Chapter 26: Survival - My Infinite Mana System

The chamber was filled with the sounds of clashing steel, the twang of arrows, and the sharp, ragged breaths of my so-called teammates.

The chaos unfolded around me like a scene from a distant dream, one I was watching from behind an invisible barrier, detached and unaffected.

Marcus lunged at Tobias again, his twin daggers a blur as he aimed for an opening in the larger man's defenses.

Tobias grunted, deflecting the blow with a heavy swing of his claymore, the sheer force sending Marcus staggering back.

The ground beneath them cracked under the strain of their relentless battle, but neither showed any sign of slowing down.

Lily, perched on a crumbled stone pillar, loosed arrow after arrow with deadly precision, her eyes locked onto Marcus.

Her usual playful demeanor was gone, replaced by cold focus.

Evelyn, on the other hand, was paralyzed with fear, her trembling hands gripping her staff so tightly that her knuckles had turned white.

And me?

I still stood there.

Watching, and thinking.

Their frantic movements, the desperate shouts, the glint of their weapons, it was all so... predictable.

They were fighting to survive, to cling to the hope that somehow, against all odds, they could escape this twisted game without spilling each other's blood.

I leaned against the cold stone wall, my arms crossed, eyes scanning the battlefield with a detached curiosity.

Tobias' voice rang out, raw with anger and frustration.

"Allen, *damn it,* do something!"

I met his gaze, unblinking.

His expression was one of desperation, like he was grasping at straws, trying to still find some sense of unity in the chaos.

"I will ask again, Why?" I asked, my voice calm, devoid of emotion.

His eyes widened, lips parting in disbelief.

"Because we're a team, you idiot! We need to-"

Team.

The word felt meaningless now.

A fragile illusion shattered the moment the system gave its decree.

I had seen it before, the way people broke under pressure, how friendships and trust crumbled when something important just like survival, was on the line.

I tilted my head slightly, my voice quieter this time.

"You still think that matters?, If you still do, just look at Marcus and think again"

Tobias' grip on his claymore tightened, his face contorted in anger.

But before he could respond, Marcus struck again, forcing him back into the fight.

The clash of their weapons echoed through the chamber, but I barely registered it.

Lily's voice cut through the chaos.

"Allen, *move!*" An arrow whizzed past me, striking the ground just inches from my foot.

She was testing me, angry, frustrated, confused by my inaction.

I looked up at her, meeting her gaze.

There was something there, something raw.

Fear?

No, it was deeper than that.

She didn't understand.

None of them did.

With a slow exhale, I took a step forward, my boots crunching against the debris beneath me.

"I don't want to kill any of you," I said, my tone as level as ever.

Evelyn, who had been rooted in place, finally found her voice.

"Allen... please."

Her eyes pleaded with me, filled with something I couldn't quite place.

Hope, maybe?

I stared at her for a long moment.

"You shouldn't have come here, Evelyn. I'm sorry"

Her lips trembled, but she had no response.

She knew I was right.

They all did.

Tobias roared, charging at Marcus with renewed fury, his claymore slamming down in a powerful arc.

Marcus barely managed to dodge, rolling to the side and coming up with a knife slash that nicked Tobias' arm.

Blood spattered onto the ground.

They bled.

They screamed.

They fought.

While I watched.

Part of me screamed at me to help...

But what if I go and help, and we successfully stop or kill Marcus.

The system isn't going to let us go.

Then Tobias and Lily will have no other choice than to fight theirselves, it can not be escaped.

Every human wants to live, even I.

But when they fight theirselves, and if one emerges victorious.

I will have to kill the person.

That is why in my own terms, I prefer they die fighting theirselves.

I don't wish to fight and kill any of them, unless when necessary.

But what about Evelyn...

Marcus laughed, a crazed edge creeping into his voice.

"Allen's got the right idea. Just sit back and let us do the dirty work, huh?" He flashed me a grin, but I didn't return it.

Lily's hands trembled as she drew another arrow.

"Shut up, Marcus."

It was all unraveling.

I could see it happening, the way their movements were growing more desperate, their strikes more reckless.

The exhaustion in their eyes, the weight of their choices pressing down on them.

The air was thick with the scent of sweat and blood.

The sounds of battle had shifted from the chaotic clamor of many to the harsh, ragged grunts and desperate gasps of only a few.

The floor was littered with discarded weapons, broken armor, and the scattered remains of what used to be a team, now reduced to enemies.

I stood at the edge of the chaos, watching as the remnants of my once-strong team fought tooth and nail for survival.

