

Shota 601

Chapter 601 Sly Duke

It would be fine if he didn't say anything, but the moment that he did...

It was like he was rubbing it in, which made us even angrier.

But this made it clear what he was planning on doing.

He was giving us these ten thousand 'troops', even though it was clear that this was a ragtag army that he had gathered in haste.

So technically, he wasn't disobeying his orders, he was just using a loophole to get out of sending any of his actual troops.

I could sense the rage coming from General Killock and the officers behind me after Duke Yuletide said this. In fact, the rage that was coming from behind me didn't just come from General Killock and the officers, I could feel it coming from Shaka and Cecilia too.

They were people that had sacrificed their lives to protect the kingdom that they lived in and the people that they loved.

Seeing Duke Yuletide spit on it like this by giving them these pretend soldiers, it was like a slap to the face.

They naturally couldn't accept this.

But this was the enemy's territory, so I couldn't just let them do what they wanted.

I raised my hand behind me for them to stop before giving a signal for them to calm down.

The looks on their faces made it seem like they were about to blow, but they were able to hold back in the end.

If they really lost their temper here, it would have been a good excuse for Duke Yuletide to get rid of us.

Naturally I couldn't allow that to happen.

In the end, I looked at the duke with a smile on my face and said, "Duke Yuletide, thank you for preparing everything so quickly. I'll be sure to report your willingness to cooperate to his majesty when I return."

This time, Duke Yuletide no longer had the same calm and composed look on his face.

There was a momentary surprised look that appeared on his face before that calm and composed look returned again.

With a smile, he asked, "Count Zwein, if possible, may I ask where you're planning on going with these troops?"

I just shook my head and said, "This is confidential military information, so I can't disclose this to you. I'm sure that you understand that while I can trust you, there's no knowing if there are any spies around."

Duke Yuletide slightly narrowed his eyes before saying, "Count Zwein, are you saying that you don't trust me?"

I said with a shrug, "Please don't misunderstand your lordship, I said no such thing." Then with a serious look, I said, "This is an important matter that concerns the future of the kingdom, I'm sure that your lordship will not mind if I take some extra precautions, right?"

Duke Yuletide continued to look at me with those same narrowed eyes for a bit, but then he gave a nod and said with a smile, "As expected of the famous general who orchestrated the Slaughter of the Rising

Land Plains. Everything that you do has many different meanings, it is hard for a simple man like myself to keep up with you."

I shook my head before saying with a humble look, "I am but a simple man, there are no other meanings in my words. I just want to do the best for my kingdom and my people."

There was a bit of a sharp jab to these words, but Duke Yuletide didn't seem to care at all as he calmly said, "Of course, it is all for the greater good of the kingdom."

At the very least, there was no doubt that his shamelessness was world class.

He was giving us soldiers like this and he was still saying that it was all for the good of the kingdom.

Even I felt the urge to punch this man in the face at this moment, but I held myself back in the end.

However, I couldn't just let this matter end here.

I had to at least get a jab in at Duke Yuletide before leaving with these troops.

With a cough, I said, "Your lordship, it is embarrassing to mention this, but I was hoping that you would be able to spare some supplies as well. We had to rush here, so we weren't able to bring as many supplies as we wanted. With the extra troops that we will be taking here, we won't be able to support ourselves for long. So if possible, could you spare some supplies for these troops?"

Duke Yuletide knitted his brows when he heard this.

He narrowed his eyes to look at me before saying, "Count Zwein, it isn't that I don't want to help, but I really cannot help. You should have seen the situation when you walked through the city, we really aren't able to help."

I gave a nod before saying, "But on the way, I saw that a few of the nobles of your fair city seemed to be squandering some resources. If those resources could be more properly allocated..."

I didn't finish my words, but it was clear what I was implying.

When Duke Yuletide heard this, he immediately glared at the soldiers who had led us the entire way. However, those soldiers didn't dare look at Duke Yuletide when he was glaring at them.

It was clear that they were scared of his gaze.

After giving a cough to calm himself down, Duke Yuletide said, "Un, it seems that I might have missed a few things. Let me take care of this matter and prepare the supplies for you."

It seemed that those nobles weren't supposed to be there.

At the very least, it seemed that Duke Yuletide didn't have full control of the nobles in his city. Or at least he didn't want full control over them.

His words proved that he had the ability to wipe out these nobles when he wanted, but he kept them in his city for a certain reason.

Was it to pretend to be weak or was it something else?

Regardless, at least I was able to make him bleed a bit.

So I said with a nod and a smile, "Then I'll be counting on your lordship."

Chapter 602 Gathering Evidence

After that matter was settled, we were shown to rooms in the duke's manor since it would take some time for the duke to prepare everything.

When we were shown to our rooms, the first thing that happened was...

Everyone exploded.

That was to be expected since they had been holding back the entire time.

Even now, it was very likely that we were being watched by the duke's people, so we should have been holding back and watching what we said. However, it was hard to hold back with these soldiers who wore their emotions on their sleeves more.

General Killock was the one that led them as he smashed a chair once the servants had all left.

"That duke! I knew from the very beginning that we shouldn't trust him, but to think that he would insult us like this!"

The officers all agreed with him and it even seemed like Cecilia agreed, though she held herself back as she stood beside me.

After he finished venting, General Killock came over to me to say, "General, we must find some way to remove that duke and take back control of this city. It's clear that leaving this city in the hands of that man is..."

