

Supreme M 701

Chapter 701 Split Part 1

Well, at least the chains patched you up just fine. Let's move." Yondra said.

"What about the others?" Rainer asked.

"Good question." Yondra sneered, looking at her colleagues who had yet to move a finger.

"My Assistant Nilla died at the hands of the fungal creature. I have no obligation towards any of these kids. I already failed to protect myself, taking care of someone else is out of the question." Gaakhu said.

"I'm sorry, Onma, but Professor Gaakhu is right." Ellkas said. "I promise you that if I manage to escape from here, I'll send the whole army to your rescue. If I fail, I hope you'll be able to kill me, because whatever the Odi have planned for us I'm certain it's worse than death.

"But all of you are powerful mages!" Rainer stuttered. Quylla's voice calling him a coward still echoed in his head, driving him to be a better man. "Is there really nothing you can do?"

"Kid, grow up." Gaakhu said. "Saving everyone, beating the odds, those are all fairy tales. I bet that our story will end with 'and then they died too'. If Yondra wants to burden herself with you, it's none of my business."

She then freed the imprisoned soldiers, who immediately started to eat and drink to recover their strength.

"As the head of the expedition, in the absence of Captain Ernas I'm the highest-ranked officer." Gaakhu said. "I order you to help me find a way out of Kulah to alert the Kingdom of the threat the Odi still pose. Is that clear?"

The soldiers gave her a salute, turning to look at the weeping Assistants only once. As members of the military, they were all too familiar with collateral damage, but that didn't mean that they liked it.

Yet, there was nothing they could do. The Assistants had proved to be dead weight more than once. Sure, the soldiers had fallen by the hands of the Golems as well, but they had gone down fighting, not crying and begging for mercy.

Phloria's soldiers had all someone waiting for them at home and none of them was willing to die for nothing. They would either get out of there or die trying to alert the Kingdom. Everything and everyone else was irrelevant.

"You heard her, she only cares about herself." Yondra whispered to Ellkas while her esteemed colleague was playing her part as Yondra had predicted. "I need you to read the Odi gibberish and you need me to operate the Odi technology. Deal?"

Ellkas nodded and shook her hand. The door to the prison was open as well, which gave everyone an eerie feeling. It could only mean that no one had ever managed to escape.

They entered in a wide room, from which branched several corridors, each one with its own tag. Gaakhu guided the soldiers in the second hallway to her right, without even looking at her colleagues.

"Where is she going?" Yondra asked.

"To the warehouse." Ellkas replied before reading and pointing the other signs one at a time. "Mana Reactor, Meat Shields, Golem Factory, bathrooms, administrative office, stairs, and canteen."

"It's a good idea, that's why we'll go to the Meat Shields room." Yondra said after scanning the corridor of her choosing.

"And why is that?" Ellkas trusted no one, but at least Yondra needed him. He was afraid of outliving his usefulness and needed to be ready to fend for himself.

"Because when she triggers the alarm, because she will, I want to be as far away as possible. Plus, Lith and Phloria took a look at the room and told us what kind of arrays we can expect. It's our safest bet."

Ellkas nodded, realizing that the Odi must have had prepared multiple exit points for their guards, and maybe one of them was near a town whose name he might be able to recognize.

Yet he kept that idea for himself. After abandoning his own Assistant, leaving Yondra behind to increase his chances of survival was easy as cake.

Meanwhile, on the upper floor, Lith and Phloria had reached the door leading to the research area. The Flesh Golems had managed to find them a few times only to witness the humans Warping away.

With the cameras down Lith was free to go back to any place he had previously visited, forcing the constructs to split up and search for them.

"Now this is the reason why I waited." Lith used Invigoration on the others, restoring about half their strength.

"How long was I unconscious and where are we?" Neshal asked while stretching her limbs.

"Three hours." Lith replied. Barely ten minutes had passed, his lie almost made Phloria yelp in surprise. "We decided to rest before moving, but we were forced to Warp several times to avoid the Golems."

"Thanks for letting me rest and for not leaving me behind." Neshal gave Lith a deep bow. "Now let's get out of here."

While she operated the door, Morok and Quylla wolfed down quite some food, both amazed by their perfect physical condition despite all the wounds they had sustained. Just watching them made Phloria hungry, forcing her to eat again.

"Bad news. This door is full of arrays but none of them is linked to the lock. They are all linked to that slot." Neshal pointed to the keycard reader. "Which means this is a work for a Forgemaster."

After thanking her for the great news, Lith chanted gibberish and used Invigoration. Just as he hoped, there were two relays again, but this time only the wrong one was linked to the arrays.

All he had to do was to send a pulse of mana to the relay associated with the lock to make it click.

'Sure a keycard energy signature is much harder to mimic compared to a key, but with such a design, I don't need to.' Lith thought. 'Unlike the holo-pads on the upper floor, there is no such

thing as repetition or correct order of characters, only right or wrong impulse. Against a true mage, it's like not having a lock at all.'

'Good gods, I should have learned Forgemastering,' Neshal thought. 'No one of us knows how to read the Odi, but at least if we can open all the rooms, we are bound to find a way out. Without Gaakhu and Yondra, these guys are my best bet.'

Quylla had taken down more Golems than anyone else, Morok seemed to be immortal, and Lith appeared to Neshal's eyes like a genius.

They found themselves in a T junction with several doors spaced between them so much that each room had to be as big as a hotel's suite.

"Wait, before we continue, I need to know which array do you prefer. Earth Blocking, Air Blocking, or the Power Detection?" Neshal asked.

"Can't we have them all?" Morok asked.

"You wish. Keeping an entire magical formation at the ready is already draining, two would make me collapse in just a few minutes."

"Do you have more of those enchanted nails?" Lith asked.

"Yes, but the last time the Golems were completely still. I can't kill them on my own if that's what you're asking me." Neshal replied.

"Then the Power Detection. That way all three of us can destroy the Golems and use dimensional magic. Okay?" Phloria and Morok nodded at his words, both shapeshifting their weapons into thin, high density blades that would more easily pierce the constructs' thick shell.

Chapter 702 Split Part 2

Meanwhile, the Odi had mixed feelings about the most recent developments. They had lost more than half of their so-called invincible army and for the first time in centuries, they had prisoners yet had managed to let them escape.

The silver lining was that among the runaways there was at least one person able to understand their language. Gaakhu had decided to prioritize speed over stealth since disabling the cameras would reveal her position anyway.

Unbeknownst to her, it had allowed the Odi to notice how she checked every sign before deciding where to go.

"This solves all of our problems." Jiira said. "We only need to preserve this monkey and the youths to have full access to the outside world. It's time to take out the trash."

Lith's group moved along the corridors, being forced to explore them all in search of a way to reach the floors below. While their companions were unconscious, Lith had shared with Phloria the Golems' dying words.

She was glad to know they had an edge over their hidden enemies and shared Lith's amazement at his ability to understand the dead language even though he was unable to read it.

'Could his Death Vision curse and the near-death state of those wretched creatures be the explanation for the phenomenon?' Phloria thought. 'I hope I'm wrong, otherwise it might mean that Lith's condition is even worse than what the Professors assessed.'

The place was completely empty, but thanks to the reinforced glass windows, they could watch inside each room and Phloria could use her Forgemaster spells to look for dimensional runes.