Tobias, Lily, and Marcus, three bodies fighting as if their lives depended on it.

Tobias and Marcus were locked in a brutal exchange, both exhausted, their movements slower than before.

Tobias' claymore swung with less precision, his energy flagging, while Marcus's dagger strikes grew more desperate, each one narrowly deflected by Tobias' heavy blade.

"You're... too slow, Tobias," Marcus hissed, his breath ragged but his grin still wide, manic.

He danced around Tobias, his dual daggers flashing, striking with precision but never landing a killing blow.

He was savoring this, savoring the chaos.

Lily, on the other hand, was a wild force of nature.

Her arrows flew with deadly accuracy, each one aimed for the soft spots between Tobias and Marcus, her eyes darting around the battlefield as if calculating her next move.

She was agile, quick, but the weariness in her face told the story of someone stretched too thin, someone who knew this could be the end.

Evelyn had retreated to the corner of the room, her staff gripped tightly in her trembling hands.

She was out of breath, her body slumped with exhaustion, but her eyes were locked on Tobias and Marcus.

She didn't have the strength to help, not anymore.

She just helped for a few seconds, healing all of them before retreating...

But isn't that stupid.

She was also healing the enemy, no, she was healing the enemies.

"Tobias!" Lily shouted, her voice high and sharp with panic.

She fired another arrow, and this time it struck Tobias in the shoulder.

He grunted, the force of the impact pushing him back a step, but he didn't fall.

He stood tall, his gaze narrowing as he turned toward Lily.

"Why are you doing this?" Tobias asked, his voice a low growl, pain lacing his words.

Lily faltered for a moment, as if the question had caught her off guard.

But then she shook her head, the fierceness returning to her eyes.

"I am sorry, we have no choice, Tobias!" she snapped. "I have to survive. I have to."

Survive.

That word echoed in my mind.

Survival.

That's all this was now.

I was watching them fight for something that didn't matter anymore.

In the end, survival meant everything.

But they all looked like walking corpses.

So where is survival in them...

As Tobias lunged at Marcus, their blades clashing with a force that shook the ground beneath them.

Evelyn hands were shaking as she muttered an incantation under her breath, casting a protective shield around herself.

But her magic was weak, her energy spent, and I could see the fear in her eyes.

She didn't want to die.

None of them did.

But then...

The final clash came suddenly.

Chapter 27: Last Stand

Remove

Tobias and Marcus collided, their weapons locked in a battle of strength.

Marcus had the speed, but Tobias had the power.

It was a deadly dance, one that only one could walk away from.

Tobias pushed forward, his claymore slicing through the air with a roar, knocking Marcus off balance.

Marcus staggered back, his feet slipping on the blood-slicked floor.

He barely had time to react before Tobias was upon him, slamming the edge of the claymore into his chest.

There was a sickening crunch, followed by a strangled gasp.

Marcus collapsed, his body crumpling to the floor like a ragdoll, his eyes wide in shock.

Tobias stood over him, breathing heavily, blood dripping from his sword.

His eyes met mine, and I could see the desperation in them.

The words caught in his throat as a fresh wave of exhaustion hit him, and his knees buckled.

He stumbled backward, his hand dropping to his side.

He was too tired, too broken to fight anymore.

"Rest in peace" I said shortly.

Now it is just me, Lily and Evelyn.

Her eyes were wild with panic, her breath ragged as she pulled another arrow from her quiver.

But the look in her eyes...

It wasn't the confident, teasing Lily I had known.

It was a woman on the edge of collapse, struggling to hold onto whatever shred of humanity remained.

"You…" Her voice trembled, but her aim didn't falter.

I didn't say anything to her.

What was there to say?

Lily's arrow flew, but it didn't reach me.

She had miscalculated, her desperation blinding her judgment.

The arrow grazed my cheek, drawing a thin line of blood, but I didn't move.

I just watched.

"Just quit trying," I said.

Her eyes flickered between me and the battlefield, searching for a reason to keep going.

But there was no reason left.

She dropped her bow.

The silence that followed was deafening.

Only the sound of our breathing filled the space between us.

But it was clear that this was the end.

One would survive, and the rest would fall.

Lily's shoulders sagged as she looked around at the devastation.

Her voice was barely a whisper.

"I thought this raid would be normal, I thought it was supposed to be a simple one, i thought i could make it back. I thought..."

I took a step forward, my gaze fixed on her.

"I am sorry."

Then she died.

With that only two where remaining.

I and Evelyn.

But still only one is required.