

Undead 1331

Chapter 1331: Fated Encounter

It took a surprisingly short time to convince the guardian beasts of the Noya Sacred Forest to join the righteous cause to save Aigas. They were a logical bunch, and it appeared they had been looking for viable ways to protect their home and the surrounding area. It was common for guardian beasts to consider the territory outside their forest as their responsibility. Some beasts had even begun campaigns to save villages and towns nearby during the Great Trembling (though those were few and far between).

The great tiger which was the leader of the guardian beasts in the Noya Sacred Forest was accompanied by forty other powerful beasts. The Noya forest was massive, and it appeared that the beasts it nestled had grown so strong as a result of the challenges in climbing up the power ladder in such a heavily populated place. The great tiger, Oum, as he was called, had a distinguished ring of light – a Crown – with a star in it floating over his head, like Karima and Azila. He was an Ascended beast.

He seemed pleased to see a fellow enlightened beast in Azila, and on the way to another Sacred Forest, he engaged the Great Mane Mountain Ape in a discussion about the value and significance of ascending. They discussed about Permanent Havens, the next stages of a Majestic Territory for beasts, and the closest they could reach to Divinity. They shared their yearning for such a power. It was strange seeing non-human creatures show such intelligent bonds.

Unlike Hauza, Oum wasn't racist. He was quite interested in the Stark Troops and Unlimited Stars. Grim entertained all his questions, most of which concerned where their Order had come from.

Indeed, the average strength of the Troops was terrifying. Because of Skullius' gift before everyone left for the mission, everyone had a purple core or above now, and the Stark Troops' powers did leak through their Granted Armament to be noticed, unlike the Stars. Grim gave Oum vague answers about the Order that served to some degree.

He made sure to make up for it by sharing the qualities of his Hidden Class, however. The moment he revealed that his powers allowed him to obtain the traits of multiple beasts, Oum damn near started calling him brother, as did other beasts.

Grim had a suspiciously large number of topics to engage them with, and apparently, they all related to some of the 'struggles' he mentioned going through while in his beast forms, much to Yuyui's surprise. Hauza merely scoffed at this.

Yuyui and Grim rendered all responsibility to incoming enemies to their Stark Troops. Because most of the Cavern weren't threats to them, they delegated the affair of dispatching them to their underlings who dealt with them swiftly and cleanly.

They sent beams of Aggrante shooting up at the dark enemies in carefully aimed strikes, and never missed. Only once or twice had some of them been forced to use their personal skills. When they did, their beast allies were shocked.

None of the Stark Troops used more than one attack to deal finishing blows to the hordes of Cavern. How well-coordinated and disciplined they were in killing the erratic enemies began to scare some of the guardian beasts at a point.

How in the world did a single fireball kill two thousand Cavern?

How come a single cross slash with an axe cut a dozen enemies into a dozen million pieces?

What do you mean that mental attack was so strong that it forced the enemies to fly off and target their own kind as enemies in other parts of Pelian?

It hardly made sense.

Even Hauza started having thoughts.

It was strange enough that none of these fighters had seen a need to go all out yet individually, much less as a whole unit – which would be horrifying for any enemy. However, what of their two leaders who didn't even expel a single shred of pressure?

In the name of preserving dignity, none of the Sacred beasts made comments.

The party reached another Sacred Forest soon and recruited another large force of guardian beasts. Their numbers swelled.

This caused several problems along the way, however.

Where humans or even beasts in need could be found, the party helped, but it appeared most of the beasts here had atrocious pride. Even if they had agreed to help save Aigas, some preferred to do so on their own. The earlier plan to split up had been on Azila's throat when things started to turn chaotic, but he soon found that it was necessary to allow some of the stronger beasts to exert their solo-hero boner as they wished.

Each group of rescued, isolated commonfolk was left with a guardian beast who quickly erected a Dormant Territory around the area and swore to protect them.

But there weren't enough victims for all the beasts in the end. The group remained as a large force that trundled around Pelian, and soon, this invited more trouble. The collective power pouring from the party attracted hoardes and hoardes of Cavern; but most of the guardian beasts loved this.

"That makes the job even easier!" some said. Defending weaker folk wasn't the best choice for some of them, after all. They would have preferred to fight the invaders head-on instead.

But Yuyui and Grim weren't quite sure about that. Skullius had warned them. The Cavern were just like humans. A majority of them were bound to not be exceedingly powerful, but sooner or later, bumping into a dangerous one was almost fact. Thus, even though they didn't lift a finger, they remained on guard.

