escorts for his trade expedition. Unfortunately, they got captured by the Kobolds, and all of their wares were seized.

Lux shook hands with the Dwarf before addressing everyone at the cavern.

"Before anything else, let me explain the current situation first," Lux said. "Right now, a group of Riders from Norria have come here for a rescue operation. I was their guide and led them to this location. Unfortunately, we were forced to retreat after saving only a few individuals because of the sheer numbers of the Kobolds."

"After a great battle, I fell down to this layer, due to the spells of the Kobold Mages. As for the main force, they are headed towards the exit of this nest as we speak."

"However, none of you have to worry. Once the reinforcements from the Stronghold of Norria arrives, they will conduct another rescue operation and deal with the Kobolds inside this nest."

Lux made sure to emphasize that he was the one that led the Riders of Norria to the nest in order to show his importance to the Dwarves in front of him.

After hearing his report, the majority of the Dwarves sighed in relief because there was still a chance for them to leave the place alive.

"You said that you can navigate through this terrain," Hans said with a determined look on his face. "Can you also lead us to the exit?"

Lux nodded. However, his next words dampened the mood of everyone inside the cavern.

"Although I can lead you all to the exit, I cannot do that at this point in time," Lux answered. "The only reason why I managed to reach this place unharmed is because the majority of the Kobolds have climbed to the upper level to pursue the trespassers to their domain. If we go up right now, we will just be hacked to pieces. Our best course of action is to wait for reinforcements to arrive."

Colette, who had been listening to the side, voiced her concern about their current situation.

"Big Brother, what do we do now?" Colette asked. "Are we just going to stay here?"

Lux shook his head. "This place is too big, and it's hard to defend ourselves here. We need to find a good hiding place while we wait for the rescuers to arrive."

Lux summoned the Elysium Compendium to look for possible hiding spots small enough for them to effectively defend against a horde of Kobolds that were out for blood.

"Follow me," Lux said. "I found a place where we can hide."

"And why should we follow you?" a grumpy Dwarf asked back. "I ain't following a damn Half-Elf."

Lux didn't even bother to glance at the grumpy Dwarf as he herded Colette and the others to follow him. He had already done what he could for the captives. Whether they wanted to follow him or not was none of his business.

Seeing his indifferent attitude, the grumpy Dwarf cursed under his breath.

Hans, on the other hand, narrowed his eyes as he followed behind the Half-Elf who obviously didn't give a damn about them.

The blonde-dwarf was a merchant. When it came to making transactions, and forming connections with potential business partners, he always trusted his instincts.

Right now, his instinct was telling him to follow Lux, so that was what he planned to do.

Seeing Hans' action, a couple of the Dwarves, which were his subordinates, followed behind him as well.

The rest of the Dwarves, who were not part of the merchant group, who had been kidnapped from other places, merely glanced at each other in dismay.

Wandering around the Kobold Nest without an accurate map was useless. Also, the Dwarves knew that the Half-Elf was right. If they tried to go to the exit at this point in time, what awaited them was an untimely death at the hands of the Kobold Horde that had been rubbed off the wrong way.

After navigating through the underground tunnels, Lux led his friends to a smaller cavern that seemed to be used as a garbage dump by the Kobolds.

The rotten smell permeated the air, and it made the Dwarves wrinkle their noses, but they currently had no choice in the matter.

Even Hans thought that this was a good place to hide, because no Kobolds would go actively looking for them in this area.

The pathway leading to the garbage dump was also very narrow. It was only big enough for a single adult dwarf to walk down, and the ceiling was a head shorter than the Half-Elf who was forced to crouch down a little when he walked down the tunnel.

After arriving at their destination, Lux used the empty storage rings that he had acquired in the prisoner's cell to store as much garbage as he could.

The Dwarves like Colette, who had special skills like the Cleansing Spell did their best to reduce the abominable smell that permeated the cavern.

Several minutes passed before the annoying smell disappeared, which made the dwarves quite thankful.

Even though the cavern was smaller than the place where they had been held as prisoners, it was more than enough to house all of them.

"Listen, I will just like to make some rules while we are here," Lux said with a serious expression on his face. "First of all, talking is not allowed. On the off chance that a Kobold or a group of Kobolds were to come to this place, our priority should be to kill them as fast as possible before they can raise an alarm."

All the Dwarves nodded their heads in agreement. They had no complaint whatsoever with the rule that Lux had stated.

"The second rule is that we should make as little noise as possible. Everyone should just rest for the time being. We will need every bit of strength we have in order to leave this place."

The Dwarves once again nodded their heads in approval.

"Lastly, if the worst case scenario happens, and we are discovered, everyone should stay as calm as possible," Lux stated. "I am confident that we will be able to stand our ground if we work together as a cohesive unit."

"My Skeletons will serve as the first line of defense and block the entrance of this cavern should the Kobolds launch an all out attack. If they fall, all able-bodied men will help block the entrance alongside me to ensure that they won't be able to break through our defenses."

The Dwarves nodded their heads for the last time and rested to conserve their strength.

Lux sat beside the entrance of the cavern to use his sensitive hearing to detect anyone who was headed in their direction.

Colette, Matty, and Axel were very tired, so all of them slept, leaving the defenses to Lux.

The little Dwarves had developed an unwavering faith in the Half-Elf, especially after seeing that he had braved the danger to rescue all of them.

Lux watched the children sleep with a smile on his face. Now that they had finally settled down, it was now time to make his preparations for the upcoming battle.

Diablo walked towards him and handed the Half-Elf a black storage ring.

Lux gratefully accepted it and peered at its contents.

Hundreds of Beast Cores could be seen inside the ring, which made Lux quite happy. The main reason he had left Diablo and the Skeletal Fighters behind was to loot the Beast cores from the Kobolds' corpses.

The Half-Elf knew that the Riders of Norria weren't in the mood to pick up the cores as they bulldozed their way through the nest to save Robin.

Since that was the case, Lux was more than happy to receive the free loot that was presented to him. He knew that if things went South, he could only rely on himself to save his friends.

The red-headed teenager took a Beast Core out of the storage ring and started converting it into Skill Points.

He would use as many cores as possible to upgrade himself, Diablo, and his Skeletal Fighters.

That way, even if they were faced with Rank 3 Monsters, they would be able to hold their ground, and show the Kobolds that it was a futile endeavor to kill what was already dead.

Chapter 58: In The Midst Of Every Crisis, Lies Great Opportunity

After looking at his stockpile, Lux decided to upgrade his Partner, and make him more formidable. After all, the latter would be the main fighting force in this rescue operation.

Since Diablo had a special title, First Born, the amount of skill points he received everytime Lux used a Beast Core to upgrade him was increased.

< Diablo >

– Progress (0 / 500)

Lux didn't bat an eye as he used thirty-four Rank 1 Beast Cores to upgrade Diablo to the next stage.

< Diablo >

– Progress: (10 / 600)

Lux decided to upgrade Diablo one more time, turning his First Named Creature into a Rank 2 Monster. With the Mythical Sword Blood Moon in his possession, Diablo could now fight Rank 3 Monsters on even ground.

< Diablo >

"Finally a worthy opponent. Our battle will be Legendary!"

– Named Skeleton

– Skeleton Rider

– Rating: B

– Mana: 10

– Progress (10 / 600)

Health: 7,500 / 7,500

Mana: 1,640 / 1,640

Attack: 250 - 300 (+300 Damage from Blood Moon)

Attack Type: Ethereal Damage.

Strength: 83 (+1)

Intelligence: 82

Vitality: 81 (+2)

Agility: 82 (+2)

Dexterity: 82 (+2)

Defense: 83 (+200 Defense)

Title: Firstborn, Squad Captain, Relentless Charger.

Active Skills: Slash, Heavy Slash, Bone Spear, Duel [EX], Whirlwind Slash (New), Leap (New).

Passive Skills: Parry, Tactician, Improved Dodge, Union of Man and Beast, Enhanced Fortitude (New)

Note: Can you teach me how to Dougie?

Diablo had managed to collect 268 Beast Cores from the corpses that the Dwarves had left behind. Ten of them were Rank 2 Cores, while the rest were Rank 1 Beast Cores.

Since Lux had used a total of seventy four Rank 1 Beast Cores to upgrade Diablo twice, his stockpile was brought down to one hundred and ninety four.