Before he could finish, I immediately raised a hand to stop him before saying, "Are you speaking of treason right now?"

General Killock was surprised when he heard this before quickly saying, "General, it's that duke that has committed treason against the kingdom with the way that he has acted."

I just narrowed my eyes to look at him before saying, "Do you have evidence of this?"

General Killock gritted his teeth as he said, "Isn't everything that he's done enough evidence of this? It's clear that this man does not care for the kingdom and only cares about himself."

Shaking my head, I gave a shrug and said with a sigh, "Then you have no evidence. What do you think will happen if you try to use force?"

General Killock gritted his teeth even more when he heard this before saying, "It is the honour of every soldier in the kingdom to die for the sake of the kingdom. If that is what happens, then I have no regrets."

I just shook my head and gave another sigh before saying, "You might want to die, but that doesn't mean that I want to die here with all of you."

General Killock looked like he was about to say something else, but I cut him off by saying, "There are better ways of handling this. You need to stop looking at what's in front of us and start looking at what's behind the curtain."

General Killock revealed a surprised look, but I didn't care at all as I said, "How is it, did you find anything yet?"

As soon as I said this, there was a cloaked figure that appeared.

The officers were surprised by this cloaked figure and moved forward with their weapons raised. However, it was General Killock who raised his hand to stop them since he recognized this person.

It was one of the Shadows, one of the secret guards of the fourth prince.

Those that knew of the Shadows knew just how capable they were.

For the fourth prince to give one of the Shadows to Count Zwein...it was clear how close Count Zwein was to him and how much he trusted Count Zwein.

At the same time, it was clear how much the fourth prince valued Count Zwein.

After Shadow Five appeared, she bowed her head and said, "I'm sorry, I wasn't able to find anything."

I wasn't surprised when I heard this since if it was that easy to find, then the duke would have been exposed a long time ago. Duke Yuletide and the Yuletide Family had been preparing for a long time to betray the kingdom and the royal family, so of course their preparations wouldn't be that easy to discover.

After a long silence, Shadow Five said, "I did find some evidence of some minor offences. If we use those, we might be able to..."

Her voice trailed off, but it was clear what she was implying.

She wanted me to use these things to blackmail Duke Yuletide into giving us more troops.

General Killock's eyes lit up and he looked at me as if he was urging me to do this, but I just ignored him.

I calmly said to Shadow Five, "Contact the fourth prince and tell him what we've found, as well as tell him what my suspicions are. I want to ask him to send a special team here to investigate this matter."

Shadow Five was clearly surprised even if her face couldn't be seen.

But in the end, she didn't disobey these orders.

The fourth prince had told her to follow all of Count Zwein's orders, so she had no other choice.

Though she knew that if it was Count Zwein who asked for this, the fourth prince would likely even send a group of Shadows to investigate this matter.

Each of the Shadows took a large amount of resources to train and each of them were precious, so they shouldn't be used that easily...

But there was no other choice.

I turned back to General Killock and said, "In the first place, I hadn't been planning on using the troops that the duke gave me in the first place. I have my own plans."

General Killock looked like he wanted to say something, but then he remembered what happened the last time that he had doubted this man in front of him.

So after a moment of silence, General Killock just gave a nod of agreement.

It was the same for the officers who were in the room.

Seeing this, I gave a nod as well before saying, "For now, we'll go out and take care of the enemies. When we come back, we'll deal with this Duke Yuletide. I promise you that he will not get off lightly for this."

Chapter 603 Luring In The Enemy (1)

The next morning, we set off from Vayne City.

As if to show his support, Duke Yuletide even came to the city gates himself to see us off.

From the head of the army, I could see him above the gates when I turned back to look at the city. Seeing me look back, Duke Yuletide even gave me a nod as if he was showing his support.

I just gave a nod back in response, but...

Neither of us were sincere in our nods.

Both of us clearly didn't want to see the other side succeed, so we were only doing this to put on a show.

Once we left Vayne City, we headed further west to the border.

Even though the enemy sent people into our kingdom's territory to raid, those were nothing more than small groups. The main forces would still be on the border since they wouldn't risk being wrapped around.

After all, if they didn't take care of the forces of the nobles that hid in their territory, then they wouldn't be able to ensure that there were no enemy forces behind them.

Once they went deep into the enemy territory, it would be likely that they would get surrounded by the enemy if they left enemies behind them. So there wasn't a single sane general who would do something like this.

The main forces were the ones that we had to deal with.

Before we reached the border though, we suddenly stopped and set up camp.

After setting up camp, the first thing that we did was check the supplies that the duke gave us.

"As expected."

That was the only thing that I could say when we stopped and took a closer look at the supplies that were given to us.

The supplies seemed like they were normal on the outside, they even seemed like they were very fresh supplies that had been provided to us. But when one took off the fresh coating and looked underneath, they would find...

There were items that were close to breaking and goods that were close to rotting.

There was only a fresh coat on this and the insides were rotten.

After searching for a bit, General Killock threw the close to rotting fruit in his hand on the ground and said, "Damn! I knew that traitor wouldn't be up to anything good."

I just calmly raised my hand to stop him from going any further and said, "We already expected this. I have already arranged for more supplies to be sent to us later, so you don't need to worry."