Grim, using his sway on some of the beasts, helped Azila encourage some of the stronger beasts to split off into smaller groups and help elsewhere. Thankfully, his voice was heard, though, of course, some of the beasts preferred to go off on their own. Azila and Grim helped point them in the right direction – places with vibrant life signatures.

The party of forty-eight was approaching a town that was aflame, ash flying out of its inferno when Grim suddenly started sniffing the air.

"What is it?" Yuyui asked him.

Grim shook his head and his red eyes stabbed the strangely beautiful sight of the burning town. A bell was chiming morbidly in a temple somewhere within the conflagration, singing a slow, sorrowful tune.

"Nothing. Just... some people were burned alive in there. Some of them were rather young," he said with a look that advertised his distaste. "You know, I wish the boss had offered a lot more people the chance to join the Order. Even people outside the Severed Union. I can't help but think a lot less

people would have lost their lives then. Is it fair to keep all that we've been given to ourselves? Ah, I'm not blaming the boss or anything."

Yuyui smiled.

"I know you're not," she said and chuckled. "But—"

"SLEEP!"

...!!!

A terribly loud voice seemed to call from every direction and closed in on the party. It had a horrific effect imbued within it, one that compelled with an intense authority.

All the beasts in the party, including Azila and Hauza, suddenly fell to the ground, instantly forced asleep.

However, the Stark Troops and the Unlimited resisted.

The Stark Constellation on their foreheads sparked furiously, spitting branches of yellowish red lightning everywhere. It defied the compulsion cast upon its users!

"Oh? That's a first," the voice came again, a lot softer and lower.

Yuyui and Grim had already ascertained the location of the enemy.

No. Enemies.

They immediately prepared for a confrontation, but then something within Yuyui pulsed in both acknowledgement and warning. She narrowed her eyes.

'It was only a matter of time, I guess,' she thought.

It appeared someone from the four enemies, all of whom seemed to blow in using the wind as transport, felt the same thing – the resonance Yuyui felt.

"Well, I never imagined we'd find you among a cluster of beasts. Colour me both surprised... and underwhelmed."

Chapter 1332: The Legacy Bites Back

"Ah, so we finally found some, Yu," Grim said with a grin. "I thought many experts from the past would be pouring in, but we've only just now met a few. Did the others mass slaughter a majority of them?"

Yuyui merely shrugged. It was possible.

They had noticed at once something their master had told them to look out for.

"Experts from the Grand War can't just pass through into our time, according to Suzamete," Skullius had said to all the Stark Troops and Unlimited Stars earlier. "To do that, they have to superimpose their Territories on themselves and maintain them at full throttle all through their 'visit'. Even in the age of the strongest combatants on Aigas, there are few who can do that. So, expect enemies at the Transcendent Stage... and worse."

And it was clear. The four women had odd designs impressed on their skin and clothing, and a vague shroud of spiking Nitros was constantly flaring around them.

But while Grim was appreciating just how skilled these women had to be to confidently move around and perhaps engage in battles while constantly expending power like this, Yuyui was staring each of them in the eye, appraising them.

"The scouts estimated that there were about 2,000 experts from the past coming into the present. But I bet these are a cut above the rest,' she thought. 'Where's the rest of them?'

"That look. You know who we are, don't you, girl?" a beast of a woman, tall, broad and curvy said, grinning viciously. She looked more ferocious than Oum even at a glance. She had wild locks of dirty blonde hair that cascaded down to her shoulders and large cruel-looking hazel eyes. The scaly plate armour she wore spotted splotches of fresh and dried blood. It stank, quite frankly, but its owner didn't mind.

"Yeah. I know who you are," Yuyui said, and her eyes moved on to stare at the others. They didn't look as lively as the large woman, but one among them...

"Are your eyes telling you something about me? I feel mine whispering plenty about you."

There was a woman who stood out from the bunch, even more so than the giant. By all accounts, she qualified to be called the womanliest woman out there just by her looks. She looked gentle, kind, dainty and perhaps, she might have sold the identity of a Priestess if she really wanted to.

Yuyui's eyes trembled.

She realised, what she had felt before and what she had felt just now – the resonance – was connected to this woman. Her long, straight dark hair falling in curtains on both sides of her long, thin face oozed grace, as did her tiny eyes and thin pink lips. She was dressed in long, pretty velvet robes and a large pink slash of silk. She didn't appear to be dressed for battle at all.