The underground labs were completely different from those on the upper level of Kulah. They were all clean, with no chains nor cells. Each room was full of a mix of magic and machinery, the Odi's signature technique to overcome the limits of ancient runes.

The labs were designed to host a full research team but only two specimens at the time. Clearly, they used them to perform the perfected procedures on the Odi or just to fine-tune the last details.

They found both an elevator and the stairs, but being cramped in a confined space with the risk of the Golems Warping with them was a no go, so they preferred to take the stairs to reach the lower floor.

'Anything useful, Solus?' Lith asked while opening the keycard locks one after another.

'Nope, but stay on your guard. I'm surprised that the Odi haven't used their meat shields more nor did they move to face us. After centuries of practice and with their ego, they should believe to be unbeatable.' Solus replied.

Lith was pondering about her words when a more pressing problem arose. There were two corridors in front of them, one to the left and the other to the right, and above each one of them multiple tags were hung.

Both corridors branched into many others and since no one was able to read the Odi language nor the room had windows, the floor was akin to a maze to them.

"What do we do now?" Lith asked everyone, Solus included. The Golems had warned them about a green array and prompted them to reach the basement, but that information had become pointless.

"Open these goddamn doors one by one and as soon as we find a dimensional rune, if there isn't that noxious gas on the other side we leave, period!" Neshal said.

Phloria had many objections to leaving behind her soldiers, the Professors, and the Assistant. Not because it would have been an utter failure on her personal file, but because after all the time they had spent together, she considered them almost as friends.

Yet not knowing if they were even still alive and the idea of joining them on an Odi's operating table left her with no choice. She pointed at the closest door and nodded for Lith to open it.

Using Live Vision, Lith could see that there were no life forces inside, so he did as instructed and looked inside. The room turned out to be an archive, full of cabinet files and orderly placed folders.

Lith closed the door while shaking his head when Solus warned him.

'They're opening Gates!'

'From what direction?' He asked.

'All of them!'

Lith had barely the time to alert the others when Warp Steps opened at the end of each corridor. A Flesh Golem stepped out of each one of them, unleashing a fireball as large as the corridor itself.

Neshal activated her Power Detector array, keeping herself ready to Blink to safety. Lith was aware that each time he opened a lock he gave out his position, but he couldn't Warp to unknown locations.

To make matters worse, that kind of attack was clearly meant to force them to split. The Golems had waited for the humans to be in a place impossible to defend before using a spell that could be dodged but not blocked.

The moment Lith's group Blinked it was over. Metal walls fell from the ceiling, blocking both their view and their path to retreat.

'How did we miss them?' Lith couldn't believe his own eyes.

'They are not magical, but mechanical in nature. None of us has gear sense.' Solus explained.

Lith Blinked near the Golem's power core, pretending to follow the enemy script. But instead of aiming for a direct strike, he Blinked away, to dodge the attack he knew was about to come and use the opening it would create to kill his enemy.

Unfortunately, together with its attack, the Golem also activated a Water Blocking array, sealing dimensional magic. Thanks to his enhanced reflexes, Lith managed to block the construct's fist but took the full power of the fireball accompanying it.

Only the Skinwalker Armor boosted by his mana and earth fusion saved his life.

Close combat wasn't Neshal's specialty, so she had kept away from the construct. Unfortunately, with dimensional magic sealed she was soon overwhelmed. Keeping the array at the ready had required most of her focus, she had few spells to protect herself.

She couldn't even access her dimensional item, leaving her with only the means she had on her pockets and fingers.

"Fuck!" She said while unleashing all the spells she kept inside her magic storing rings. Some of them were even tier four and five. A jet stream of flames thousands of degrees hot struck the Golem, instantly followed by a blazing tornado.

Neshal chanted as fast as she could, timing the release of the spell so that to buy herself as much time as she could. The only good thing about being isolated from the others was that the walls also protected her allies from her most powerful spells.

'If I hold on long enough, they'll come for me.' She thought.

Yet the Golem just kept protecting its core with its arms while walking forward, ignoring the blazing inferno Neshal had created and attacking with more fireballs of its own.

With no earth nor ice to manipulate, Neshal couldn't block them nor she could Blink away. The first explosion made her eyes bleed and brought her eardrums on the verge of bursting. She kept attacking despite being blind, but the second explosion broke through her magical protections and made her cough out blood.

The Golem undid its array and Warped in front of her, clutching her head with its half-melted hand. Luckily, the Golem killed her before she could feel the heat that charred her bones and made her blood evaporate.

Chapter 703 Tyrant Part 1

The heat from the fireball was burning Lith's lungs while the light blinded him, but by switching to Life Vision he became able to see again. He unleashed a burst of Origin Flames, which the Golem shrugged off as if they were nothing more than a parlor trick.

Flesh Golems were so heavily enchanted that a single breath of Origin Flames could barely heat their stone surface due to the powerful magic coursing through their bodies that amounted to several tier five spells.

The construct struck with its fists again, activating even more fireballs. Lith was exactly in Neshal's situation. He couldn't block nor dodge the enemy's spells, yet he had one more means of defense.

Instead of wasting his Origin Flames to attack, he used them to cancel the fireballs as he stepped back to avoid the physical attacks. Origin Flames' greatest weak point was that it required him to exhaust the air in his lungs, leaving him breathless.

'Beware, this thing isn't trying to take you alive.' Solus warned him.

The Golem had no idea what was happening, so it tried to switch to darkness magic, only to have its black waves devoured by Lith's blue flames.

Lith infused his prototype Gatekeeper with air magic, to boost its speed and piercing abilities, but thanks to the mix of earth and air magic the construct used to move its body, the Golem was as fast as an Awakened.

The stone fist shattered the blade before it could get even one centimeter under its skin. The other fist struck at Lith like a charging bull, making him bounce on the floor before sending him crashing against the back wall.

Even with the boosted protection of the Skinwalker armor and Solus promptly covering his chest to shield him, Lith's vision was blurred and his focus lost. He used Invigoration to recover his strength, but it felt like a fool's errand.

Magic was useless and so were physical attacks. Lith refused to surrender and used a sudden wave of spirit magic to lift the opponent and sending it slamming against a wall.

The Golem was surprised but unfazed by the invisible energy, so it just resumed its magical onslaught, forcing Lith to interrupt his breathing technique to use Origin Flames to save his life.

A sudden explosion and the Golem's power core becoming invisible again made Lith aware of Neshal's death. Lith racked his brain for a path to victory, but he kept not finding any.

'Damn, Golems are too powerful. Now I understand why the Odi made the entirety of Kulah out of metal. Without earth to manipulate against them, they are nigh invincible.' Lith thought.

'I have only one shot left, but I need your help, Solus. It's dangerous and likely to fail. You could remain...'

'Just do it.' She replied while reading his mind.

Lith took a breath as deep as he could before hurling a wall of flames against the construct. It ate all of the incoming spells, sticking on both the flesh and the stone parts of the Golem, leaving the creature blinded as its human side suffered in agony.

The moment the flames struck, Lith bolted forward, infusing himself with all the elements and striking at the power core hidden inside the Golem's left thigh.

Just like it had happened for the sword, the moment his claws pierced its rock skin, the construct's fists fell down like hammers, shattering Lith's arm in several places and sending him sprawling on the floor like a ragdoll.

The Golem lifted its foot to shatter Lith's skull, but suddenly it lost its balance and fell to the ground. Solus's glove had detached at the last second, using the blue flames as a cover and the hit's momentum to reach the power core.