General Killock revealed a look of rage as he said, "That isn't the problem. Even if we have supplies, we can't just let him get away with this."

This time, I nodded in agreement as I said, "I know, but it isn't the time yet. For now, we have to endure until it's time to make our move."

General Killock and the other officers looked like they were unhappy about this, but they didn't say anything in the end.

To change the topic, I suddenly said, "Alright, let's talk about our strategy instead."

When they heard this, General Killock and the other officers revealed serious looks before looking around us, as if they were afraid that there would be people listening.

I shook my head with a smile when I saw this before saying, "Why did you think that we came all the way out here to check the supplies when we already knew that they would be like this?"

General Killock and the officers looked around us again, but this time the looks in their eyes were completely different.

After a while, they just looked at me as if they were waiting to hear what I had to say.

So I waved for them to come closer before telling them my plan.

"General, this is too dangerous."

That was the general consensus that they came to after they heard what my plan was.

It was clear that there wasn't a single person who supported my plan.

In fact, even Cecilia and Shaka looked like they disapproved even if they had supported me previously.

I just calmly shook my head and said, "It's only dangerous if something unexpected happens. Otherwise, this is a foolproof plan, there is no way that something will go wrong."

They all looked like they clearly didn't believe me, but I refused to explain any further.

This was all because I couldn't tell them what the surprise was.

Even if I did, it was unlikely that they would have believed me, which was why I couldn't say a thing.

They looked at the determined look on my face for a while before finally giving up.

That was the prestige that I had built over the course of my time with this army.

They knew that I must have some kind of secret plan that I wasn't telling them and they were looking forward to seeing what my secret plan was. After all, the last secret plan had caused a slaughter that killed over a hundred thousand people.

After a long time, General Killock finally said, "Alright, what are our orders?"

I gave a nod and said with a smile, "It's very simple..."

...

The next day.

A small group set off from the camp.

This group was a group that was led by me while General Killock watched over the main camp of our army.

This group was supposed to be a scouting group that was to determine the location of the enemy.

I was going because I needed to personally see how the enemies were spread out, so I could make sure that there were no mistakes in my plan.

But as we left, there were certain people that noticed us leaving.

When we were a bit away from the camp, Shadow Five suddenly told me in a whisper, "There are people following you."

I gave a simple nod, but I didn't stop as I kept moving forward with this group.

Chapter 604 Luring In The Enemy (2)

As we continued moving forward, I received even more reports from Shadow Five that there were people following us.

But at this point, it wasn't just Shadow Five alone who was reporting that they were being followed.

At this point, everyone could sense that they were being followed.

After all, the people that were following them didn't seem like they were trying to hide that they were following them at all. It was almost as if they wanted them to know so that they would panic and try to run.

Even with all of this, I just ignored all of them as I kept moving my group forward.

Eventually, we were surrounded.

There was no way around it.

Since the enemy had been moving around us, it was clear that they were trying to force us into a trap of their own. With the way that they were trying to force us to panic and run, it was clear that they wanted to make us go in a certain direction so they could surround us.

But I made sure that we only went in one direction.

Until we finally reached this cave where we were surrounded by the enemies.

They didn't charge us right away as we stood there in front of the cave.

There was an important looking person that came forward and he looked down on us from his horse as he said, "Ha, I never thought that I would encounter the famous Rising Lands Butcher. I had thought that you would be a bit hard to handle, but I never thought that you would be such a fool that you would fall into a simple trap like this."

I didn't say anything as I looked at this person and asked, "Are you the general of the Vikal Kingdom army?"

This person was surprised to hear me ask this question, but then he raised his head up high and said, "That's right, this one is the famous General Risen from the Vikal Kingdom. I'm sure that you've heard of me before!"

I just calmly shook my head before saying, "I've never heard of you before, that's why I asked if you were the general in the first place."

There was an awkward silence that filled the air after this was said.

The soldiers of the Vikal Kingdom all revealed awkward and scared looks as they looked at their general.

They knew that their general had a fierce temper and what this person had just done would without a doubt provoke their general. They just hope that they wouldn't suffer the wrath of their general because of this.

At the same time, they couldn't help blaming this enemy general in front of them.

Didn't he know how to at least play properly so that he wouldn't get them in the crossfire?

There was a vein that started throbbing on the forehead of General Risen, but it seemed like he was able to keep himself calm in the end.

Or at least that was what it seemed until the subordinates behind Count Zwein suddenly burst out in laughter.

They pointed at General Risen and said, "Did you see the look on his face?"

"Right? He proudly said his name and everything! He was acting like everyone should know him!"

"Our general just slapped him in the face without a single care, look at how embarrassed he is."

It was fine if they didn't say anything, General Risen would have been able to ignore this and move on since this was his moment in the spotlight. But now that they were poking at his wounds, he naturally wouldn't be able to let this go that easily.

With a dark look on his face, he said, "Kill them all, don't even leave a corpse!"

Then he turned to look at me before saying with a fierce voice, "I will cut your head off and turn it into my trophy. Everyone will know that your title of butcher is baseless and you are nothing more than trash."

As soon as he gave the order, all of the Vikal Kingdom soldiers started moving forward without any hesitation.

The look on their face seemed like they wanted to avoid the wrath of their general.

They wanted to take care of the enemies as soon as possible to eliminate the risk of their general being enraged again.