"Her armour is something special. I can't sense anything from her," another of the women said with a placid face. She was stocky and short with curly silver hair. "She resisted Franceesta's compulsion though. She's probably strong, thank goodness."

"No. Look, there's something on her forehead. It responded to Franceesta's voice. It's not uncommon for the weak to find measures against soul manipulation," another of the women said. She reminded Yuyui of Kintar. She had a wide face and lively eyes that said a lot of harmful nothings. She looked the most 'normal' among the four, and was carrying a large, nasty-looking double-bladed sword. It was larger than her.

This woman gave Grim a sharp, dangerous look.

"Ah. I was right," she said, scowling so deeply her face might have been kneaded dough. "He shares the same armour as her. They are partners in some organisation, I bet." She turned to the woman in the velvet robes, her face turning darker with wrinkles. "I told you. Nothing good would come out of our legacy being received by someone from this pitiful age. She's probably painfully below average just like everyone else here."

The giant woman, Franceesta also gave Grim a hard look, but her grin persisted.

"The world has reverted back to a state where women HAVE to ally or submit to men. And here I thought we made the tiniest difference." Her spit reached Grim's feet.

The Unlimited Star turned to Yuyui, baffled.

"Hey, you could have told me it was them, you know," he said.

Before Yuyui could respond, the stocky woman interrupted, a disgusted look on her face:

"Ha! She lets a man talk down to her. Dear me, what in the world happened in that temple? Did Fuwin not vet properly those who entered?"

Franceesta shook her head. Her eyes fell on Yuyui and then in the blink of an eye, she was standing right in front of her, staring her down.

Yuyui didn't look surprised or shaken. She met those inhuman hazel eyes, like lanterns torching down, with her own calm pair. A few seconds of silence passed, cold and stagnant.

"Good, good. I like the look in your eyes, girl," Franceesta said. "You're not as great an abomination as Porria makes you out to be. I love that. You've been through some dark turns, haven't you? Good, good. You have a lot to prove, but that's not a bad thing. I'd like to get to know and understand you. We all would."

Porria, the wide-faced woman with the double-bladed sword snorted. The long-faced one wore a calm smile and simply watched.

Grim did not interfere. The Stark Troops stayed put too, but they had already assumed a formation in response to the level of the threat while also guarding the sleeping beasts.

Yuyui continued to look into Franceesta's eyes. Then, she spoke:

"Do you really go by the name, the Order of the Trodden Rose?"

Franceesta's expression did not change. Yuyui might have asked if she wanted a cupcake.

The giant of a woman gently rolled Yuyui's lime-green hair around her finger.

"It's not a name that's meant to inspire a feeling of glory, is it? But it's served us well. It communicates our purpose and intent very well, especially in our time. You saw all about that in the Temple of Unlusted Tears, no?"

Yuyui remembered the atrocities just behind the entrance to that temple.

"And what really is your purpose?" she asked.

Franceesta grin disappeared. She sighed.

"Don't disappoint me like this, girl. How did someone like you inherit our legacy?" she said.

Franceesta could already sense that Yuyui did not align with the purposes of the Order of the Trodden Rose. It was as Yuyui had intended, actually. She wanted to establish her stance immediately.

"The answer to that is simple," Grim finally intervened. "She didn't. She only got your powers."

Franceesta's eyes seemed to light aflame.

"Who asked you, corpse?"

Grim grinned, matching the energy.

"Didn't like that answer, did you?" he said. "Well, you're not going to like the rest of my attitude."

Chapter 1333: A Clash of Orders

But Yuyui instantly killed the tautening tension with the simple raise of her hand. Both Franceesta and Grim were surprised.

The lime-haired girl had a look to her eyes that only Grim could have fully discerned meaning from. He sighed inwardly.

'You can't be serious,' he thought.

"Since I'm such a disappointment already," Yuyui said, "You must surely realise that I'm not opposed to the idea of allying with and befriending men. Grim just so happens to be a valued ally of mine. What do you think about that?"

Franceesta's nostrils released a burst of steam. Her insides might have been boiling. It was a wonder how her opinion of Yuyui was fluctuating so much, and how it had departed to an extreme negative now. But Yuyui did not flinch.

"I think it's a damn shame. Direction screwed us over with this one," the giant woman said before eyeing Grim. She grinned. "You speak of allies, but a loud character like him probably sees you as his pet."