The Golem had failed to notice the damage she had inflicted due to Origin Flames dulling its senses and its lack of sense of pain. However, victory came at a cost. Lith was barely conscious and so was Solus.

Between the Origin Flames and the construct's attacks, she was heavily wounded. It took her several seconds to collect all of her pieces spread throughout the room and return to his side.

Lith used Invigoration again, knowing that until Solus recovered, using that trick a second time might kill them both.

Phloria had Blinked while holding Quylla, foiling the Odi's plan to split them. She knew that her sister wouldn't last a second alone against a construct. When Phloria Blinked again, much to the construct's surprise, she was running away along the path they had taken to get there instead of facing it.

It made the Golem's array useless and forced it to give them chase.

"Any idea?" She asked Quylla. They were just around the corner. Instead of wasting her mana, Phloria had opted for hide and strategize.

"None. If I can't touch the Golem, I'm useless. You?"

"Even if I can see its power core, I doubt it will let me strike at will. Quylla, does indirect contact work for tier five healing magic?" Phloria asked.

"Only if I touch a living being, I can't transmit Scanner through metal."

"Good enough for me. Stay close to me, no matter what." Phloria would have liked to Blink by Lith's side, but with their visual obstructed, she had no idea which direction he had gone, nor she could Warp to an unknown location.

Lith had just recovered enough to stand up when his nose picked up an odd smell. Following it, he noticed a small hole in one of the metal walls that separated him from his companions.

It allowed whoever was on the other side to look at Lith's position.

A split second later, Morok Blinked in front of him. His clothes were tattered to the point of being rags. Even an army uniform would take some time to recover from such damage, yet the Ranger looked alright.

"Man, I hate Golems. No vitals, immunity to most forms of magic, terrifying recovering abilities. They are a pain in the ass even for those like us."

"Us?" Lith echoed, not understanding the meaning of Morok's words.

"Come on, there's no need to be shy. There's just the two of us now."

"How the heck did you get rid of the Golem so fast and how did you pierce that wall?" Lith asked, still incapable of making heads of tails of those words.

"Fine! I'll show you mine and then you'll show me yours." Yet instead of taking off his clothes, Morok shapeshifted.

His skin became snow-white, with only one big red eye in the middle of his forehead, another eye the size of a football appeared on his chest, and two more on his shoulders.

His appearance was still humanoid, but he was now over two meters (6'7") tall.

His nose had disappeared, leaving only two slits on his face and his mouth was full of several rows of shark-like teeth. Lith recognized immediately the Emperor Beast known as Tyrannical Eye, or just as Tyrant.

They were the magical beast equivalent of Balors, but unlike them, Tyrants weren't part of the Fallen races and their mastery over the elements wasn't as developed.

"All those abilities, they didn't belong to your weapons, it was you all along." Lith finally understood many things, like his fellow Ranger's heightened senses and inhuman battle prowess.

'Solus, you told me he wasn't an Awakened.' Lith thought.

'He's not. Morok is just like Gadorf, the offspring of an Emperor Beast.' She replied.

Chapter 704 Tyrant Part 2

"There's no point in denying it." Morok said. "Between your fancy glove and all of your trinkets, I would have bought your act if it wasn't for your smell, brother. You need to fix that."

"How did you kill the Golem?" Lith repeated his question. He preferred to avoid explaining that he could do nothing about it. Unlike Morok, he didn't just shapeshift, he had two different life forces with a unique smell.

"My old man refused to Awaken me, but at least he gave me a nice gift." Morok juggled with his weapons before sheathing them. "They can absorb and enhance the power of my eyes, giving me plenty of tricks.

"Balors are losers compared to Tyrants, we evolved correctly and it's only a matter of time before we outmatch them in every aspect." His smile was full of spite, pronouncing the name of their rival species as if it was poison.

"Don't get startled, I'm not a Balor." Lith said while assuming his hybrid form.

"What the fuck?" Even though he had been forewarned, Morok jumped back, unsheathing his blades. "Was your father a Dragon who mated with a Balor or was it the other way around?"

"I don't know what I am." Lith replied. His blue eye remained open for a few seconds before closing shut.

"You got abandoned, huh? Is that why you have the hots for human women?"

"What?" Lith snarled, a puff of black smoke came out from his mouth.

"It's nothing to be ashamed of." Morok raised his hands in a sign of apology. "My mom kicked out both me and my old man when she discovered the truth. I've got mommy issues too. Why do you think I became a Ranger?"

"For fun?" Lith replied.

"Nailed it in one. Emperor Beasts are so boring, always blabbering about duty and balance. In the army, I get to kill stuff, see stuff, date hotties, and the best part is that I get paid for it. By the way, are your eyes for decoration or what?

"They should be pretty powerful if you descend from a Balor and you have seven of them. Odd, even us Tyrants develop six tops. I am still stuck at four, sadly."

"I can only see how people will die, if they do, in the immediate future. Nothing else." Lith said.

"Seven worthless eyes? That's harsh, brother. Maybe rather than from a Balor, you descend from a Peeping Dragon." Morok gave Lith a wink.

"Whatever. We need to find Phloria and get out of this place. The longer we remain here, the higher the risk of more Golems finding us."

"Dating so many women at once is not cool. Also, she's not that cute. We can find much better girls outside and..."

"First, she's just my friend." Lith was seconds away from strangling the Tyrant and his face was a few millimeters from Morok's.

"Second, I don't know how to operate dimensional runes. Without her, we're stuck in here. Is that clear?" Each word was a snarl, accompanied by a puff of smoke.

"You need to literally chill, brother." Lith's scales had turned red hot from his anger. "You definitely have Dragon blood. The brimstone breath is a killer. Mint?"

Morok offered him a dew fresh leaf from his dimensional amulet, which turned into ashes the moment Lith touched it.

"Can you find the girls with your sense of smell?" Lith asked while scanning their surroundings with Life Vision, finding several mana signatures but no life form.

Morok sniffed the air like a hound before shaking his head.

"All the spells cast during the fight have destroyed any trace I could find. Plus, the fact that they likely used dimensional magic doesn't help. I think we should work on the assumption that they've been captured. Humans have no chances against Golems."

After checking on Professor Neshal, Lith was forced to admit that the Tyrant was probably right. Bits of the Professor's corpse were mixed with the Golem's remains. Neshal had detonated all of her magical items to bring her enemy down with her.

Only a suicide attack of that magnitude was enough to destroy constructs. With their arrays sealing dimensional magic and uncanny bodies, there was nothing that Phloria could do against them.

'When I get out of here, I must warn Friya. Dimensional mages like her are basically powerless against constructs.' Lith thought.

He told Morok about the dying words of the two humans grafted to the Golems he had killed, hoping that the Tyrant's eyes could help him to find his target.

"So you don't just see people dying, you also somehow commune with them. Seriously, who the fuck were your parents?" Even though they were alone, they had both reverted to their human form to keep the element of surprise.

"Focus, dammit. Can you find something like the Mana Reactor or the so-called green array? The former we have to find and destroy, the latter we have to avoid." Lith asked.

"I can only sense great amounts of mana belonging to the elements associated with my four eyes." Morok said while moving around the corridor. The red, yellow, black, and orange eyes on his body moved independently, searching for energy traces.

"Something like what you just described should be visible from a distance, yet I can't find anything. Either it's too far from here or it's cloaked."