Now that he had upgraded Diablo twice, it was now time for him to upgrade himself!

Lux was quite happy when Diablo learned the AOE skill, Whirlwind Slash, which would ensure that even if the latter got surrounded on all sides, Diablo would still be able to take out his enemies as long as he wanted to.

The second skill Diablo obtained was Leap. This skill allowed him to jump several meters in the air, before landing in his desired location, causing a small tremor that would deal AOE Physical damage in a four-meter radius that was similar to Whirlwind Slash.

Aside from that, the massive boost in Diablo's Health Points and Defense made Lux feel more secure because this meant that his Partner could take more hits. This would allow Diablo extensive survivability on the battlefield.

After admiring Diablo's Stats for a full minute, Lux decided to upgrade his own Body Constitution, so he wouldn't lag behind his Partner in Crime.

Checking his progression, Lux used twenty Rank 1 Beast Cores to upgrade his Body Constitution to the next stage.

< Immortal Conqueror's Legacy >

Rating: E+

Progress: (0/400)

< Ding! >

< Congratulations! Your Body Constitution has been upgraded! >

< Choose one from among these three options as your bonus reward! >

(Option 1) – +50 permanent points to Vitality

(Options 2) – Warcry: +30 Physical and Magical Damage to you and your allies

Duration: 5 minutes

Cooldown: 10 minutes

(Options 3) – Guts: A Skill that will allow you to withstand a lethal blow without dying. No matter how powerful the attack is, it will always leave you with One Health Point after the damage has been dealt.

This time around, Lux firmly chose the skill War Cry. This was the skill he needed the most, and he would be a fool if he didn't choose the skill at this critical moment.

Just as the Half-Elf expected, his handy, dandy, Special Evolution [EX] Skill kicked in and upgraded the skill that he had chosen.

< Skill Evolution [EX] detected the skill Warcry. >

< War Cry will be upgraded into Battlecry once the requirements have been made. >

< Since the Skill is learned from your Body Constitution Upgrade and not from a Beast Core, evolution requirements will be waived. >

< Battle Cry >

+100 Physical and Magical Damage to you and your allies

Duration: 5 minutes

Cooldown: 10 minutes

< Immortal Conqueror's Legacy >

Rating: D

Progress: (0/600)

< Bonus Rewards >

+5,000 Health Points, Battle Cry,

Additional Reward: +2 Summon Skeleton Skill

– You will be able to summon four more skeletons to fight for you.

'Hell yeah!' Lux wanted to scream so badly, but he held his excitement in.

The only skill that the Rank 1 Kobold Monsters could use was the Slash skill. Since Lux already had it and its upgrade, he didn't learn any other skills from it.

Even so, he was quite happy with the overall improvement in his strength after his upgrade.

Before, he could only summon four Skeletal Warriors to fight for him. With the additional +2 in his Summon Skeleton Skill, he could now summon seven skeletal fighters, which made him a one-man party.

Not only that, he also gained an additional 100 Stat Points that he could distribute freely. However, since Lux had no intention of leaving the Leaf Village for the time being, he merely hoarded his stat points and didn't add any of them to his current stats.

'One more time,' Lux resolved himself to upgrade himself one more time, in order to cope with any variable that might arise during their escape from the Kobold's Nest.

After spending sixty Rank 1 Beast Cores from his stockpile, Lux was once again given a choice between three options to choose as a reward for his Body Constitution Upgrade.

< Ding! >

< Congratulations! Your Body Constitution has been upgraded! >

< Choose one from among these three options as your bonus reward! >

(Option 1) – +50 permanent points to Vitality

(Options 2) – Guts: A Skill that will allow you to withstand a lethal blow without dying. No matter how powerful the attack is, it will always leave you with One Health Point after the damage has been dealt.

(Option 3) – Parry: A passive skill that gives you a high chance to deflect a physical melee, or ranged attack, using your weapon. By breaking your opponent's stance, you will be able to unleash a counter attack.

Lux chose the passive skill, Parry, because this was what he currently needed the most. This skill would be very helpful in the upcoming battle with the Kobolds. Besides, being able to successfully parry against a multitude of attacks would be really handy, regardless who the enemy he was fighting against.

< Skill Evolution [EX] detected the skill Parry. >

< Parry will be upgraded into Expert Parry once the requirements have been made. >

< Since the Skill is learned from your Body Constitution Upgrade and not from a Beast Core, evolution requirements will be waived. >

< Expert Parry >

– A passive skill that gives you a higher chance to deflect a physical melee, or ranged attack, using your weapon. By breaking your opponent's stance, you

will be able to unleash a counter attack that has a very high chance to deal critical damage to your enemy.

< Immortal Conqueror's Legacy >

Rating: D+

Progress: (0/800)

< Bonus Rewards >

+5,000 Health Points, Expert Parry,

Additional Reward: +1 Summon Skeleton Archer Skill

– You will be able to summon two more skeleton archers to fight for you.

– This additional reward cannot be used at this time because the requirement to unlock Summon Skeleton Archer has not been met. Once the Skeleton Archer Skill becomes available, the effect of this reward will automatically activate.

Conquest is not all about claiming lands, and expanding your Domain. True conquest is conquering the hearts of people. Once you gain their loyalty, the path to Dominion will open its doors for you.

Note: You're starting to look like a real Novel Protagonist!

Lux smirked as he looked at his current stats with a satisfied look on his face. He had now surpassed Diablo's Health Points, which made him more confident in the upcoming battle.

Not only that, his free stat points were almost 500, which was more than enough for him to step into the ranks of a Grade B Apostle.

The Half-Elf was not willing yet to take that step because he still had many things to do in Leaf Village. There were still plenty of unique quests that he hadn't taken because he was still too weak.

However, right now, even without a party to help him, Lux was confident that he could bulldoze his way through the different areas to fight against the Alpha Beasts, which were the Apex Creatures in the Beginner's zone.

Name: Lux Von Kaizer

Age: 16

Race: Half-Elf

Rank: (None)

Health: 11,960 / 11,960

Mana: 940 / 940

Strength: 46 (+3)

Intelligence: 46 (+1)

Vitality: 31

Agility: 34 (+3)

Dexterity: 31 (+3)

Free Stat Points Available: 480

Special Abilities: Skill Evolution [EX], Mana Drain [EX], Item Transmutation [EX]

Active Skills: Power Shot, Dark Arrow, Fury Slash, Double Fury Slash, Battle Cry

Passive Skills: Enhanced Fortitude, Expert Parry,

There was a famous saying back on Earth that "In the midst of every crisis, lies great opportunity".

If not for the fact that Colette and the others were kidnapped by Kobolds, Lux would never have the opportunity to upgrade his skills to his current level.

Lux also knew this, but since it had already come to this point, all he could do was to take advantage of his current situation. They were still trapped inside the Kobold's Nest and waiting for rescue.

Unless he, his friends, and the other Dwarves could escape this deadly prison, he wouldn't be able to celebrate the rewards that he had already received from this rescue mission.

'I still have 114 Beast Cores with me,' Lux thought with a smile. 'I think this is more than enough to upgrade the Skeletal Fighters to Rank C, which will unlock the Summon Skeleton Archer Skill.'

The Half-Elf then started to absorb the remaining Beast Cores in his possession to upgrade his Skeletal Fighters twice. More than anything else, he was curious about the options he would be given after he unlocked the Summon Skeleton Archer Skill.

If things went according to the script, then there was a high chance that Lux would have another Named Creature fighting on his side.

Chapter 59: The Forgotten Queen

Nevreal, Boreas, Helen, and the rest of the Dwarves had successfully escaped the Kobold's Nest.

Their numbers had greatly fallen after some Dwarf Warriors sacrificed their lives in order to buy time for everyone else to escape.

Aside from Helen, Robin, and Andy, only eighteen other Dwarves remained, which included Nevreal and Boreas.

Boreas had a pained expression on his face as he carried Helen on his shoulders. Many of his subordinates had died in this rescue mission, but he knew that if those men didn't take the initiative to hold the Monster Horde back by sacrificing themselves, more Dwarf Warriors would have died.

Right now, he only had one thought in his mind. It was none other than to wait for the reinforcements from the Stronghold of Norria, and then to wipe the entire Kobold Nest from the face of the Gweliven Kingdom!

After finding a safe place to hide, the Dwarves tended to their injuries and sharpened their weapons.