Yuyui remained unfazed. She felt the giant woman's words bounce right off her. If it had been Yuyui from the early days post her release from the Temple of Unlusted Tears, she might have absorbed these dark words, but now...

She tore her eyes from Franceesta's lantern-like hazel eyes and turned to the long-faced woman. Her small smile remained and her eyes remained fixed on Yuyui. The lime-haired girl remembered what she had said some moments ago.

'Are your eyes telling you something about me? I feel mine whispering plenty about you.'

"What are your eyes telling you about me? You're the leader of your Order, aren't you?" Yuyui asked.

The woman was amused. She chuckled and began towards Yuyui.

Franceesta might not have made Yuyui feel tense, but this woman certainly did. Grim also smelled the pressure coming off of her. It was dangerous. As confident as he was, she wasn't someone they could let their guard down against, even for a moment. No, especially for a moment.

"The fact that you'd resort to asking about leaders and hierarchy just spells how much men have poisoned you. What's the need for positions among sisters seeking to do righteous work?" the woman said. She was graceful in her speech, yet also devilish.

Her name was Nigerra. Her name had been rather popular during the Second Grand War, but the Ashing of Time had erased it from the memory of the general public, leaving only vague mutterings about the Order of the Trodden Rose as a whole.

Franceesta backed away from Yuyui and made way for Nigerra.

"Righteous work?" Yuyui laughed. She couldn't believe what she was hearing. "Is that really what you tell yourself when you are skinning defenseless grown men and little boys alive?"

Nigerra's smile grew a little wider, but not wilder. Porria and the other woman drew close.

"How is that any different from how men keep pet women in their dungeons; pets that they fuck and lash at with barbed whips to feed some distorted itch in their hearts? Surely, if society can tolerate that, they can tolerate our work," Nigerra said, and she stopped just shy of Yuyui and looked at the burning town. "I believe whoever came up with the phrase 'An eye for an eye' had a revelation. All things in equal measure. Avenged, or perhaps rebutted in kind."

Yuyui wore a strained face.

"Is that what you've believed all along or did it become an excuse for your horrible actions after you started going mad? Weren't you supposed to be beacons of hope for women? Women started picking combat-oriented Classes during the Second Grand War because of you. You empowered them before you started killing innocent men. Didn't the fact that some women were inspired to rise up against you to protect communities of men tell you anything at all? You're sick!"

Nigerra was not offended.

"Of course, we're sick. It's the price we had to pay to show the world a bitter truth," she said with a laugh and turned to Porria, the wide-faced woman. "Honestly, our little group wasn't entirely motivated by a righteous cause from the beginning. Porria was a powerful Arma User back then, while I and the others were nobodies with no ambition. A lack of that ambition led me to try something that was viewed as uncommon – to become a powerful woman by the standards of the men."

"Porria trained me, and power came so easily. It was as though I was born to be a fighter, an Advancer, a Master, an Incandescent Stager. It was a breeze. Soon, I overtook Porria and we found

other women blessed in no other particular, natural womanly gifts, and had them try to be monsters like us. It was easy and sweet for them too."

"But then came our ambition. As women we were just as capable, weren't we? We were just as fierce as the men when we fought. And what better way was there to make that idea known than to demonstrate it in the name of all women as heroes."

Yuyui had already been scowling.

She found that her assumptions in relation to the Order of the Trodden Rose had been very wrong. She assumed they had been righteous women who had fallen to the dark side as time passed, but as it turned out...

"You mean to tell me you never truly cared about making a difference at all? It was all an excuse to exercise your strength and talent?" Yuyui said, seething.

Nigerra's soft smile finally turned into a grin.

"Ah, my eyes told me true. You're a frail flower that's only just begun to bud and bloom. What's spurred your growth isn't even your own strength or ambition. It was a man's agenda that caught your heart, isn't it?" she said.

Yuyui took quick steps to reach within an inch of Nigerra's face.

"So you're gifted? So what? That makes my background worthless? Being helped by someone else to grow – a man, no less – makes me inferior?"

"That's exactly right. Like I said, we are sick by society's standard, but that's only because we have our own standard, as all women should. The Deities didn't make men and women equal. Last I checked, there are two Deitesses who made Aigas. Does that not say it all?"

Grim sighed exasperatedly at this. Nigerra looked at him.