Both mana sense and Life Vision revealed nothing but the usual set of locks and arrays on the nearby doors, making Lith grit his teeth.

"Fine. Let's backtrack our steps. If Phloria or Quylla managed to escape, they'll be waiting for us. If we don't find them, we have to assume the worst and destroy the Mana Rector." Lith checked on Solus's condition before moving.

She was using her own Invigoration to recover, but she had yet to return to her full strength. Lith quickly opened a small Warp Steps, leading to the farthest point to the camp he had access to, closing it the moment the noxious gas started to seep through the dimensional window.

"I tried that too, otherwise I wouldn't have come back for you." Morok sighed. "Without one of the Royal Forgemasters, we're as good as dead."

Professor Gaakhu reached the Warehouse in a matter of minutes, the problem was that she had no idea how to safely open its door.

"Stay back! We've already thrown caution to the wind, there's no point in using finesse." After her chant was over, a pillar of black flames struck one of the Warehouse's sidewalls.

Darkness lowered the metal's melting point while the fire was just fire. A hole the size of a door slowly opened and the pillar made its way inside the room, destroying the crates and their content until Gaakhu was able to see in front of herself.

Her actions triggered several alarms, but she didn't care. The soldier assumed a defensive formation around her while Gaakhu cooled the wall and scanned the arrays inside the room.

It was then that three Flesh Golems appeared from as many Warp Steps, surrounding them from every side. They blocked fire, ice, and darkness magic before unleashing their thunderbolts against the floor, hitting all their prey at once.

The soldiers weren't aware of that trick and Gaakhu had never bothered warning them. She had already fought the Golems, so she knew that the soldiers were only good to buy her time.

'Five soldiers and only three constructs. I can still escape while they capture them again.' She smiled while using the Disarray spell to deactivate the only dangerous magical formation in the room.

Chapter 705 Judgment Call Part 1

Gaakhu dashed inside, using her magical protections to tank several small air blades and ice spikes. The room had several dimensional runes which she recognized. They were the names of ancient Odi cities, some of them were too far from Kulah to be affected by the poison tainting its surroundings.

Gaakhu struck with her Royal Forgemaster wand at the dimensional rune associated with the modern city of Othre. The Gate opened, revealing a stone tunnel devoid of danger.

Gaakhu jumped towards her freedom, only for a stone hand to hit her on the head and made her lose consciousness. She had been the constructs' priority from the beginning.

Only after their precious slave had been apprehended did the Odi order the Golems to collect the soldiers.

Lith and Morok went back to the elevator and even to the living quarters, finding no trace of their missing companions. After returning to the research labs, Lith put the list of Odi words the Professors had shared with the rest of the expedition members inside Soluspedia.

He hoped that it would help him to make head or tails of at least a couple of signs. Unfortunately, they turned out to be useless. The Odi language was too complex and the words at his disposal were too few to allow Lith to figure out the meaning of the writings along the corridors.

When they finished exploring the lab, they found another door, probably leading to a lower floor.

"We should go down. The woman told me to search the basement and this place doesn't fit the bill." Lith said.

"Agreed, but I don't like the idea very much." Morok shapeshifted from time to time to look for clues. His mystical senses had a greater range than Lith's and Solus's but they didn't provide much information about the nature of the threat at hand.

"There's something big and really powerful down there and for some reason, it's visible to all my four eyes."

"Why is that bad?" Lith asked.

"I'm no Awakened, so I can't see world energy, life force, or any of that stuff. I can only spot elemental mana. What I can see, even from up here, is some kind of energy pillar as big as a hill and is composed of all the four elements at my disposal."

Lith tried using Life Vision, but the pillar was too far for him. He couldn't see past the arrays sealing the door in front of them. Solus's mana sense was blinded by the amount of magical equipment surrounding them instead.

Lith closed in on the door, activating Invigoration to study and neutralize its lock. He had to hold back a laugh when he recognized the Nightmare Safe. It was the same device the Odi had used to lock the secret documents in the office of Kulah's commanding officer.

"We're lucky, it seems that at the time this kind of protection was considered to be the best magical seal available, while it's actually the easiest to crack if you know what you're doing." Lith said while reading the array containing the password.

"Hey, that wasn't an array revealing spell. You're an Awakened!" Morok had seen his own father using such abilities so often that he immediately recognized Invigoration.

"Does it change anything?" Lith asked, opening the door while Morok took note of the password.

"No, but that's an amazing piece of news. Are you willing to Awake me?" The Tyrant knew that with that kind of power, very few beings could pose a threat to his life. Alas, Golems would still be among them.

"Depends, are you willing to swear me obedience for one hundred years?" Lith replied.

"Absolutely not!"

"Then you have your answer. If I have to put my life on the line for you, you have to be damn worth the risk. So far you're just a pain in my ass." Lith opened the door, scanning his surroundings.

The coast was clear, but they had to move fast, to not give the constructs the time to pinpoint their position.

"What if I save your girlfriend?" Morok said while they were darting along the stairs.

"She's not my girlfriend, and a human doesn't live as much as we do." It was Lith's biggest gripe with every one of his relationships. Even with a crippled life force, he was likely to outlive most of his loved ones.

"It was worth a shot." Morok grumbled.

Forcing someone to Awaken another person was a waste of time. All Lith had to do was either to let the Awakening fail or report Morok to the Council. Both events would lead the Tyrant to a premature death.

To make matters worse, Morok had seen his fellow Ranger fight and Lith was a force to be reckoned with. The idea of having a semi-immortal enemy of that caliber on his tail forever was simply appalling.

The moment they reached the bottom of the staircase, Lith could catch a glimpse of the pillar Morok was talking about. Yet it was still too far to take a proper look at it, making it necessary for them to find a way to the lower levels.

Whatever was on their current floor, it was nothing useful.

After waiting for a bit in front of the elevator, Phloria and Quylla had been forced to Warp away because of the Flesh Golems looking for them. The more time passed, the more they had to assume the worst.

Lith might have been captured or killed. Also, without a Warden, they were stuck with just Phloria's Forgemaster skills, which greatly limited both their options and escape chances.

The two young mages were growing more desperate by the minute. Phloria even checked with Warp Steps the furthest point in Morok's pathway to Kulah she could remember, but even that was filled with black smoke.

The various underground tunnels had to be connected or at least share their airways.

"We can either get ourselves captured on purpose or take our chances and open random doors." Phloria said. They were getting tired, constantly changing their position without rest drained their mana.

"If we get captured, we can rescue the Professors and have them help us. The problem is, what if the Golems stun us? Remember that they know I can deactivate them if they touch me." Once again, Quylla cursed her own helplessness

'If only Yurial was here, he would know what to do.' She thought.

"Don't worry, I've a plan. It's very risky, but it can bring us behind the enemy lines and get rid of a Flesh Golem at the same time." Phloria said, taking deep breaths to calm herself down.

"What? Why didn't you propose this earlier? Professor Neshal has died and maybe even Lith. You could have saved them both!" Quylla started to sob. Another Warden had died, and yet she was still alive.

She wasn't actually angry with Phloria, Quylla was just trying to shut up the voice in her head telling her that she was bad luck. First Yurial, now Lith. Everyone she loved died because of her.

The fear of losing Phloria, made Quylla feel like her existence was cursed.

"Because it's a desperate plan. Earlier, with Lith and Neshal, we still had a chance of escaping on our own. If it fails, we'll end up in the Odi's hands." Phloria hugged her sister, trying to comfort Quylla.