Helen looked after the unconscious Robin and Andy and thought of her Big Brother Lux, as well as Colette and her other friends.

'Please, be safe everyone,' Helen silently prayed in her heart. 'I hope that when the reinforcements arrive, I will once again be reunited with my friends.'

After the Summon Skeletal Fighter was upgraded twice, the requirements to upgrade to Summon Skeleton Archer had been reached and the option is now unlocked.

Lux only had forty four Rank 1 Beast Cores and ten Rank 2 Beast Cores left in his stockpile. However, he didn't regret using them one bit. What was the point of having a stockpile of Beast Cores if you do not live long enough to use them?

'Now, time to activate this new summoning skill,' Lux thought as he used ten Rank 1 Beast Cores and put his new skill to the test.

< Skill Evolution [EX] detected a new Skill. >

< Since the Skill is learned from a Skill Book and not from a Beastcore, evolution requirements will be waived. >

< Choose which path of Evolution you wish to take. >

Option 1: Summon two Skeleton Archers to fight for you instead of one.

Option 2: Upgrade Summon Skeleton Archer Skill to Summon Skeleton Hunter.

Option 3: Give your first Skeleton Archer a name. Named creatures will be stronger and more intelligent than normal ones. Also, you can upgrade your named creature individually if you wish it.

Lux decisively chose the third option and a row of text materialized in front of him.

< You have chosen to give your first Skeleton Archer a name. >

< Know that your first Skeleton Archer is a female. Although it is already a skeleton, giving it an appropriate name will raise its loyalty towards you.

< Please choose a name >

Lux blinked once then twice as he read the part which said that his first Skeleton Archer was a female. He had already thought of a cool name for his Skeleton Archer, which was Gilgamesh, but after seeing its gender, he had to scrap his plans entirely.

After thinking for a few minutes, he finally settled for a name and made sure to spell it properly.

< You have chosen the name "Ishtar" as the name for your first Skeleton Archer. >

< Is this your final answer? >

< Yes / No >

As soon as Lux clicked yes, another page appeared in his Soul Book, this time it was a page dedicated to his new Named Creature, Ishtar.

< Ishtar >

"Let the living beware."

– Named Skeleton Archer

– Rating: F

– Mana: 10

– Progress (0/100)

Health: 200

Attack: 20 - 30

Attack Type: Ranged Ice Damage

Strength: 10

Intelligence: 15

Vitality: 10

Agility: 10

Dexterity: 15

Title: The Forgotten Queen

– Ishtar is your second Named Creature and has been bestowed the title "The Forgotten Queen".

– This Named Creature has gained the ability to evolve.

< Forgotten Queen >

– Regardless of what happens in the future, this Named Creature will be forever loyal to you.

– All attacks made by Ishtar will deal Ice Damage.

– Ice Damage can slow and even freeze those hit by Ishtar's deadly arrows.

– As someone who bore the title, Forgotten Queen, Ishtar's stats increase by 50% during the night.

– When you use Beast Cores to upgrade your Named Creature, its effects will be increased by 50%

Note: Let phantom arrows fly!

Lux used seven Rank 1 Beast Cores to upgrade Ishtar. Thanks to the 50% points boost, Lux's Beast Core consumption was reduced by a good margin.

However, he wasn't satisfied yet so he used another thirteen Rank 1 Beast Cores to further boost Ishtar's stats, which raised her Rating to D.

After seeing her stats, Lux consumed the ten Rank 2 Beast Cores in his possession, and an additional seven Rank 1 Beast Cores to upgrade Ishtar's rating to D+.

< Ishtar has reached the requirement needed to change a Job Class >

< Please Choose your named Creature's Job Class wisely >

< Compatible Job Classes >

< Skeleton Hunter >

– A Hunter doesn't only hunt animals. Anything living or dead can be hunted. If you are foolish enough to hunt a Hunter then be prepared to become hunted as well.

– This skill specializes in long range combat, as well as setting traps to ensnare their prey. They are one of the deadliest range professions around, and anyone should be wary of being marked by one of them.

(Job Class Bonus)

+30 Dexterity

Active Skill:

- Hunter's Mark: Place a tracker on your target. Ishtar will be able to know her target's location as long as they are within a three-mile radius around her. Up to three markers can be active at any given time.
- Set Traps: Place traps anywhere to bind, injure, or even cripple those who are unlucky enough to set foot upon them. Up to five traps can be active at any given time. More traps will be available on the next upgrade.

Passive Skill: Fast Reload

< Skeleton Ranger >

- Rangers are natural protectors and have a strong empathy with wild beasts. They can wield bows, daggers, or short swords with great proficiency and are masters in both ranged and close combat fighting.

They are also proficient Beast Tamers, which allows them to have Beast Companions to fight for their side.

(Job Class Bonus)

+15 Dexterity

+15Agility

Active Skill:

- Beast Taming: Tames a Beast to become the Skeleton Ranger's Beast Companion. A Maximum of four Beast can be tamed, but only one can be present at any given time.

When the number of Tamed Beasts exceeds four, the Skeleton Ranger will be given an option to release the Beasts that they have already tamed, in order to make room for another.

- Stealth: Blend in with the surroundings to decrease the chance of getting detected by the enemy.

After a brief internal struggle, Lux decided to choose the Skeleton Hunter Job Class for Ishtar.

No matter how good the Skeleton Ranger was, what he needed right now was a dedicated damage dealer. He already had the Diablo and the Skeletal Fighters to swarm the enemy with numbers.

Adding a few more Beast Companions may bolster their troops and even increase their survivability, but the Hunter's Skills like Set Traps and Hunter's Mark, were nothing to sneeze at.

Setting traps was a no brainer. A properly set trap could make an enemy feel a world of pain, and it would also weaken them greatly.

Hunter's Mark on the other hand, would allow Ishtar to trace any target that she had set her sights on.

Lux was only able to track Colette and the others because they were part of his party. If they weren't, the Half-Elf wouldn't have any idea that his friends had been taken by the Kobolds nor where the Kobolds hid them. This was why a tracking skill was necessary.

This was especially true for enemies. As long as Lux knew of their location, he could hunt them down anytime as long as they were within Ishtar's range.

—

After the binge upgrading, Lux was only left with twenty Rank 1 Beast Cores, but he regretted nothing. The red-headed teenager looked at Ishtar's stats and nodded his head in satisfaction.

< Ishtar >

– Named Skeleton Hunter

– Rating: D+

– Mana: 10

– Progress (0/600)

Health: 2,500 / 2,500

Mana: 900 / 900

Attack: 115 - 135

Attack Type: Ranged Ice Damage

Strength: 50

Intelligence: 55

Vitality: 50

Agility: 55

Dexterity: 85

Active Skill: Hunter's Mark, Set Trap

Passive Skill: Equip Item

Title: The Forgotten Queen

Note: Screaming helps... not at all.

'Not bad,' Lux thought as he gazed at Ishtar's stats. 'She now gets fifteen free stat points every time she is upgraded. This is good. She will be able to catch up to Diablo easily.'

The Half-Elf knew that he had already done everything in his power to prepare himself for the tough fight ahead. His second named creature, Ishtar, had the strength of a Rank 1 Monster.

Aside from Ishtar, he could also summon an additional two skeleton archers to fight for his side. But these extra summons were just cannon fodder that would die from a single attack from Kobold Warriors.

Even so, Lux still had uses for them. He immediately put their uses into action while waiting for their rescuers to arrive.

Chapter 60: Learning Things The Hard Way

After the Dwarves escaped the Kobold's Nest, the majority of the Kobolds returned to tend to their duties.

However, when the guards of the prison returned to their posts, they noticed that all of their captives had escaped. This immediately brought a new round of alarms that could be heard through the entirety of the nest.

The expressions of Lux and the other Dwarves turned serious. They didn't know why the Kobolds raised the alarms. However, they all knew that this was a dangerous time for all of them.

Just as the Half-Elf had expected, the Kobolds performed a thorough search for the prisoners that had escaped from their cages. They looked in every nook and cranny of their nest, with the exception of the dump site where they threw their trash.

For them, going there was a waste of time, and they didn't believe that the Dwarves would go to that place to hide.

An hour passed then two, followed by the third.

The tension in Lux and the Dwarves was at an all time high as the hours passed by. In the end, Lux told the non-combatants to just rest, and the combatants to alternate between guarding and sleeping.