When they were bearing down on us like this, my subordinates couldn't help revealing a panicked look.

The only reason that they had done what they had done before was because I had told them to do this. This was the only instruction that I had given them and they had followed it to a tee.

But now, we had to do something to get out of this situation.

So they looked at me and asked, "General, what do we do?"

I had been watching the soldiers approach at first, but once they reached a certain point, I suddenly turned around and started heading into the cave.

As I went, I said to them, "Follow me." But then I also added in a serious voice, "Be sure to follow all of my steps or else..."

don't blame me for what happens."

All of my subordinates couldn't help revealing surprised and confused looks, but they didn't have time to think about it. So all they could do was nod in agreement to this.

So without hesitation, I went into the cave.

The moment that I went into the cave, General Risen suddenly shouted, "Stop!"

As soon as they heard this, all of the Vikal Kingdom soldiers stopped.

It seemed that they were well trained at the very least.

General Risen just watched as his enemies entered the cave.

Even if he was enraged by what had happened, he was still a general and he cared about the lives of his soldiers. Since he didn't know what was happening, he couldn't just send his soldiers into the cave that the enemy was fleeing into without a care.

But after a minute of seeing nothing happen, he said, "It's just a fake, huh? They really have nothing left."

There was a pause before he gave the order again, "Kill!"

Chapter 605 Chimera Ants (1)

Once we were in the cave, I suddenly revealed a smile as I saw the layout of the cave.

For a moment, I just remained there with that smile on my face as I looked at this cave.

It was the exact same as the cave layout that I had seen in the game.

I was just standing there in a daze, as if I was lost in my thoughts as I stared at this cave.

For a moment, it was as if I had been sent back to my old world and I was just staring at this game world through a screen.

But there wasn't the time to think about all of this.

"General, what do we do now?"

As soon as I heard this, I snapped out of my daze and said, "Follow me and make sure to walk in the exact same spots that I'm walking. If one of you is off, then we'll all be in danger."

All of them gave a gulp when they heard this, but they nodded in agreement to this.

As I stepped forward, I suddenly closed my eyes.

"General? What are you doing closing your eyes?!"

They said as soon as I did this, but I just ignored them as I stepped forward.

This was a dungeon that I had done many times before since this was a dungeon that one could farm. Especially since the monsters that were in this dungeon bred very quickly, which refilled the dungeon very quickly.

So I could find the safe path for this place with my eyes closed.

Or rather, it was easier for me to take the safe path with my eyes closed since that would allow my memories to come easier. It was better to rely on muscle memory than to rely on trying to figure it out with my sight.

Taking a deep breath, I took a step forward.

Then I took two more steps forward before suddenly stopping.

Turning to the left, I took two steps and stopped.

Turning to the right, I took three steps and stopped.

Turning to the right again, I took another three steps and stopped.

Just like this, I progressed deeper into the cave with this strange method of movement.

While I was doing this, my subordinates just looked at me with very strange looks.

They had been too stunned by this that they almost forgot to follow me.

If it wasn't for Cecilia who blindly trusted me getting them to move, then I might have actually left them behind.

It was only because of her following me and telling the others to follow that they remembered to follow my exact path.

After heading a bit deeper into the cave, I heard some noise coming from behind us.

At the same time, I heard Cecilia say, "They're here."

I just gave a simple nod before continuing forward since we were already on the edge of this maze. As long as we made it to the other side, there was nothing for us to worry about.

So I just focused on getting us to the other side.

"Stop and surrender! As long as you surrender, we will go easy on you!"

I heard that coming from behind us, but I just completely ignored it as I continued forward.

Finally, I opened my eyes after reaching the end and waving my hand for my group to come over.

They saw that I was waving at them, but they made sure to remain right behind me until I said, "It's fine now, you don't have to follow me anymore. Just stand behind me and don't go back or else something might happen."

They all nodded to acknowledge this before even taking a step back.

However, on the other side, there were some people that misunderstood what I meant by this wave of the hand.

General Risen didn't charge in with his troops, so the one that was currently in command was one of the commanders that he trusted. However, what kind of general determined what kind of commanders were under him.

When this commander saw Count Zwein waving his hand, he thought that it meant...

"Come and get me."

This would be considered a very simple provocation that most people would have ignored, but the commander didn't.

It was for two simple reasons.

One, he believed that he was better than Count Zwein, so he could easily take him down.

Two, it was because he didn't believe that there would be anything dangerous in this cave.

He could even see the back of this cave, so he knew that there was nowhere for this group to go.

Yet they still wanted to run?

He wouldn't let them.

The commander raised his hand and said, "Fire the arrows and turn them into pincushions."

The general had already said that there was no need to take them alive, so he wouldn't hesitate.

After all, there was nothing to lose from using arrows to take care of them.

The archers all aimed at the group that was on the other side of the cave and fired their arrows.

But the moment that the arrows made it halfway, there was something that suddenly caused the arrows to fly upwards. These arrows were pushed up by some kind of strange force and all of them stuck to the roof.

The Vikal Kingdom soldiers were all caught off guard when they saw this, but the commander didn't remain stunned for long.

He knew that there must be something strange about this cave that the enemies had chosen to run into this place.

But other than a few tricks, the commander didn't believe that this enemy was capable of anything else. Especially since they were completely outnumbered at this point.

So the commander said, "Go and get them. Surround them and take them down."