"Since both our lives are at risk, I can't make this decision on my own. Are you with me?"

Quylla stopped crying and nodded. Phloria explained her plan to Quylla, making her yelp more than once. A few minutes later, they were in front of a locked door. They had hoped that a Golem would find them, but since that didn't happen, they had to lure one.

Chapter 706 Judgment Call Part 2

Phloria used one of Orion's spells, which revealed the relays of the keycard lock mechanism and allowed her to open it simply by sending a mana pulse to the right spot. She opened the door and ran into hiding.

They had chosen a place at the end of a corridor, so that there was only one way in and one way out, requiring just a single Golem to trap them.

As Phloria had predicted, the construct Warped at the end of the hallway to block the only escape route available. The Golem was surprised seeing that there was no human in front of itself, nor its sensors could pick up any energy signature.

Yet the door was open.

Phloria and Quylla were on the opposite end of the corridor, waiting for the Warping Array to open and Blink through it. Once on the other side, Phloria was surprised to discover that not only did the surveillance devices have already been destroyed, but also the cells were all empty except for the one holding the Assistants.

The Golem reported its failure and stepped back inside the Gate, getting struck by both sisters with their respective Clean Slate. The tier four Forgemaster spell required physical contact and had no permanent effect on something as complex as a construct.

Yet it could temporarily stop its functions. Two Clean Slate at once were enough to turn the Golem's power core off for a split second, which made the dimensional corridor collapse.

The Construct was only halfway through, so it got cleaved in half along with its power core. Phloria's plan had been a complete success.

"Please, don't abandon us here as the Professors did!" The Assistants started sobbing the moment their jailer was gone.

"I don't have much time, so I need you to be honest with me. Which one of you is a Warden?"

They all started to yell "Me! Me!", making Phloria curse.

"We should take with us both Asera and Onma." Quylla said while opening their locks with Clean slate. They are the Assistants of Neshal and Ellkas. I spoke with them more than once, so I know that they are respectively a Warden and a linguist.

Onma was actually an Alchemist, but that information was useless in their situation.

The two remaining Assistants started to scream so hard that Phloria had to Hush them.

'Is this how Lith felt during Balkor's attack?' Phloria thought. 'Knowing that you can't save everyone and that even bringing one more person along might doom us all?'

Lith had never felt anything like that. He had just pretended so to not be burdened by people he didn't care about, but Phloria had no way to know it. She regretted leaving two innocents to a fate worse than death, but at the same time, she couldn't kill them in cold blood.

"Great thinking Quylla, we must..." Her words were interrupted by another Warp appearing. She and Quylla had expected that the destruction of a Golem might alert the others, so they had a contingency plan for that.

What they didn't have a plan for, was the man accompanying the construct. Tired of losing their precious Flesh Golems, Jiira had decided to personally take care of the latest disturbance. His eyes lit up with joy when he saw the two young women.

"Well, well, well. Finally our luck it's turning." His smile crept all those presents out. They had seen multiple Odi pictures, but even that wasn't enough to prepare them to meet the real deal.

Just like all his colleagues, Jiira was the embodiment of perfection, but only according to Odi's standards. He was 1.70 meters (5'7") tall, with long purple hair and blue translucent skin.

It allowed them to see every single twitch of his muscles and organs since he was almost naked, wearing only a loincloth to cover his genitals. His body was comprised only of muscles and what was visible of his face could have been considered handsome, if it didn't appear completely unnatural.

He looked more like a statue come to life rather than a living being.

Phloria attacked the Odi with her estoc the moment he appeared. She had no idea what he was capable of, but she had to stop him from casting spells. Jiira grabbed her blade with just three of his fingers.

With a wave of his hand, the Golem disappeared inside the Warp, while a green array formed around Jiira. Phloria gasped recognizing by its color the spell that the dying Flesh Golems had warned Lith against, so she promptly unleashed the spells stored in her rings.

Jiira just pointed his forefinger, generating a ray of light that pierced through Phloria's spells and chest, leaving a hole the size of a golf ball. His finger flashed one more time, striking Quylla down before she could do anything.

He then chained them where once the Professors had been, letting the red chains' properties to heal and restore their bodies before the procedure.

"Finally! We have our interpreter and enough bodies for our most useful members. We only need to retrieve the boy to start our plan. The old coots and the non-humans can die, we have no use for them."

The other Odi welcomed his proposition with an applause. After being prisoners inside their own home for so long, they could finally see a way out.

Lith and Morok walked through the door and ran along the corridor, to avoid falling in another ambush. Lith kept revealing and destroying the surveillance devices along their path until they reached a large, circular room from which branched several corridors, each one with an arrow-shaped tag to identify their destination.

Lith looked at the sign pointing from the direction they had arrived and noted down the Odi word for stairs. Then, he searched the remaining tags for another one containing the same characters that was supposed to lead them further down.

Yet he stopped halfway for two reasons. The first was that he recognized the character for "Meat Shields". It was identical to the one he had found with Phloria in the tunnels departing from Kulah.

The second reason was that his revealing spell couldn't find working surveillance devices in the room nor in the corridor leading to the magical beast breeding center.

"One of ours went this way." Lith pointed with his finger.

"It was Yondra, her Assistant, and Ellkas." Morok said after sniffing the air. "That's not all. The soldiers and Gaakhu went that way."

He was pointing at the warehouse, but Lith didn't recognize the character and his spell confirmed that the surveillance devices in that corridor were still operational.

"All the Professors seem to have managed to escape. How long ago did they pass from here?" Lith asked.

"Not much. A few minutes tops." Morok replied. "If we make haste, we might be able to catch up with her. After all, she had to slow down to clear her path, whereas we can just follow into her footsteps."

His idea was interesting, but not for Lith. If they actually found Yondra, Morok wouldn't need Phloria anymore to escape nor could Lith say them anything to stop them from leaving him alone in that nightmare.

Yet he nodded and used Life Vision to scan the area ahead. If he found Yondra and a dimensional rune leading to safety, he would know where to Warp to as soon as he rescued his friends.

Also, if he managed to convince Yondra to teach him how to operate a dimensional rune, their escape would proceed even smoother.

Chapter 707 A Forgemaster's Wand Part 1

The metal corridor turned out to be very long. It branched several times because each kind of magical beast had its own breeding facility.

Also, they were further split according to what they were destined to become. The elite Meat Shields were breed in a department while the fuel for the Mana Reactor was breed in another.

To find the right path, Lith just had to check at each intersection where the cameras had been deactivated and where they were still active. Unbeknownst to them, they were following Yondra's group toward the Teks' breeding facility.

"Good gods!" Lith said when Life Vision perceived three familiar life signatures and his Array Detecting spell revealed five elemental blocking arrays to him, hidden but ready to be activated at any moment.

"It's anyone there?" Lith asked, even though he already knew the answer. "We followed your trail."

"Thank the gods, young spirit! It's so nice to see you, we were just biding our time and fearing for the worse." Yondra came from around the corner, hugging Lith while sighing in relief.

She looked terrible. They had been separated barely half an hour ago, yet she looked like someone who didn't have a good night's rest in days. She was covered in sweat, panting heavily with every word.

Yondra seemed to have suddenly got older, to the point that she was even unable to stand up-right properly. She was leaning against Lith rather than just hugging him.