The red-headed teenager had become the temporary leader of the Dwarf survivors, and everyone listened to him. The grumpy Dwarf who had made things difficult for him earlier was no exception.

All of them wanted to live, and Lux saved their lives. Since they all owe him and they had seen his capabilities, the least they could do was trust his judgment until they managed to leave the Kobold's Nest.

Lux positioned himself near the entrance of the cavern they were staying in. He was resting, but he would wake up at a moment's notice. This was one of the techniques that his Grandma Vera had taught him a year ago, to allow himself to rest but still be able to react to any situation at any given time.

Hans, the head of the Dwarf merchant group, was paying close attention to the Half-Elf who had saved them. For some reason, he had a feeling that if he followed Lux's orders, he would be able to leave this place alive.

Merchants usually followed their gut instinct, and his instincts were telling him that he had to stick with the Half-Elf no matter what.

Because he was paying close attention to Lux, he immediately noticed when the latter opened his eyes and made a gesture to everyone, signaling them to stop whatever they were doing.

This was a signal that Lux had established with them beforehand to let them know that Kobolds were approaching the dump site.

Earlier, he had summoned the two Skeletal Archers and placed their heads outside of the cavern. He placed them on the path facing the tunnels, and ordered them to keep a lookout for any enemies that were headed their way.

Since his connection with the Skeleton Archers wasn't as strong as his Named Creatures, he gave them an additional order to mention the number of the approaching enemy if they saw any.

Right now, the skulls of his Skeleton Archers had just told him that three Kobolds Warriors were approaching the dump site. Since the path was narrow, the Kobolds didn't have any other choice but to walk single file down the tunnel.

This was the main reason why Lux chose this place. The topography would render any advantage in numbers completely useless.

Lux had summoned his sword in preparation to kill the Kobolds before they could alert anyone of their position.

Hans also gripped his axe in order to help the red-headed teenager quickly deal with their enemies the moment they showed up.

The leader of the Merchant Group was a Grade C Apostle (Rank 2 Monster). The only reason why he allowed himself to get captured was because he knew that he didn't stand a chance against the numbers of Kobolds that had ambushed them.

However, when backed to a corner, he would be willing to fight to the death if needed.

He was standing near the entrance of the cavern as well, facing Lux. The two nodded their heads in unison as they held the weapons in their hands firmly.

When the first Kobold entered the cavern, Lux immediately summoned Diablo behind the three Kobold Warriors, so they would have nowhere to run.

Diablo stabbed the back of the Kobold that was right in front of him, piercing through its chest, killing it in one hit.

Hans hacked his axe at the neck of the Kobold that had just entered the cavern, and decapitated it in one strike.

Lux, on the other hand activated his skill, Double Fury Slash, dealing critical damage and killing the second Kobold before it could even shout for help.

Lux, Diablo, and Hans, hurriedly dragged the dead monsters inside the cavern, so that they wouldn't be easily discovered. The Half-Elf didn't rule out the fact that they might have been sent here by their superiors to check if their prisoners were hiding inside the dump site.

Diablo took out the three Beast Cores from the Kobold's chests, and presented them to his Master, who took them without another word.

Hans didn't have any complaints because, for him, Rank 1 Beast Cores were useless. He would not fight Lux over them and ruin the bigger picture.

"If these are scouts then we can expect that their superior will send some other Kobolds to look for their whereabouts," Hans said.

Lux nodded because he was also thinking of the same thing. "If we get lucky they will completely forget about this matter and only remember it in a few hours."

Hans smiled. He knew that what the red-headed teenager was saying was only wishful thinking, but he also hoped that it was the case.

Unfortunately, an hour later, the Skeleton Archers once again issued a warning, and this time around, they said that there were a dozen Kobold

Warriors headed in their direction, with one of them being a Kobold Leader, which was a Rank 2 Monster.

When Lux relayed this information to Hans and his subordinates, all of their expressions became serious. They knew that they would have to kill these Kobolds as fast as they could and prevent them from leaving the place alive.

Aside from Diablo, Hans was the strongest warrior in their group. The Dwarf also had six subordinates under his command, who were all Grade D Apostles (Rank 1 Monster). All of them were willing to fight for their survival, but Lux told them that they didn't have to fight.

This perplexed the Dwarves, which made them think that the Half-Elf had given up all hope. However, when they saw Lux summon Diablo and seven Skeleton Warriors, they immediately understood why he asked them to stand down.

Right now, every Dwarf was indispensable. If they died fighting against the Kobolds, it would be one less fighter on their side. However, the skeletons were different. As long as Lux had mana, he could summon them over and over again, and they were not afraid of dying.

All the other Dwarves had backed away to the very corner of the cavern, so that they wouldn't be involved in the fighting.

Colette had asked Lux to let them join the fight, but the Half-Elf rejected their proposal. Lux only told the adorable little Dwarf to protect the non-combatants and ensure that no Kobolds would harm them.

Everyone became tense when the sounds of footsteps reached their ears. The plan was relatively simple, and had no room for error. The moment the first Kobold entered the cavern, Hans immediately decapitated it, while Diablo charged and stabbed the Kobold behind it.

The Kobold Leader was in the middle of the formation, so all it could do was bark orders for those behind it to retreat.

However, who was Lux? Naturally, he already expected that this was going to happen, so he had placed a key figure at the back of the tunnel, which was none other than Ishtar.

Lux's second Named Creature had a peculiar ability. She was able to disassemble her body, and scatter her body parts to where she wanted them to be.

Ishtar was also the one that warned Lux that there was a Rank 2 Monster amidst the group of Kobolds. As soon as the fight began, the Skeleton Hunter assembled her body parts once again and placed traps in front of her.

After doing that, she immediately began shooting her arrows into the rear of the Kobold formation, trapping them in a pincer attack.

Diablo had a strength equivalent to a Rank 3 Monster because of the Mythical Weapon, Blood Moon. With this powerful weapon in hand, Diablo made short work of the Kobolds and killed the Kobold Leader without mercy.

By the time the battle was over, Diablo had killed six, Ishtar killed seven, and Hans killed one.

Just like last time, they dragged the dead bodies inside the cave, took their beast cores, and incinerated them with fire magic.

The smell of burning flesh permeated the room, but with the cleansing magic, the smell disappeared completely.

Now that they had killed the scouting party, Lux, Hans, and the Dwarves knew that they were now only on borrowed time. They couldn't leave their hiding spot because it was the only place they could defend themselves with the numbers they currently had.

Lux gazed at everyone with a serious expression. "The next time the Kobolds appear here, we will all be fighting for our lives. I hope that when that time comes, all of you will do your best to remain calm and listen to my orders."

"Don't worry. No matter how many of them come, I am confident that we will be able to hold them back. The tunnel only allows one person at a time to pass through it. Even if there were thousands of them, they will have no choice but to go down this one path. As long as we block this one entrance, they will not be able to overwhelm us with numbers."

Everyone nodded their heads in agreement. After hearing Lux's strategy, all of them felt a little better. They had seen how strong the skeletons were, so they believed that they would be able to hold the Kobolds at bay no matter what.

Technically, they weren't wrong. However, they had forgotten one thing. Kobolds may not be the smartest monsters around, but they were not stupid.

Because of this, Lux, and the other Dwarves didn't remember that even a well thought out plan could go terribly wrong if they did not understand the true nature of their enemies.

This was a lesson that the red-headed teenager would learn the hard way.

Chapter 61: Are You Dwarves, Or Are You Goblins?

Half a day after Robin and Andy were rescued, the Riders of Norria arrived at the place where Nevreal had asked them to meet.

Due to the importance of this endeavor, the Stronghold had dispatched almost half of its manpower, which numbered a little over five hundred Dwarf Warriors.

Four Hundred Grade D Apostles.

Ninety Five Grade C Apostles

Eight Grade B Apostles.

This level of manpower was strong enough to wipe out any hostile forces within the territory of Norria. However, even Nevreal still doubted whether it was enough to raid the Kobold Nest.

Usually, a Kobold's Nest housed thousands of Kobolds. The Kobold Warriors were the weakest, followed by the Kobold Leaders. The Kobold Mages were stronger than the rest, and some of the older ones could reach Rank 3.

As for the Draconic Kobolds, their Ranks were at Rank 3 Minimum. These special Kobolds were known to break through to Rank 5 once they got older.