Once they received this order, the soldiers took a formation with spears and shields, moving towards the enemy group.

But as they did, they passed over the area that the enemies had just passed...

Chapter 606 Chimera Ants (2)

There was a reason why I had carefully made my way through this cave.

It was because this was the only safe path through this cave that was filled with hidden traps.

Unless one took that path, it would wake the things that were hidden under the ground here.

Under the floor that seemed normal, there were...

As soon as the soldiers stepped into the area that I had carefully moved through, they found that the ground collapsed from underneath them.

It wasn't just the area that we had moved through that collapsed, it was even the floor that was under them that collapsed. But of course, it wasn't as if every single part of the floor collapsed.

There were just some holes that appeared in the ground under the Vikal Kingdom soldiers.

The ones that were caught off guard by the sudden appearance of these holes were swallowed by those holes. They tried to grab at anything that they could to stop themselves from falling, but all that did was drag their comrades down in the holes with them.

It was a complete mess as these soldiers were caught off guard by the appearance of these holes.

Even if they were elite soldiers that were well trained, that didn't mean that they were able to stop themselves from being caught off guard. Once they were caught off guard, their panic took over and even their finely trained minds couldn't keep up.

The only instinct that they had was to stop themselves from falling down into the holes that had formed.

But...they were just too slow for that.

The commander was among the few that was able to escape falling into these holes.

Once he calmed down, he was able to analyze the situation.

The one thing that he noticed was that there were no holes where we were currently standing.

As soon as he realized this, the commander knew that this was the only solution.

"Forward! Charge forward and get them! The area where they're standing is safe!" The commander shouted at his soldiers, but it was too bad that they weren't in a state to follow these orders.

All of them were still trying to find their footing after the collapse of the floor under them.

It was just too bad that they wouldn't get the chance to come back to their senses.

After all, there was still something that was under the ground...

It was something that had been crawling around without a care for the humans above it, but once it was disturbed...

There were these skittering sounds that suddenly started filling the cave.

These sounds were just too loud that it was impossible to ignore them.

At the same time, it was clear that there were many things that were making this sound.

After a while, there were things that peeked out of the holes that had formed in the ground of this cave. These were...mandibles with sharp pincers or these were legs that seemed very thin, but covered in a layer of exoskeleton.

The things that crawled out of the caves were...giant ants.

As soon as they came out, they looked around as if they were trying to see what was there.

Though as they looked around, what really moved were the antennas on their heads.

Ants had blurry vision, so what they really used to find things was chemosense which they did with the antennas on their heads.

It was during this time that they were able to get a closer look at these ants that had suddenly appeared.

These were giant ants that seemed to be the same size as large dogs.

There wasn't much that was different about these ants, other than the fact that they were giant compared to normal ants. Other than that, they had the same features as normal ants.

But there was one thing that caught the eye very quickly about these ants.

It was that there were some of the ants that were covered in red.

As for what that red was...it was blood.

It was the blood of the ones that had fallen down into the holes.

In fact, there was even an ant that had what seemed to be a human arm in between the pincers of its mouth. This arm had a sleeve on it that had the symbol of the Vikal Kingdom army.

When the Vikal Kingdom soldiers saw this, they began panicking even more.

The only one that was still calm was the commander of these soldiers.

He knew that there was nothing to gain from losing one's cool. In fact, losing his cool here would mean the death of not just himself, but his men as well.

So he had to think of a way out of this.

After a moment of thought, the commander said, "Forward! Charge forward and take down the enemies if you want to live!"

That was right, he saw that there was nothing happening around us.

There wasn't a single hole or any that had appeared around us. It was as if the ants were completely ignoring us.

It was just too bad that his orders were drowned out by...

"Screech!"

There was the sudden screeching that came from the ants before they charged forward at the Vikal Kingdom soldiers.

The moment that they saw this, all of the soldiers wanted to run away, but they found that this wasn't possible.

While they had been in a daze, the ants had appeared behind them as well.

They were completely surrounded.

The only way out was to fight their way out.

"General, what is this?" One of my subordinates couldn't help asking.

I just watched the ants charge forward at the Vikal Kingdom army before saying, "This is the plan that I was talking about. This is my way of dealing with these enemies."

Another one of my subordinates couldn't help asking, "What are these things?"

I looked at the ants surging forward and said, "These things are Chimera Ants."

Chapter 607 Chimera Ants (3)

The look on their faces made it clear that they wanted to ask more about this, but that was cut off by the screams that came from in front of us.

We turned back to see the scene of carnage that was happening in front of us.

There had been a moment of calm before it started, but the moment that the ants found the Vikal Kingdom soldiers, they attacked.

It wasn't a simple attack, it was a vicious attack.

There was no mercy at all as they used their razor sharp pincers to cut into the soft bodies of the humans. The Vikal Kingdom soldiers weren't able to react at all as they were ripped apart by these sharp pincers.

The ones that were ripped apart could be considered the lucky ones since they didn't have to suffer.

In fact, they almost didn't feel anything since they died almost instantly.

The ones that didn't were the ones that suffered.

After the first group died, the rest of the soldiers reacted.

"Ah! What are these monsters?!"

"Don't come over here! Go away!"

"Take this! Die!"

There were many different reactions to the ants that were flooding them, but there was no coordinated action from the soldiers. It was as if they had completely forgotten that they were soldiers in the first place.