"What happened to you? Are your injuries so severe?" Lith asked while performing Invigoration on her. Her body was fine, but she was running on fumes. Both her mana and stamina were almost depleted.

"No injuries, but you see, I've been thinking ahead." Her crafty smile and hunched posture made her resemble Nana so much that it almost hurt.

"I've disabled the surveillance devices of all the corridors from the last junction so that the Odi don't know where exactly we are." Lith nodded. He had found them with Life Vision and had yelled to pretend to have fallen for her deception.

"Yet the moment I open a door, everything will be for naught. So I spent all of my energies to cast the necessary arrays to turn any Golem that tries to block us into scraps."

Lith found several flaws in her plan. First, if more than one Golem came, they would be doomed. If they activated the arrays while only one construct was inside its area of effect, the second would need but a handful of seconds to make a temporary array collapse.

If they waited for the second construct to enter the arrays, by that time the first Golem might as well already captured them all. Last, but not least, even if they somehow managed to trap several Golems at once, all the Odi had to do was to unleash the magical beasts to finish them off.

The arrays would seal their spells as well, making it impossible for humans to stand their ground against magical beasts.

'This plan is idiotic, Yondra must be beyond desperate.' Lith thought.

"My problem is that if they send more than one Golem we're screwed." Yondra continued. "Don't get me started on how bad things would get if instead of inside the corridor, the Odi make the constructs Warp inside the room, where is not covered by my array's area of effect.

"We can't deal with Golems, magical beasts, and the arrays inside the room at the same time. At least not by ourselves."

'Or not.' Lith corrected himself, listening to Yondra's well-thought reasoning.

"Then what's the meaning of all this?" Lith asked.

"The original plan was for me to rest and recover enough strength to take care of the defensive arrays while Ellkas dealt with the magical beasts. If we manage to move fast enough, we might reach a dimensional rune and escape.

"The elemental blocking arrays are a last last-ditch effort, to cover our retreat in the case the Golems arrive before we find the rune. I planned on using them more defensively than offensively.

"But now that the two of you are with us, things will go much smoother. None of us can fight hand to hand, but you can. Your presence at least halves the time we need to find and activate the rune." Yondra said.

"Keep resting. In such a debilitated state you'd slow us too much." Lith forced her to sit down and handed her some food. Then, he explained what had happened since the group had been split.

"If they have captured your friends, they must be in the prison, locked by those terrible red chains." Yondra said, explaining to him the artifact's properties.

"Is the prison nearby and can you Warp me there?" Lith asked.

"Yes to both, but please, listen to me first. According to Rainer, there is always a Golem standing guard to the prisoners, so if you go there, you'll trigger the alarm and give away our position."

"Are you asking me to abandon them? Like you abandoned Rainer?" Lith sneered.

"No, what I'm asking you to do is to play it smart." Yondra shook her head. "Let's say you find and save them. What then? You would still be trapped here with no way out. Worst case scenario you'll ruin my plan.

"Here is my idea. Stay here and help us clear the path. If we succeed, all you need to do is to Warp to the prison, rescue them with our help, Warp back here, and get out. You might even not need to fight. Stalling a Golem is much easier than destroying it."

"Your plan is good, but what if after we find the rune you get away and leave me behind? Why should you risk everything for me when freedom is just a step away? What if the Odi or their Golems damage the rune?

"You would reap all the benefits of my work and I would be stuck here." Lith knew that no one would sacrifice so much for a stranger. If their roles were reversed and Yondra wanted his help to save Rainer, he wouldn't think twice leaving her behind.

"He's right, you know? I'm not staying here a second longer than necessary. Don't count on me for your rescue mission. Unless of course..." Morok winked at Lith with a greedy smile on his face. Becoming an Awakened was a nice incentive.

"Neither am I. I'm sorry, kid, but someone has to alert the Kingdom. This is too big for any of us. Only an army of well-prepared Spellbreakers can destroy this place. Anything but running is just suicide." Ellkas tried to sound as if he was more worried about the Kingdom than for his own life, but failed miserably.

"Do you see what I mean? Just point me to the prison and I'll do the rest. I'll not mess with your plan but I won't help you either." Lith stood up, ready to leave.

"There's only one thing I need to know. Can you teach me how to activate a dimensional rune?"

Yondra was conflicted by the choice at hand. She had really hoped that they could escape together, but without Ranger Eari and Ellkas, there was not much she could do. Rainer kept looking at her like a lost puppy, begging her to bring him home.

Chapter 708 A Forgemaster's Wand Part 2

'Seriously, I can't believe we've come to this point.' Yondra thought. 'Even if I could actually make a difference, I would never trust Ellkas or Eari with Rainer. They both strike me like someone who always looks out for number one.

'Hence I can't stay here and hope that they will help him out of the goodness of their hearts and why I can only trust them until the dimensional Gate will be opened. After that, I'll be on my own.

'I can't be like these idiots, I must think about the bigger picture. What if we get interrupted and we have to run away? What if something happens to me? Everyone else would be doomed.' She took a deep breath, trying to make her mind.

She was too tired to think clearly, yet she had to. After a few seconds, she decided to gamble one last time, to leave no stone unturned.

"I could teach you how to operate dimensional runes, but it would be pointless." Yondra replied. "There are only two ways to fuel them. The first is with what their maker intended as a key.

"In the Odi's case, it's probably a mana crystal carved with a particular shape. The second way is to use a Royal Forgemaster's wand to directly activate the rune with your mana."

"Great. So you're blackmailing me. Either I come with you or I risk getting stuck here forever." Lith didn't like ultimatums, yet he had his back against the wall. Both choices sucked.

To stay behind meant to risk everything for someone who might already be dead, but leaving was even worse. Phloria was the first person who had ever accepted him for who he was and Quylla was almost like a sister to him.

She had come to that horrible place because of him, to find a way to prolong his life. More than everything, he couldn't keep living with the thought to have given up on two of the people who mattered the most for him.

When Lith had been reborn, surrounded by the love of his family, he had sworn that nothing and no one would have ever been taken away from him again. Yet it was exactly what was likely to happen.

"No blackmailing, I'm offering you my help. Help us to reach the dimensional rune, give Ranger Eari whatever he wants from you, and I'll help you save your friends." Yondra said while looking him straight into his eyes.

"If it's just the two of us, your plan would be suicidal, but with Eari's help, it's like having the whole team." She sneered at Ellkas and Rainer. Their battle prowess was bordering on insignificance.

"Fine!" Lith didn't like the deal much, but it was the best compromise he could get. That way, no matter if Phloria was alive or not, he would still have a way out. His infant conscience and his selfishness had stopped quarreling, giving him time to think.

'It's not that bad of a deal.' He thought. 'If Yondra's plan succeeds, their help will make saving Phloria and Quylla much easier. If it fails, well, my deal with Morok will be the least of my worries.'

"You heard the lady. Are you in?" Lith asked.

"For real? Do you give me your word that this is not a trick?" Morok had never thought that Lith would have actually accepted. His earlier offer was barely a joke, to spread salt on Lith's wounds.

"You have my word. A life for a life." Lith extended his hand and Morok promptly shook it.

"Well, as we eye brothers use to say, if before you had my curiosity, now you have my undivided erection."

"Don't you mean attention?" Rainer asked.

"I know exactly what I mean, kid."