If there were a handful of Rank 4 Draconic Kobolds, or even one Rank 5 Kobold. The Riders of Norria would be in for a tough battle.

Usually, Rank 5 creatures wouldn't be found in any Beginner Areas. Simply put, they could be considered "World Bosses", because no one in the Beginner's Territory would be able to fight them one on one.

At most, a group of a hundred people that was composed of Grade B (Rank 3) and A Apostles (Rank 4) could fight it in a Boss Raid.

"Since Robin is already safe then there's no need for us to risk our lives trying to raid the Kobold's Nest," one of the Rider Captains of Norria, who was a Grade B Apostle, said. "We should just return to the Stronghold and call it a day."

The other riders nodded their heads in agreement. If Robin was still inside the Kobold's Nest then they would surely charge in and do everything in their power to rescue him.

However, since he was already rescued, the Warriors of Norria didn't feel the need to rescue the Dwarves who had been captured by the Kobolds. For Riders of Norria, they were not that important.

"Normally, I would agree with you," Boreas said, "but this time it's different. We made an oath to the person that served as our guide to find this place that we would rescue his friends no matter what happens. We made this vow to the Earth Goddess, so our hands are tied."

Nevreal nodded his head, which made the Dwarf Captains groan. The Commander of the Stronghold had come to personally supervise the rescue operation. He was the only Grade A Apostle (Rank 4) in the territory of Norria, which made him the absolute decision maker at all times.

His name was Thoram, the Commander of the Stronghold of Norria.

Thoram wore a serious expression on his face. He knew that he had to make a difficult choice. If he chose to ignore the oath made by Boreas and Nevreal, it was tantamount to abandoning them to their Fate.

If he did this then his subordinates would no doubt be safe, but they would always have reservations when it came to following his orders. Nobody wanted to follow a leader who readily abandoned his men with only a moment's notice.

This was not the way of the Dwarves, and doing so would tarnish his reputation.

On the other hand, if he chose to honor the oath, he would be gambling the life of his men to fight against an unknown number of Kobolds. It was impossible not to have any casualties when raiding a monster den, especially a Kobold's Den.

Thoram didn't want to see his men die in droves if they were to encounter a Draconic Kobold, whose rank surpassed theirs.

Just as he was hesitating to decide what to do, a voice spoke out from behind him.

"We will go and rescue Colette and the others."

All the Dwarf Warriors turned around to look at Robin who stood before them with a serious expression on his face.

"I owe that Half-Elf a life," Robin stated. "I will not be able to sleep at night knowing that I abandoned the one that saved me when he needed me the most. I am a Dwarf, not a Goblin. I will not turn my back on those that had made their oath to the Earth Goddess."

Robin scanned the faces of all the Dwarf Warriors who were looking at him with complicated expressions on their faces.

"So, tell me..." Robin sneered. "Are you Dwarves, or are you Goblins who abandon their kin at the first signs of trouble? The Kingdom of Gweliven has no need for Goblins. I am a Dwarf, so I will do what Dwarves do best. All of you can return to the stronghold if you want, I'm going to go and save my friends even if I have to do it alone."

Andy and Helen stood beside Robin with determined expressions on their faces. Clearly, they also wanted to enter the cavern and save their friends to the best of their abilities.

Thoram sighed as he knelt in front of Robin.

"I, Thoram, son of Malrom of Thordrom, hereby swear that I will wield my axe to pave the path to victory! I swear this upon the honor of the Earth Goddess!"

All the Warriors of Norria knelt toward Robin and thumped their weapons on the ground to voice out their approval.

Robin nodded his head in acknowledgement as he patted Thoram's shoulder.

"Fight for victory," Robin stated. "Fight for Gweliven!"

"For Gweliven!"

It was at that moment that the five hundred strong Dwarf Battalion of Norria marched towards the Kobold Nest with one goal in mind. To rescue Robin's friends, and fulfill their oaths to the Half-Elf who was now currently fighting for his life.

Kobold Nest...

"Sh*t!" Lux cursed as he and the Dwarves held their weapons firmly in their hands.

All of them were staring at the walls of their hiding place, as the sound of digging became stronger.

Just as he expected, the Kobolds had discovered that the men that they had sent to scout the Dump Site hadn't returned after an hour. The Kobold Chieftain and the Kobold Sorcerer dispatched a hundred kobolds led by a Kobold Mage and four Kobold Leaders to the Dump Site and made them check what was going on.

A great battle ensued when they arrived at their destination. Out of the hundred Kobolds, seventy were able to retreat and report their findings to their Kobold Chieftain.

After discovering that the escaped prisoners had holed themselves up in the Dump Site, the Kobold Chieftain sent the Kobold Sorcerer, who was the leader of the Kobold Mages, to take command of the Kobold Army.

Instead of forcing their way into the narrow tunnel which led to their destination, the Kobold Sorcerer ordered the Kobolds to do what they did best. Naturally, that was mining!

Thousands of Kobolds started to chip away at the walls that led to the Dump Site, while they positioned some of their troops to observe the tunnel that led to where the Dwarves were hiding. This development had far surpassed Lux's understanding, which made him grit his teeth in frustration.

After three hours of nerve-wracking tension, the sounds of the mining stopped, which made Lux frown.

"The sound of mining has stopped," Lux informed everyone. "I don't know what they're planning, but everyone, brace yourselves."

Diablo and the Skeletal Fighters raised their shields as they faced the wall. Ishtar was standing in front of the main entrance of the tunnel, ready to snipe the Kobolds who would use that route to pincer attack them.

Just as everyone was wondering what was going on, a loud explosion broke the wall in front of them. Dirt and rubble flew in different directions as the wall collapsed. It was hit by a fireball made by the Kobold Sorcerer.

When the dust had settled down, a two-meter wide hole appeared in front of everyone. Soon, the blood curdling war cries of the Kobolds were heard as they charged down the path made by their brethren.

Diablo and the Skeletal Fighters immediately formed a defensive wall using their bodies, continuously hacking the Kobolds who were trying to overpower them with sheer numbers. If Lux hadn't upgraded his minions, the Kobold might have stood a chance, but with Diablo's strength, which was now at the peak of a Rank 3 Monster, the Rank 1 Kobold Warriors quickly died under his mythical blade.

Lux and the Dwarves could feel their hearts rising towards their throats as the battle turned more intense.

Soon, even Ishtar, who was standing far away from them, had started to fire arrows at the main tunnel leading to their hiding place. Just like Lux had anticipated, the Kobolds planned to do a pincer attack.

Thanks to Ishtar's Ice Elemental Damage, Kobolds' advance was slowed down. Even so, it was merely delaying the inevitable.

"Everyone, get ready. Go to your positions!" Lux ordered "This is a do or die moment, so do everything in your power to resist. Once the Kobold breaks past our defenses, it's all over. So fight with everything you've got!"

"Yes!"

As the battle in the Dump Site area intensified, the Warriors of Norria had just killed the guards that were manning the entrance of the Kobold Nest.

Over five-hundred strong warriors, with Thoram at the lead, ran through the passageway that led to the depths of the Nest.

A battle that had never before seen in the territory of Norria was about to begin.

Chapter 62: Show These Lizards Whose Boss

"Fight!" Lux roared as he activated his skill, Battle Cry.

This was the skill that added +100 to both Physical and Magical attacks for all of his allies. With this boost of strength, his ordinary Skeletal Fighters' physical damage had reached Rank 2, making them more formidable as they held back the charging Kobolds.

Diablo and five Skeleton Fighters blocked the newly created passage made by the Kobolds, while Ishtar and other two of the Skeletal Fighters blocked the original narrow tunnel that the Kobolds were using to form a pincer attack.

The non-combatants hurriedly retreated to the very back of the cavern, leaving all those who could fight standing behind the Skeletal Fighters, who were ready to replace the latter the moment they died.

Colette held her weapon firmly. But on the contrary, she couldn't stop her body from shaking. As someone who had already been defeated by the Kobolds once in battle, she was well aware of how tenacious they were.

They were one of the races that could use the strategy of overwhelming their enemies through sheer numbers with kamikaze attacks.

It was at that moment when she felt a hand rest on her shoulder, gripping it firmly.

"Are you scared?" Lux asked with a smile.