That was until a voice said, "Form your ranks and push them back!"

It was the commander who was now missing an arm.

His face was pale and his body was covered in blood while he was being supported by two people, but he didn't back down as he shouted, "We need to form ranks or else we'll all die here!"

As soon as he said this, the soldiers slowly came back to their senses and military discipline sank in.

Without any further hesitation, the soldiers formed shield walls with other soldiers standing behind them with their spears at the ready.

There were a few failures at first when they found that the sharp pincers of these ants were able to cut right through their strong steel shields. Even if they tried to push the ants back, their lines were being broken by the sharp pincers.

But then they figured it out.

It was only the pincers that were sharp, the other parts of the ants weren't strong enough to break through these shields. They were being pushed back by the shields when they used the shields to push the other parts of the ants.

At the same time, they also figured out how to hurt the ants.

The ants had strong exoskeletons that could protect them, but there were gaps in those exoskeletons. It wasn't as if the exoskeletons could cover the ants completely without any gaps since that would completely stop them from moving.

There were gaps where the joints were that allowed the ants to move.

So once they figured that out with a few spears breaking from attacking the exoskeletons, they started aiming for the joints of the ants.

These joints were the weak points as spears that were stabbed into them went in with ease. As soon as the spear was stabbed in, the limb that the joint held fell off, being separated from the ant's body.

After that, the soldiers figured out that the back of the head for the ants were their weak points.

The exoskeleton at the back of the head was thinner than the exoskeleton around the ants, so they were able to stab through this with ease.

Once the ants had their heads stabbed, they immediately stopped moving.

Just like this, they had found a way of dealing with the ants that were coming at them.

But the problem was that more and more of these ants were coming out of the holes in the ground and it was only a matter of time before they were completely swarmed by them.

The commander gritted his teeth when he saw all of this and he didn't know what to do at first.

However, he then remembered something and looked in the direction that we were standing in.

When I saw him looking this way, I just waved my hand at him with a smile on my face.

Seeing me like this, the commander looked at me with a glare that would have killed me if looks could kill. It seemed like he wanted nothing more than to rip me to pieces with his bare hands.

It was just too bad that he wasn't able to reach me.

Well, too bad for him.

It wasn't as if I wanted to be ripped apart.

I could see that there was a moment where the commander was thinking about charging in our direction, but it seemed that he gave up on this idea in the end. He could see that there were just too many ants in between his group and us, so they wouldn't be able to get far before they were swarmed by the ants.

The only upside to this was that...we wouldn't be able to leave.

I could see in his eyes that he was cursing me to a gruesome death, hoping that I would be eaten by the ants.

Once he made his decision, the commander said, "Retreat! We're leaving this place and letting them get swarmed by the ants. We'll wait outside for the ants to return before coming back to get their corpses."

The other soldier also looked in our direction with eyes that were filled with hatred.

But they followed this order and started leaving the cave.

Seeing them leave, I just revealed a faint smile.

However, my subordinates couldn't calm down as they all revealed worried looks.

That was because they could see the large number of ants that were in front of us.

One of them suddenly asked, "How do we get out of here? Is there even a way for us to leave?"

I shook my head and said, "There's no need for that."

When they heard this, they all looked at me with shocked and confused looks.

But there was also a look in their eyes that seemed to be saying, "Did we just get sacrificed?"

Chapter 608 Chimera Ants (4)

They didn't know it, but we were actually perfectly safe in this space.

There was a reason why I had gone to all that trouble to come to this specific area in the cave.

That was because in the game, this area was a safe zone from the monsters of this dungeon.

Of course, that wasn't my only reason for believing that we were safe.

I knew that things that were in the game couldn't be relied on other than information about where certain things were. Things like safe zones were things that were created in the game to help the players and they wouldn't transfer over to the real world.

Or at least that would have been the case for other safe zones.

This safe zone was an exception since there was an explanation behind this.

The designer for this dungeon seemed quite meticulous, so they had even written lore for why this area was a safe place.

The Chimera Ants made their nests in random caves that they found, so they had no idea what was in the cave that they settled in unless they explored it. Most of the time, the Chimera Ants didn't do this since they only cared about having enough space to build a nest.

That meant that they didn't know about this one safe zone that was in this cave.

This was a safe zone because there was a perimeter created by a special ore that was in this safe zone.

This safe zone had a special ore that had only one special effect.

It was good at repelling bugs because of its scent, which included the Chimera Ants.

Humans weren't able to smell this scent, but insects could smell this scent right away as long as they got close.

It was like the scent of rotting garbage, so the insects would want to stay as far as possible from the source of this scent.

That meant that as long as they stayed in this area, it would be impossible for them to be attacked by the Chimera Ants.

But I didn't want to explain this since I was certain that it would go over their heads.

At the same time, they wouldn't believe me in terms of the ore.

It was not something that could be proven easily without a demonstration first and this was clearly not the time for that.

So I just shut them down without explaining a thing.

As the Vikal Kingdom soldiers retreated, there were many casualties that occurred.

But since they had figured out how to fight the Chimera Ants, it wasn't just casualties on their side that was happening. There were casualties on both the side of the soldiers and the side of the Chimera Ants.

The only thing was that there were far more Chimera Ants than there were soldiers.

As long as this kept going, it would only be a matter of time before the soldiers were completely wiped out.