"Good. While we wait that I recover some of my strength, let me teach you how to use a Royal Forgemaster's wand." Yondra handed Lith her silver wand, making Rainer's jaw almost fall to the ground.

"Master Yondra, why?" He asked.

"Because if we fail and something happens to me, everyone would be stranded here. We need a contingency plan." She replied.

The moment Lith had it in his hands, he used Invigoration to understand the wand's nature. Much to his surprise, it didn't have a pseudo core, nor it was actually made out of silver.

The external layer of precious metal was just a focus for a small mana crystal. Both of them were covered in silver-colored runes Lith had never seen before. Unfortunately, Yondra demanded his attention before he could study it properly.

"The wand is basically a filter. It purifies your mana from its energy signature, allowing it to be universally accepted by all kinds of devices as if you are a giant mana crystal.

"Also, the lack of energy signature allows your mana to interact with most artifacts without triggering their defensive systems, hence why we could safely examine Kulah's various locks and seals.

"It has many other properties, but that would be beyond the scope of our lesson." Yondra then taught him the spell to activate the dimensional runes and once she was certain that Lith had learned it properly, she gave the wand to Rainer and asked him to perform the spell as well.

That way, no matter who survived, her Apprentice would be useful and hence the others would be more careful about his well-being. The spell itself was simple, but it required both a high amount of mana and a highly developed mana control, the two trademarks talents of a Forgemaster.

Lith had learned the spell so fast that Rainer lived it as a competition, doing his best to not let down his beloved mentor.

While Yondra repeated her instructions to her pupil, Lith asked Professor Ellkas to translate for him all the signs they had found along the way. Ellkas was happy to help.

His talents as both a linguist and an Alchemist weren't very useful in their predicament. Just like Quylla, he was deeply regretting not to have practiced an offensive specialization.

He had spent his whole life holed up in his academy, letting his love for the past civilizations made him forget about the dangers of the present.

Thanks to him, Lith was able to enrich his Odi vocabulary and even find the way leading to the lower floors.

'I wonder if Gaakhu managed to escape. If yes, the warehouse might be worth checking. I'll know more after visiting the detention facility. I need a contingency plan in case the dimensional rune of the Meat Factory gets destroyed.' Lith thought.

Yondra hadn't taught him how to repair runes and he suspected that it was not only because the task required special ingredients, but also to ensure Rainer's survival. If the youth already knew the restoration spell, then Lith would be forced to take care of him.

'Such a shrewd woman.' Lith thought. 'If she was a true mage, I would immediately accept her offer of apprenticeship. With her deep knowledge about almost all magical specializations and her title of Royal Forgemaster, Yondra's help would save me decades of research.'

Lith turned to look at Morok, yet his glare only found a sleeping Ranger. He would have gladly followed the Tyrant's example, but time was a luxury he couldn't afford. While Yondra rested and meditated, he squeezed all the knowledge he could from Ellkas.

"We have to move now." Yondra said less than half an hour later. "Without mana crystals to fuel them, my arrays are going to disappear in a while but we can't place mana crystal without making our trap lose the element of surprise."

Chapter 709 Strength and Weakness Part 1

Yondra had stopped wheezing, but she was still far from being strong enough to fight. Lith gave her an alchemical flask that Solus had prepared for him which contained all the necessary nutrients for a speedy recovery after being injured.

"Thanks for the offer, but I already took a tonic. One more would do nothing but drain my energy." Yondra politely refused.

"This is no tonic. It will complement the effects of the potion you already took. Also, I'm going to give you a bit of life force. I can't afford to lose you." Lith insisted.

Yondra gulped down the potion. It had a really weird taste, as if someone had blended together grape juice, steak, and vegetables. The problem with tonics was that even though they enhanced the metabolism, they still required food to work.

Yondra had eaten but she had yet to digest the food, whereas Solus's concoction could be instantly assimilated.

Lith used Invigoration to give her a bit of life force and mana back. Not enough to arouse her suspicions but enough to clear her head.

"This thing tastes like shit, but I feel much better." Yondra said, appreciating the full effects of both Solus's potion and Invigoration. "Let's move."

She quickly cast an array detection spells, making the Odi's magical formations become visible. With another spell, she made all the protections crumble, leaving only the card reader lock in place.

"Once I open the door, I need to stay behind to check the corridor and activate the elemental blocking arrays in case one or more Golems appear." Yondra said. "Lith, Morok, you clear the room and call me as soon as you're done."

"Rainer, Ellkas, you two stay between the Rangers and I. Support us at best of your possibilities. Ready? Go!" A flick of her wand made the light above the card reader turn green, releasing the lock.

Lith entered the room and used one of his personal spells. It revealed that the compound shared the same protections that he and Phloria had found in the Teks' breeding ground. There was a fire based, a darkness based, and an air based magical formation.

The room was 20 meters long and 10 meters wide. Along the walls, there was a long line of cylindrical tanks holding adult Teks in what looked like suspended animation. There were at least 40 magical beasts, each one as big as a closet.

He, Morok, and Ellkas took down one array each while Rainer neutralized the security cameras. They were all casting from behind to door, to keep both their numbers and identity a secret.

Lith cursed when he saw with Life Vision that several Gates were about to open inside the room, whereas the corridor where Yondra had placed her arrays was empty.

'Fuck! How many of those accursed Golems they had prepared and why didn't they use them in the war?' Lith received all the answers he needed when he saw that the creatures stepping out of the Warping arrays were no Golems.

A small army of Thorns was filling the room while the tanks holding the Teks were being opened.

"There's too many of them!" Morok said. Based on his estimate, even if he went all out as a Tyrant and burned his cover as a human, it would still take them too long to clean the room.

On top of that, they would be too tired to hold their ground in the case a Flesh Golem appeared.

"I got this!" Ellkas said, glad to be useful for once. The Professor messed on purpose with his Disarray spell, so that instead of dissipating the magical protection, he sent it haywire along with the others.

Ellkas closed the heavy metal door just a second before the resulting combined explosion made the wall tremble.

"Ellkas, you idiot!" Yondra said. "You've probably alerted the entire base. What if you destroyed the rune? There a limit to the damage I can repair."

"Better than being butchered!" He replied. "Or do you expect us to take down dozens of creatures in just a handful of seconds?"

Morok opened the door again, discovering that despite the fact that most of the creatures had been heavily injured or maimed, most of the Teks were alive and so were the Thorns.

"There's one thing I have to try." Lith said, unleashing his spell, Death Zone. A huge cloud composed of darkness magic invaded the room, killing the Teks as if they were a bunch of flies.

"Stop that spell!" Morok cursed. Instead of taking damage from Death Zone, the Thorns were getting bigger and stronger by the second.

"Trust me!" Lith kept the spell active until all the wounds the Thorns had sustained from the detonation of the arrays were completely healed.

"You idiot! You made them stronger. Infiro!" Morok's human eyes turned red as his fire eye charged his short words making them emit a deadly heatwave.

Contrary to his expectations, instead of just pushing the Thorns back, the ray burned the first row of creatures to a crisp, stopping only when the Thorns managed to combine their efforts to conjure a protective wall of darkness.

"The fuck?" Morok couldn't believe his own many eyes.

After fighting Irtu, Lith had learned that some creatures were able to absorb darkness magic and use it to heal themselves. During the battle in front of the elevator, he had noticed how the Thorns weren't affected by the darkness element, so Lith had used their ability to his own advantage.