Colette bit her lip. Her father had told her that she mustn't show any weakness, especially during a battle. She was a member of the Goldenlayer Clan, a family of Paladins. It was their duty to stand at the forefront of battle and lead their people to victory.

And yet, right now, she was truly scared. Although she was doing her best to fight the growing fear in her heart, she was still unable to stop her body from shaking.

Seeing that she couldn't bring herself to answer, Lux raised the hand he had placed on her shoulder and rested it over the little girl's head.

"I am scared, too," Lux said as he shifted his attention to his subordinates who were keeping their enemies at bay using everything in their arsenal. "But, I have a goal in life. For the sake of that goal, I must make a stand, even if my heart trembles inside my chest."

One of the Skeletons fighting alongside Diablo shattered into pieces, and the Half-Elf raised his hand to summon another one to take its place.

"For that goal, I must wield my weapons to fight," Lux added. "Also, there is someone... waiting for me back home; someone that raised me with love and care. If I fall here, she will be heartbroken, so no matter what happens, I must return alive."

Lux smiled as he summoned another Skeleton Fighter after another died. Colette looked up at the Half-Elf who was like a strong pillar, who gave her and everyone in that cavern, hope.

"What is your goal, Big Brother?" Colette asked.

She wanted to know what the Half-Elf, who came from a distant land, wanted to accomplish by coming to Elysium.

"To save a dying world from destruction," Lux answered as he lightly patted her head. "And prevent it from being destroyed a second time."

The red-headed teenager took a step forward as he summoned another Skeletal Fighter to block the narrow tunnel where the Kobolds were advancing slowly.

"That's why I asked all of you to trust me, and fight with me until the end," Lux declared. "We will not lose. I promise that I will lead all of you to the surface. So, children of the Earth Goddess, I bid all of you to stand... and carve a path to victory!"

The Half-Elf then charged forward as one of his Skeletal Fighters shattered. He took its place and engaged against Kobolds in close combat, preventing them from breaking past their defenses.

Colette and the other Dwarves felt their blood boiling inside their chest. Although they were still feeling fearful, a small blaze of courage was rekindled in their hearts.

The little blonde girl raised her mace and charged forward the moment another Skeletal Fighter got destroyed. She activated her Paladin Aura to strengthen her allies, and then continued fighting side by side with Lux and Diablo.

"Diablo! Push them back!" Lux ordered. "Show these Lizards who's boss!"

The glowing embers in Diablo's eyes burned brightly as he rammed the Kobold in front of him with his shield. Lux's First Born then pulled back his arm as he activated his AOE Skill "Whirlwind Slash."

Lux's first Named Creature annihilated all the Kobolds in front of him as he assumed a protective stance to defend Lux and Colette from the Kobolds, who had momentarily stopped their advance due to the pressure that he was releasing.

"Kekeke."

Diablo laughed as if he was finding his enemies' reaction very funny. Truth be told, he wasn't too worried about the monsters that he was facing. As a monster that had reached Rank 3, very few monsters in the Kobold's Nest could beat him.

Not to mention that Blood Moon was a cheat-like Mythical Weapon that broke the laws of the Beginner's Area.

< Blood Moon >

Weapon Type: One Handed Sword

Rarity: Mythical

Damage: 225 - 350

Requirement: All stats must be fifty or above.

Additional Requirement: Only those recognized by Randolph can wield this weapon.

Passive Skills: Sharp Blade, Swift Blade, Life Steal, Thorn, Indestructible

< Sharp Blade >

– The blade of this sword will always be sharp and will never dull.

< Swift Blade >

– The sword feels very light which helps its wielder brandish it with ease. Able to strike very fast in quick succession.

< Life Steal >

– Each attack heals the user with 10% of the damage they deal to their enemies.

< Bleed >

– Has a 5% chance to apply the Bleeding effect to your target with every strike.

– Bleeding effect reduces your target's Health Points by 1% of its Maximum Health Points every 2 seconds.

– Bleed Effect Duration: 10 seconds.

< Indestructible >

– This weapon is indestructible. It cannot be destroyed.

Diablo's defense was quite high, so he only received minimal damage from the Kobold's attacks. With the help of the "Life Steal" ability that was imbued in his weapon, his health points were almost always full.

Simply put, even if Diablo fought against a hundred Rank 1 Monsters, a single Whirlwind Slash was enough to fully restore his Health Points.

Seeing that things were not going their way, the Kobold Sorcerer decided to intervene and shot a fireball towards the defenders. Just like Diablo, it was a Rank 3 Monster who was very close to breaking through Rank 4.

The moment the Kobold Sorcerer cast its fireball, Diablo threw its Bone Spear which met the attack head-on.

When the two spells collided, a powerful explosion took place, negating each other's attack.

"Kekeke." Diablo raised his sword and made a taunting gesture to the Kobold Sorcerer who was at the back of the Kobold Formation.

The Kobold Sorcerer snorted as it unleashed fireball after fireball with the intention of obliterating the arrogant Undead that dared to provoke it.

Diablo continued to unleash his Bone Spears to meet the fireballs head on. The loud explosions made the walls of the cavern tremble, causing Lux to frown due to the possibility of the cave crumbling.

He had already dragged Colette back to the safety of the cavern, while Diablo stood in front and continued his barrage of Bone Spears.

Just as the Half-Elf expected, the impromptu tunnel that the Kobolds had made wasn't stable enough to handle the powerful explosion, which resulted in a cave-in. This sent dust clouds billowing in Lux's direction, forcing everyone to cover their faces to prevent themselves from getting dirt in their eyes.

When the dust cloud receded, Lux glanced in the direction of his Named Creature and sighed internally. The cavern's entrance had been completely blocked by rubble, preventing the Kobolds from continuing their assault on two fronts.

It was at that moment when Diablo turned his head to look at Lux and gave him a thumbs up. Although it couldn't talk, its confident pose gave everyone the impression that it was saying the words "Just as planned!".

Lux smirked because the feeling of smugness coming from his Named Creature was being transmitted back to him. It was at that moment when he wondered if it was possible for Diablo to talk after a few more upgrades.

The Half-Elf reluctantly put this matter aside as he summoned more of his Skeletal Fighters. Their fight was far from over, and he had no intention of letting his guard down until reinforcements arrived.

Chapter 63: The Kobold Chieftain's Decision

Due to the battle happening at the lower layers of the Kobold's Nest, Lux had no idea that the reinforcements he had been waiting for had already arrived.

Led by Thoram, the Commander of Norria, the Dwarf Warriors used brute force to blast their way through the Kobolds, which had detected their advance. After the incident of the other's escape, the Nest was on high alert, so the Kobolds immediately noticed the arrival of the uninvited guests in their domain.

The Kobold Chieftain frowned after hearing his subordinates' report. Right now, their strongest warrior, the Kobold Champion, was currently leading their main force to subdue the Goblins that had built a large settlement near their territory.

It would take their reinforcements a full day before they could return to the nest, so the Chieftain was contemplating his choices about what they could do for the time being. Just like the Kobold Sorcerer, the Kobold Chieftain was at the peak of a Rank 3 Monster.

Their Champion, the Draconic Kobold, was at the peak of Rank 4 and was only a step away from breaking through to Rank 5. The other Draconic Kobolds, which ranged from Rank 3 and Rank 4, had accompanied him to battle, leaving only the Kobold Chieftain and the Kobold Sorcerer to look after the nest.

Because of this, only seven thousand Kobolds remained inside the nest. Although Kobolds weren't afraid to fight to the death, they still didn't like meaningless deaths. After knowing the strength of their opponents, the Kobold Chieftain estimated that they wouldn't be able to beat the Dwarf Warriors who had come to raid them.

Since that was the case, he decided to personally handle the issue and came out to have a dialogue with the invaders.

Thoram and his men brute forced their way against a horde of Kobolds. Although the majority of them were rank one, there were dozens of Rank 2 Kobolds mixed within their group. The battle was bloody as both sides fought tooth and nail against each other.

After two hours of non-stop battle, blood dyed the ground making Helen's expression very pale. Although the dwarves were stronger, they still lost over a hundred men as over a thousand Kobolds fought them with a ferocity that made even the most arrogant of dwarves feel respect towards their enemies.

After the battle ended, Thoram and the Dwarves took a short rest as they tended to their injured. They knew that there would be more battles up ahead, so they decided to recuperate for a short period of time before continuing their rescue mission.