The only upside was that the soldiers were well trained and they had been steadily making their way to the exit. So even if they did suffer casualties, it seemed like they would be able to escape in the end.

Only I knew that they were completely underestimating the Chimera Ants.

I took out a pocket watch and checked the time before turning back to look at the Chimera Ants and saying, "It's time."

After saying that, I said to the others behind me, "You're about to learn why these ants are called Chimera Ants."

All of the subordinates revealed confused looks when they heard this.

After all, they had never been told the name of these ants.

They were surprised that I knew this and looked at me with strange looks because of it, but I just ignored them as I focused on the fight between the soldiers and Chimera Ants.

These Chimera Ants gained their name because of what happened when they ate and right now, the latest thing that they ate were the human soldiers of the Vikal Kingdom.

Something very disturbing was about to happen.

...

"Save me! Please save me!"

When they heard this, the group of soldiers couldn't help stopping.

"Captain, that was the rookie's voice."

One of the soldiers suddenly said to the captain of this group.

The captain knitted his brows in deep thought while they were still moving forward, but he knew that as long as they kept moving forward like this, it was only a matter of time before they missed this chance.

If they wanted to do this, they had to do this now...

So the captain took a deep breath and said, "Break off from the main group and go save the rookie."

He was allowed to do this because of the structure of military command for the Vikal Kingdom troops.

The various troops were divided into small groups with captains commanding them.

They would follow the orders of the general to the best that they could, but they were allowed to move freely as long as it was within the confines of the general's order.

This gave the Vikal Kingdom troops a flexibility that other kingdoms didn't have.

As they came closer to the source of the voice, they found that this voice was coming from the center of a group of ants. It seemed that whoever this belonged to was about to become food for the ants.

"Save me! Please save me!"

The voice that came from the inside at least showed that the rookie was still alive.

However, the captain knew that they couldn't wait much longer or else they wouldn't be able to save the rookie.

So the captain said, "Rookie, hang in there! We'll get you out of there soon, just keep your head on your shoulders!"

Without waiting for a response, the captain said, "Let's go, shield formation to break through and grab the kid."

The others all nodded in agreement before following his plan.

By working together, they were able to push aside the ants that were around the source of this voice.

Chapter 609 Chimera Ants (5)

After the ants were pushed away, they all looked for the source of this voice.

They found that there was a human that was lying there with an ant beside it.

Neither of them seemed to be moving.

So they quickly formed a defensive line around this area before gathering around the two bodies on the ground.

Using a spear to push away the ant's body, they went over to the human body and turned it over.

While turning it over, the captain said, "Rookie, get up. Stop lazing around, we need to run."

But when they turned the human body around, they found...it was a corpse.

The body had already turned completely cold and even the organs had been pulled out of the body, falling to the ground. Their rookie couldn't be any more dead like this.

The captain and the soldiers all revealed grim looks when they heard this, but they didn't waste any time in lifting up the rookie's corpse and bringing it with them. Since they had come all this way, they would at least bring this back with them.

Or at least they would have left if it wasn't for a voice that suddenly said, "Save me! Please save me!"

As soon as they heard this, all of them looked at the rookie that was being lifted up, but they quickly turned away. That was because they knew that this voice didn't come from the rookie.

They quickly turned in the direction that this voice came from and they found that it was the ant that they had pushed away.

While they were all dazed, the ant suddenly turned around and got on its feet before charging at the captain. The captain wasn't able to react in time and he took the brunt of the ant's attack right in the chest.

As he felt the pain fill him, he looked down at the ant to hear, "Save me! Please save me!"

It was clearly the voice of the rookie, but this voice was coming out of the pincers of the ant.

Just how was it able to do this?

It was too bad that the captain wasn't able to figure this out as the ant suddenly widened its pincers.

As those pincers spread apart, the chest of the captain was ripped open and his eyes dimmed as he took his final breath.

After ripping the captain's chest open, the ant's pincers came back to bite down on the organs inside of his chest. It quickly bit into the heart and then swallowed it in just two bites.

It was only at this time that the other soldiers reacted.

They all quickly raised their weapons and prepared to attack the ant that had just killed their captain.

But before they could...

That ant suddenly opened its mouth and said, "Rookie, come with me!"

The weapons in the hands of the soldiers suddenly stopped in midair as they looked at this ant in shock.

That was because the voice that the ant had just spoken in was...the voice of the captain that it just ate.

All of them felt a chill run down their spines as they realized something.

The rookie's corpse had shown signs that it had been eaten by the ants...

And the ant had spoken in the rookie's voice.

Then the ant ate the captain's heart and spoke in the captain's voice...

Did that mean that these ants had the ability to eat them and steal their voices?

There was only silence that hung in the air until one person finally said, "What is this monster?"

As soon as this was said, all of the soldiers let their fear take over and they wanted to destroy this ant as soon as possible. They were about to surround this ant and stab it with their weapons as much as possible, but they found that the situation changed.

The ants that had been pushed back by their defensive line regrouped and came in larger numbers.

No, it was better to say that they had suddenly attacked more fiercely than just that they came in larger numbers since in the first place, there were already a lot of them.

It was already surprising that they had been able to push back these ants in the first place with the number of soldiers that they had.

Since they were soldiers, they quickly figured out what had happened.

"They led us into a trap and we fell right into it."

There were bitter laughs of despair that rang out as they realized this.