To heal wounds that severe and grow their bodies, the Thorns needed nourishment. Sure, they were now bigger and healthier, but also exhausted, making them an easy prey. The Thorns started to feed upon each other, reducing their numbers and helping Lith's group to clear the field even faster.

A new set of Gates opened, letting an army of Koas swarm the room.

"There's no end to them. Yondra, you need to find the goddamn rune and fast!" Ellkas used his alchemical tools to mow the magical beasts down while still being able to speak and, if necessary, prepare more spells.

Yondra ran inside the room, giving a little red mana crystal to Rainer.

"You keep guard in my place. Do not activate the arrays unless all the Golems step into them. Don't hesitate to run if you think you can't handle the situation."

Yondra Blinked near the door leading to the next room, past the enemy lines. Lith followed her lead, to provide her cover while she cleared the path. He engaged the Koas physically, triggering their bloodlust so that they would only focus on him.

The Koas' hard scales made blades useless, so both he and Morok employed blunt weapons to damage their internal organs. To resist the deep-sea pressure, Koas had sturdy and compact bodies, yet their organs were packed so tight that the shockwave of each hit easily propagated through them.

Unfortunately, living or dying didn't matter to the Koas. They attacked the Rangers in waves, simply stepping over their fallen comrades. Their lightning-enhanced claws managed to pierce even the Skinwalker armor, sending shocks through Lith's body that made him almost spasm more than once.

The Koas had no qualms in using lightning bolts even against their own, using the magical beasts in front as a cover for their spells. A Koa was nothing compared to Lith, but there seemed to be no end to their numbers and his body continued to sustain wounds. To add insult to his many injuries, Lith had to prevent the Koas from getting past him. If even one of them disturbed Yondra's work, she would have been forced to start again from scratch.

Chapter 710 Strength and Weakness Part 2

Lith stood in front of Yondra, unleashing all the spells contained in his rings to buy himself a moment of respite. The living wall of Koas in front of him fell to a volley of wind blades while a sphere of darkness magic slowed the following waves of creatures, making them stumble.

On the other hand of the room, Morok wasn't faring much better. Even with the physical strength of an Emperor Beast and the power of his eyes, he was slowly getting pushed back.

To make matters worse, the fallen Thorns were regrowing their bodies by feasting on the corpses of their fallen enemies. Green tentacles imbued with darkness energy wrapped around his legs and sapped his strength.

He cut them down as fast as he could but they would release toxic spores laced with darkness magic that made it hard for him to breathe.

'What a deadly combination.' Morok thought. 'Teks are like heavy infantry, Koas are fast and armored like cavalry units, while Thorns are almost immortal. They just need to feed on fallen enemies or allies to rebuild themselves or even increase their numbers!

'We're lucky that they are completely unable to cooperate or we would be already dead.'

Just like Ranger Eari had assessed, the three combined magical beasts were a threat on par with the Flesh Golems. Unfortunately, the Odi experiments had made them mad and incapable of understanding even the simplest order.

When they had tried to use slave items on them, they had no effects. The mass-produced magical beasts would attack anything but their master, even their own kin.

"Old man, don't you have an herbicide? Something to kill them all in a fell swoop?" He asked to Ellkas while the spore density had become so high that both he and the Koas were suffocating.

"I do, but it would kill you in the process. Also, I've no guarantee that it wouldn't reach the other end of the corridor and kill Yondra as well." The Professor replied. To him, Lith and Morok were expandable, but without Yondra, he was screwed.

Among the other things, Morok was a Battle Mage, but between the nature of his opponents and of the location of the battle he had no way to put his specialization to use.

There was no earth, all the creatures were immune to lightning, darkness would strengthen the Thorns and offer him little protection, and fire might harm his allies. Lith had the same problem and no solution as well.

"I'm done! Blink inside!" Yondra yelled while opening the room.

"Are you crazy?" Morok replied. "Aren't supposed to be arrays in there as well? What stops our friends to just Warp there and follow us?"

"Excellent point!" Lith used spirit magic to grab a few Koas and throw them inside the next room before closing the door. A series of booms and sizzles told them that the place was indeed protected.

"Damn runts, you had one job." Yondra started to chant, while Lith tried all the spells he had at the ready, hoping to turn the tables. A frozen wave got rid of the spores in the air, but no creature seemed to be affected.

A barrage of jets of fire almost made the air unbreathable and hurt the nearest Thorns, but they simply used the carpet of corpses on the ground to smother the flames and rejuvenate themselves.

He would have loved to use Origin Flames, but in such a confined space they would hurt him as well. He erected a wall of wind, strengthening it with spirit magic to buy Yondra a few seconds, yet it lasted only one.

The pressure that the Koa exerted was too great. The creatures were uncaring of their death or of that of their companions. They were so many and their scales so hard that even wind blades would cut only one of them before losing their edge.

Yondra finished her chant, conjuring four walls made of ice that sealed the creatures away while a pillar of flames materialized in the middle of the room.

'Fire and ice? This doesn't make sense, unless...'

Just as Lith had predicted, the ice walls couldn't stop water creatures like the Koas for long. With their sheer strength and numbers, it took them a little more than a second to crack the half a meter (1.7 feet) thick walls.

In the following seconds, the cracks grew until they covered the entirety of Yondra's spell. Then, just as fast as they had appeared, the fissures started to close. The fire pillar was almost gone and so was the air inside the ice walls.

The mass of bodies blocked the Gates and even the little oxygen that managed to enter wasn't enough to sustain so many creatures. Once Yondra was certain that her spell would hold, she turned around and started to take the arrays in the next room down with the help of the Rangers.

"This took us way longer than I predicted." Yondra said while spreading in the air silvery strands of mana from her wand to look for dimensional runes. Lith took down the cameras, but unless the Odi were incredibly stupid or they were against an automated defense, their goal was obvious.

Without waiting for Ellkas, she started to activate all the runes she managed to find. Some, like the one Phloria had triggered, were too close to Kulah and lead to tunnels filled with poison.

When she finally found one leading to a safe area, she said:

"Tell Ellkas and Rainer to join us. We'll stay behind but they can leave."

Lith didn't like their situation at all. He had hoped to not have to explore two rooms, nor to face a whole army of creatures.

'Dammit, if I knew it would have been so difficult, I could have gotten a much better deal. What really worries me, though, is that no more Gates have been opened. Whoever our enemy is, they know our position and goal. freewebnovel.com

'We're so weakened that another wave of frenzied beasts would be enough to kill us.' Lith was using Invigoration, his paranoia told him that everything was going too smoothly to be true.

Lith left Yondra and Morok to their work. The room was so full of arrays that it would take a while to neutralize them all and walk safely through the Gate. He called for his companions, but no answer came.

He activated Life Vision, noticing that there was no energy signature. Only the black wind of death was emanated by something in the proximity of the door, where Ellkas was supposed to be.

Lith turned around to check the room and the next. Morok and Yondra were safe and the Odi's Gates had been closed. Lith opened the door, to be sure about what to tell Yondra and found Ellkas' corpse.

It had two holes the size of a golf ball, one in the middle of his eyes, and the other in his chest. Whatever had killed him had also struck at the metal walls with such strength that it had left molten indentations as big as Lith's head.

There was no trace of Rainer. The red mana crystal that Yondra had given him to activate the arrays was lying on the floor, still ready to be used. Whoever was responsible for it, they had been as quick as silent, otherwise Lith or Morok would have sensed it coming.