An hour later, they once again formed their ranks and braced themselves for another hard battle.

Thoram and his men noticed that the Kobold Nest was surprisingly empty after they explored the middle levels of the Nest.

They didn't know that the Kobold Chieftain had issued a command for all the Kobolds to retreat to the lower levels, in order to prevent them from dying needlessly.

Word had also been sent to the Kobold Sorcerer about the new threat, so they decided to pull their forces, which were currently raiding the Dump Site, to regroup with their Secondary Force.

Just as the Warriors of Norria arrived near the end of the Kobold Nest's middle level, they noticed seven Kobolds standing in a spacious cavern, as if waiting for their arrival. None of the Kobolds were carrying any weapons, but they did hold wooden sticks with a white cloth tied to them.

Thoram frowned, but he made a gesture for his men to not do anything reckless.

After seeing their reaction, the Kobold Chieftain briefly nodded its head and spoke using the universal language of the realm.

"What is your reason for coming here, Dwarves?" the Kobold Chieftain asked.

Thoram took a step forward as he faced the Kobold's Chieftain's indifferent expression. "You terrorize our lands and capture our people, yet, you still dare to ask why we've come?"

The Kobold Chieftain's expression remained calm as he eyed the Dwarf who seemed to be the leader of the raiding party.

"Dwarves kill us Kobolds, and steal the treasures we mine underground," the Kobold Chieftain stated. "Naturally we kill them back. It has always been like this, and will always be in the future."

This time, it was Thoram's turn to frown. To the Dwarves, the Kobolds were a race that liked to mine. Although Dwarves liked to mine themselves, their passion didn't come close to what the Kobolds felt about mining.

There were times when these two races met underground while they were creating mazes in the depths of the Earth. Wars between them were very common, and Thoram would not lower his dignity to refute the Kobold Chieftain's words.

Since that was the case, he decided to get to the point and see whether both he and the Kobold Chieftain could reach a compromise.

"We've only come here to rescue our people," Thoram declared. "If you give them to us and promise to not attack any more Dwarves in the territory of Norria, we can have a non-aggression pact between our parties."

"Do you have the qualifications to make this pact hold true?" the Kobold Chieftain asked. Right now, their priority was to wage war on the other monsters in the area in order to secure the safety of their Nest.

Also, they were patiently waiting for their Draconic Champion to Evolve into a Rank 5 Monster. Once that happened, there would be very few creatures that could threaten their existence in the territory of Norria.

"I am Thoram, the Commander of the Stronghold of Norria," Thoram replied. "This territory is under my jurisdiction, so yes, I have the authority to make this pact binding."

Thoram didn't want to lose any more of their men in a fight against the Kobolds because they had more pressing issues at hand. The Beast Tide Season was nearing, and they would need every Dwarf Fighter to protect the walls of Norria from the Beast Invasion.

They simply didn't have time to deal with the Kobolds at this point. If the Stronghold of Norria could form a non-aggression pact with them, that meant that they could focus all of their attention in other areas that required their assistance.

"Very well." The Kobold Chieftain nodded.

Since both sides didn't want to wage a full blown war against each other, a compromise was a welcome topic between the two forces.

"Make an Oath to your Earth Goddess," the Kobold Chieftain stated.

"And you make an oath to the Dragon King," Thoram countered.

To the Dwarves, the Oath to the Earth Goddess was a sacred oath. Although the Dragon King was not a God, for Kobolds it was the ultimate existence they would offer everything to, even their lives.

After the two sides made their oaths, the Kobold Chieftain asked one of his Elite Warriors to escort Thoram, and his subordinates to the lower layers, where Lux and the other Dwarves had holed themselves in.

Lux and the other Dwarves were in a state of tension as they waited for the Kobolds to continue their attacks. The Half-Elf didn't know why the Kobolds' relentless assault had suddenly stopped, so he merely advised everyone to be on their guard.

Two hours later, the Half-Elf heard some noises that seemed to be heading towards their direction. When the Half-Elf stood up and went towards the exit, all the Dwarves prepared themselves to fight once again.

However, before they could even raise their fighting spirit, Helen's voice echoed down the tunnel.

"Big Brother! Colette! Matty! Axel! Are you guys alright?" Helen shouted as soon as she appeared in the narrow tunnel leading to the Dump Site.

"Helen?" Lux couldn't believe that the little Dwarf girl would appear on the lower floors of the Kobold Nest looking practically unharmed. "What are you doing here?"

"We've come to rescue everyone!" Helen shouted as she ran towards the opening of the cavern, and hugged Colette.

The red-headed teenager glanced down the tunnel and saw several Dwarves wearing armor. Clearly, these were the reinforcements they had been waiting for. However, he felt that something was off.

"Helen, did you meet any Kobolds along the way?" Lux asked.

"Un! The Kobold Chieftain came to negotiate with the Commander," Helen answered. "We now have a non-aggression pact with the Kobolds. We can all leave this place safely."

When Lux and the Dwarves heard Helen's words, most of them didn't believe it at the start, but after seeing that no Kobolds were attacking the Dwarves, they finally understood why the attack on their location had stopped.

Lux breathed in a sigh of relief after confirming that Helen's words were true. Although he kept on showing a confident expression on his face to prevent Colette and the other Dwarves from panicking, deep inside, he was standing on pins and needles.

After losing the tension in his body, his legs buckled and he almost collapsed on the ground. Fortunately, Diablo was standing beside him and managed to support him in time.

"Big Brother, what's this? Getting soft all of a sudden?" Colette teased. Now that they had been saved, the little girl's cheekiness had returned.

The Half-Elf only chuckled and ruffled Colette's hair in order to get back at her.

"Let's go back to Leaf Village," Lux said softly. "I want to take a long nice rest and a few days off from adventures."

Colette and the other Dwarves felt the same way.

With the protection of the Warriors of Norria, all of them left the Kobolds Nest safely.

Thoram had sent fifty of his men to accompany Lux, Colette, and the rest of her party to escort them back to Leaf Village.

Along the way, Nevreal and Lux had a private talk. The middle-aged dwarf had directly asked the Half-Elf what kind of reward he wanted for his help in guiding them to the Kobold's Nest, where Robin was held captive.

Lux didn't plan to play the goody-two-shoes and reject the free rewards that were being offered to him.

"I want weapons and armor," Lux stated. "The higher the quality, the better. Of course, if you plan to give me a Mythical Weapon, I will gladly accept it with open arms."

Nevreal stared at Lux with a hawk-like gaze before leaving the Half-Elf's side. The red-headed teenager watched him go with a smile on his face. He was just teasing the middle-aged Dwarf about the Mythical Weapon, but he wasn't lying when he said that he wanted weapons and armor.

His summoned minions had gained the Equip Item Skill, which meant that they could equip weapons, armor, accessories, and other miscellaneous items. If Lux could arm all of them to the teeth, then the forces he could wield would not lose to a Dwarf Party who had broken through the Apostle Rank.

Chapter 64: I Miss You

The swishing sound of a broom could be faintly heard in the surrounding area as Vera gathered the leaves that had fallen in front of their house.

She had been doing this almost every single day ever since Lux left because she had nothing else to do. After gathering the leaves into a pile, she took them to a part of the garden where she used them as mulch for other plants.

After finishing her task, she went back inside the house and headed to Lux's room. Upon entering, she scanned the surroundings to see if there was anything amiss. Seeing nothing out of place, she waved her hand and used cleaning magic to clean it.

A gentle breeze swept across the room, leaving a refreshing fragrance behind. Vera made sure to clean her grandson's room everyday using magic to ensure that Lux's stay would be a comfortable one if ever he came back home to rest.

She nodded her head in satisfaction once the cleaning spell ended. Just as she was about to leave, her gaze landed on a rainbow ball that sat on top of Lux's desk. It was something that she had bought from a passing merchant when Lux was only two years old.

After picking up the ball, a nostalgic smile appeared on Vera's face as she remembered her adopted grandson's hardship when he was only two years old.

Two years after Vera saved Lux from the Giant Crocodiles...

"Good morning Grandma Vera; good morning Lux!"

"Are the two of you going out for a walk?"

"Lux is growing up fast. It was just like yesterday when you adopted him as your grandson. After a few more years, he will definitely be a handsome boy."

Vera smiled as she chatted with the residents of Wildgarde Stronghold. Lux was a special existence within the Stronghold, not because he was a Half-Elf, but because he was Vera's adopted grandson.