But then there were determined looks that appeared on the faces of the soldiers.

It was as if they had suddenly come to a conclusion when they realized that it was impossible for them to escape.

One senior member of this group raised his spear and said, "Kill! Take as many of them with you as you can! We must rid this world of these evil creatures!"

The soldiers all roared out in agreement after hearing this before charging out at the ants.

They put up a much better fight than before because this time, they didn't care if they lived or died. They knew that they were already dead since they were trapped by the ants, so they were just trying to take as many of the enemies with them as they could.

Without caring for their lives, they were able to take out quite a few ants since the ants were only strong against those that were afraid of them. They only had a single hard shell and pincers to attack with.

Quite a few of the ants were taken down as the soldiers mounted a suicidal offense.

But there were just too many ants in the end that they couldn't take them all down.

Once the soldiers were killed...

The ants ate them and started talking in their voices as well, using them to lure even more soldiers in.

All over the battlefield, the same situation was happening.

Chapter 610 Chimera Ants (6)

Chimera Ants, there was a reason why they received this name. (f)ree

A chimera was an ancient mythological beast that was formed from the combination of a lion's head, a goat's body, and a dragon's behind. This was a creature that personified a mishmash of random parts to create a terrifying monster.

As such, the chimeras that were normally found in games were described as monsters that were artificially created when different parts were brought together.

So for the Chimera Ants to receive this name, there was a reason.

It was simply because they were able to take in the attributes of the things that they ate that they were given the name chimera.

That was how that one ant had been able to mimic the voice of the rookie and the captain after eating parts from them.

In the game, the Chimera Ants had been classified as a weak monster, but that was only because the players knew how to deal with them. As long as they weren't given much to eat, then they wouldn't be able to pose a threat by integrating attributes from their food into themselves.

However, those that played the game also knew how dangerous these Chimera Ants could be.

There was a reason why they had survived this long even though they had this attribute that made people wary of them. It was simply because there was a powerful individual among the Chimera Ants that had evolved far beyond what normal Chimera Ants were capable of.

It was just a rumour, but it was said that this Chimera Ant even surpassed the demon king.

Of course, something like that would break the balance of the game and had never been included in the game. There were only rumours that were present about this creature in the game and nothing else.

But now that game world had become reality...it was very likely that this powerful Chimera Ant had become reality.

I just hoped that I would never run into this thing in the future.

As my subordinates watched the Chimera Ants swallow the enemy soldiers and gain their voices, they couldn't help revealing terrified looks. They had never known that such a terrifying creature existed in the world.

Though they were enemies, they couldn't help feeling sympathy for the Vikal Kingdom soldiers as they were being slaughtered by these Chimera Ants.

It was similar to how they had watched the Midra Kingdom troops being slaughtered on the Rising Land Plains by the Blood Worms.

As fellow humans, they could only feel sympathy for the Vikal Kingdom soldiers that were suffering from this slaughter.

There were parts of them that wanted to shout for them to run, but they held their silence in the end since these were the enemies.

After a while, the screams finally came to a stop.

When the screams came to a stop, they no longer had looks of sympathy for the Vikal Kingdom soldiers. Rather, they had looks of worry for themselves since they could see that the Chimera Ants were now wandering around in front of them.

I couldn't help slightly knitting my brows too since this wasn't what I had wanted to see.

I had expected someone from the Vikal Kingdom army to escape from this place and lead the Chimera Ants outside.

But I never thought that they would be so weak that they wouldn't be able to break through in the end. If they couldn't break through and lead the Chimera Ants outside where the rest of the Vikal Kingdom army was waiting, that would be a problem for us...

However, as I was debating this, there was noise that came from in front of us.

As I looked up, I found that there was a group that was still fighting.

This group had been able to break through the lines of Chimera Ants and reach the exit of this cave.

This was the group that the commander led.

It seemed that they hadn't been distracted at all by the mimicked voices of the Chimera Ants, which had allowed them to reach the exit in the end.

Was it because they were coldhearted or was it because of something else?

Still, it was a good thing that they were able to make it to the exit in the end.

After they reached the exit, I saw the commander turning back one last time to glare at me before they left this cave. The way that he looked at me, it was almost as if he was glad that I would be stuck in this cave with the Chimera Ants.

It was as if he thought that I would be attacked by these Chimera Ants once he left.

But I couldn't help revealing a faint smile seeing this.

If the Chimera Ants had never attacked me before this, why would they attack our group now?

It was clear that this wouldn't be what happened if he ran.

As soon as the commander and his group reached the exit, what I expected to happen happened.

The ones that had been wandering around seemed like they had been summoned by something before gathering at the exit of the cave.

There were a few that had chased after the commander and his troops, but many of them were still inside of this cave. It seemed like they were waiting for something as they gathered in rows.

It was only when there were enough of them gathered that they suddenly ran out of the cave and chased after the commander and his troops that had escaped.

Seeing the Chimera Ants leave this cave, my subordinates couldn't help feeling much more relieved. But at the same time, there were looks of sympathy that appeared on their faces as they felt sorry for the Vokal Kingdom army.

Once the Chimera Ants were all gone, I waved my hand at them and said, "Alright, let's go. It's time to earn your keep and do a bit of work."

They were all confused when they heard this, but they still followed me in the end.

Though many of them couldn't help feeling a chill run down their spine.

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