The Stronghold had Nine Protectors which ensured that it remained the Overlord of the territory. There had been many occasions when the local and foreign warlords tried to invade the Fortress in order to expand their Domains.

However, all of their ambitions were turned to ashes after these Nine Protectors made their move. Vera was one of those Protectors, so her status in Wildgarde Stronghold was very high. As someone who their Protector had adopted, Lux became a hot topic among the residents.

Lux, who was being carried by Vera in her arms, sucked his thumb as he curiously eyed his surroundings. Whenever someone tried to lightly rub his cheeks, he would cry. Even if a beautiful girl kissed him, he would still cry. If someone attempted to talk to him, he would cry as well.

This made Vera feel very helpless. Her grandson didn't like to be touched, kissed, or talked to by other people at all.

As Vera neared the vast playground, where most of the children in the Stronghold gathered, the thumb-sucking baby in her arms raised his head and looked at the children with great interest. His grandma would often bring him here to watch the other children play.

But, today was different. Vera took him to the playground so that he could interact with children of his age. As the old lady walked towards the left side of the playground, where a group of toddlers could be found, several of the ladies who had gathered there to look after their children stood up and gave her a brief bow.

Vera waved her hand to put them at ease before placing Lux down on the ground.

As a two year old, Lux was able to stand up on his own, but most of the time, he still preferred to crawl on all fours to get to where he wanted.

"Lux, play with the other kids," Vera said as she coaxed her grandson to go to where the other children were playing.

The toddler's area had a special protection magic around it that ensured that nothing dangerous would happen to any of the children.

Vera had only taken a few steps away when she saw Lux following behind her. When she stopped, Lux grabbed hold of her leg and laughed.

This made the ladies who had been watching over their children giggle. They had seen Lux several times in the past, but he was mostly carried along by Vera whenever she walked around the stronghold for her regular patrol.

Seeing the little Half-Elf follow his grandma around like a little duckling made the hearts of the ladies melt. They couldn't help but think about how endearing he was.

"Lux, don't you want to play with the other kids?" Vera asked. "Look, they are having fun over there."

Vera pointed at a bunch of two to four year old kids playing with colorful balls and small boxes that littered the playing area.

Lux glanced at the place where Vera was pointing at and started to suck on his thumb once again. Seeing that an opportunity had arrived, the old lady lightly pried Lux's left hand, which was still clinging at her leg off, and jumped to the top of a tree where Lux wouldn't be able to see her.

Since Lux was still a baby, he didn't notice right away that his grandma had disappeared from beside him. The moment he turned his head to look back, Vera was no longer in sight.

The little Half-Elf turned his head in every way, searching his surroundings, trying to find his grandma. A minute later, when Lux still couldn't find Vera, he started crying, calling out to his grandma.

"Manma! Waaaaaaaah! Manmaa!"

(A/N: Manma is Mama and Grandma combined.)

The Little Half-Elf was bawling his eyes out, making the ladies who were watching him earlier get a strong urge to hug and coax him until he no longer

cried. However, they didn't dare move from their location because they knew that Vera was just up in the tree beside her grandson, observing his every move.

"Manmaaaa! Manmaaa!"

Lux cried and called out repeatedly until his face became flushed. Anyone who saw him right now would feel heartbroken because of how pitiful he looked.

Vera sighed because she realized that Lux might not be ready yet to play with the other children. Just as she was about to jump off the tree, Lux suddenly collapsed and laid on the ground without moving.

The ladies who saw what happened cried out in alarm and stood from their seats. They were about to go and help Lux when Vera appeared by his side.

The old lady picked up her grandson, and immediately checked his condition with a spell. The result baffled Vera because according to her medical knowledge, Lux was perfectly fine.

The old lady then wiped the tears and snot on her grandson's face before leaving the scene to visit her friend, who was Wildgarde Stronghold's healer. She was not a medical expert, so she decided to let her friend do a full diagnostic check on her grandson to find out what had happened to him.

"He's not in any serious danger. At least, for now," the strongest Cleric in Wildgarde Stronghold, Natasha, said with a frown. "There's nothing wrong with his body. But, do you remember what I told you when you brought him to me after you returned to the Stronghold with him?"

Vera nodded. "You said that he might have been exposed to a soul damaging spell, which may leave him with some problems growing up."

"Yes," Natasha stated. "Back then, he was still too young, so these problems weren't obviously showing. Now, it's different. This is a side-effect of his soul being damaged."

"Although it is too early to tell, I have a feeling that he will lose consciousness anytime he is faced with very strenuous situations. Worst case scenario, it

might be triggered when he experiences any kind of strong emotions like happiness, anger, sadness, or depression."

Vera looked at her grandson with an anxious expression before looking back at her friend, who was still in the middle of casting a diagnostic spell.

"Is there any way to cure him?" Vera asked. "Just tell me what things you need, I'll get them for you."

Natasha sighed and shook her head. "This is beyond my capabilities. I've already tried to use my powers, and even gave him a very strong elixir a year ago. I thought that it would help his soul heal over time, but it didn't work."

"Then, what should I do?"

"Don't let him feel any stress or encounter stressful situations. Bring him to me for regular checkups so I can observe his condition all the time. Maybe, just maybe, we will be able to figure out a way to rid him of this sickness before he becomes old enough to enter Elysium."

After leaving her friend's house, Vera carried her grandson back to their residence. When she was halfway through their journey, Lux opened his eyes and looked drowsily at Vera. After seeing that his Grandma was in front of him. He hurriedly wrapped his arms around her neck and once again started to cry.

Clearly, the little Half-Elf had been scared silly earlier, and still hadn't gotten over the fact that Vera had disappeared without him noticing.

"There, there, don't cry," Vera coaxed as she lightly patted Lux's back. "Don't worry, Grandma will not leave you again, okay? So stop crying."

It took Vera a full five minutes to coax Lux enough to get him to stop crying. It was at this moment when she passed by a merchant stall in which several items were laid out for sale.

In order to apologize to her grandson, Vera bought the rainbow-colored ball from the merchant and gave it to Lux to play with.

Surprisingly, the little Half-Elf loved Vera's gift and played with it a lot. There were even times when he would faint while playing with the ball due to how

excited he was, which had made Vera panic several times because of how sudden it was.

"Time flies so fast," Vera muttered as she lovingly placed the ball back on top of the desk. She missed the days when Lux was still young, but she also understood that he couldn't remain a child forever.

This was why when Lux decided to go to Elysium, she had given him her silent consent and passed her family's Special Techniques to him. Vera hoped that it would be enough to keep Lux safe when he faced dangerous situations.

Just as she was wondering what to cook for lunch, she felt a fluctuation inside the house.

Vera didn't hesitate and ran towards the training room. The moment she opened the door, a handsome Half-Elf with red hair, and eyes as green as emeralds turned his head to look at her.

"I'm back, Grandma," Lux said with a smile. "I missed you."

The old lady walked towards her grandson and hugged him tightly. It had been more than a month since Lux had come to Elysium, so she had also missed him terribly.

"Welcome back, Lux," Vera replied as she lightly ruffled her grandson's head like usual. "Your hair has grown a bit long, do you want me to cut it for you?"

"Is it that long already?" Lux asked as he scratched his head.

"Yes," Vera answered with a smile. "But, we can do that later. Have you eaten? What do you want to eat for lunch?"

That day, Vera cooked all of Lux's favorite dishes. The Half-Elf ate a lot because it was tasty and he had missed his Grandma's cooking. After the meal, Lux told Vera about his adventures in Elysium.

Vera smiled as she listened to her grandson's bragging. She found it funny when Lux told her that he single-handedly fought a Kobold's Nest. As someone that had fought these monsters in the past, how could she possibly believe her grandson's exaggerated tale?

'Well, as long as he is safe, that is all that matters,' Vera thought as she praised Lux for his amazing performance.

They had been finally reunited after more than a month of parting, so Vera had no intention of ruining Lux's good mood, and allowed him to brag as much as he wanted.

While the Grandma and Grandson pair were spending some quality time together, news of what happened in the Kobold's Nest had reached the ears of the high-ranking personages in the Kingdom of Gweliven.

By the time that the Half-Elf returned to Leaf Village to continue his adventures, he would understand that the Dwarf Race was not a race that should be taken lightly.