"I see that's not a popular opinion with men. Care to prove me wrong?" she said almost politely.

"You're on," Grim said, ready to bare his fangs – again – but Yuyui once again raised her hand.

Grim was baffled.

"What? You're still considering taking them all on by yourself?"

Yuyui didn't answer, but it was clear.

Indeed, Grim had gathered this from the jump. This seemed like a personal affair to Yuyui. He wasn't really concerned for her safety, but he would be lying if he didn't admit that he really wanted to fight these women.

He folded his arms.

"You sure about this?" he asked, but he didn't expect an answer. Yuyui was still locking faces with Nigerra, who slid backward a moment later with a laugh.

Grim didn't need to tell Yuyui anything. She had a guidance field. He knew she was fully aware that Franceesta, Porria and the other, stocky woman were peak Transcendent Stagers... and that Nigerra was a Beyond The Veil Stager.

Indeed, the long-faced woman stood at the pinnacle of Aigas' power system!

She chuckled.

"Bold. But perhaps, fitting. I'm not sure how many eyes you have awakened, but it seems perfect to match yourself against us. Perhaps how you've mastered your eyes will reach my poor, sick soul instead," she said while placing a hand on her chest.

Yuyui scoffed.

She knew her enemies probably had more eyes than she did, the unique eyes that made up her Hidden Class. That, on top of the powers afforded by their Stages was bound to be terrifying. However...

'Even then, it's nothing compared to the Impossible Task...' she thought.

Chapter 1334: The Impossible Task

During the training in the Timemould Mirror Box...

Only about a month had passed according to the standard of time in Aigas, but everyone already felt as though they might have been better off dead. They could hardly feel their limbs and even their souls seemed to be aching. Whether it was an Unlimited or any other individual who had been glad to be Replicus' subordinate, they, for a short while, began to regret joining him.

The training scheme their master had devised was brutal. It must have been meant for Giants and not humans.

The Timemould Mirror Box was too perfectly equipped to handle Replicus' intense training regiments. It could conjure weapons and artefacts of any ranks according to Aigas' standards, and could even have them assume the properties of existing items. The suits of armour were easily the most loathed by the experts in here. They could mimic the appearance of anyone in the Timemould Mirror Box including their personality, current mindset and abilities. It was effectively a perfect copy that could only exist in this strange place.

Replicus had replicated himself using the suits of armour and was training everyone individually – within separate camps in the Mirror Box – for the last month. He learned all their strengths, weaknesses and limits, and used them both for and against them. He broke and rebuilt each of his subordinates and had them thoroughly study each of their powers, no matter how insignificant, to exhaustion.

At times, he would use Maximum Catalyst to strip his followers of all their powers (reverting them to a state where they hadn't mastered anything) and then engage them in combat, beating the ever-living piss out of them until they learned to study his movements and respond as best as they could even without any supernatural powers.

But this wasn't the thickest of it.

Replicus abhorred the fact that Classes were categorised into Arma Using, Form Using and Energy Forming. He forced everyone to master each category in one fashion or the other, but it was nothing as tame as Class Branching.

It didn't matter if you were a Mage. You would soon become a master of hand-to-hand combat and even forget to use spells when the four-armed monster of a leader spent the better part of sixteen hours forcing you to fight and react to his whipping fists and cruel kicks.

Even close quarters combatants were forced to learn to discern energies. After all, there was no excuse for failing to master the art of distinguishing energy enough to a point where you could see how your enemy meant to attack before they even began the physical motion for it.

A solid month of this cruelty made all of Replicus' subordinates experience all stages of grief. Replicus inflicted all forms of pain imaginable upon them – disembowelling, dismembering, spatial distorting and so many other forms of torture – in duels in order to establish the consequences of a loss (stakes), bolster their mental fortitude and tolerance.

Some of his subordinates hated him for it for a while, but soon, they learned to accept reality. This was their life now. This was for their own good.

They learned discipline, and not just in combat. They actively engaged with Replicus and asked him how to improve. Granted, he didn't always have the answers, but he did at least steer them towards possibilities.

This attuning was simply one part of the regiments that Replicus had his subordinates go through every day. The rest were shorter, but bloodier. The Warmoth's Progeny would not have weak, witless allies and in time, his subordinates decided they didn't want to fall short of his expectations.

All this horrendous work came before Replicus began gifting them all skills and other forms of powers, of course. A sturdy foundation was much more important, and wouldn't it be more rewarding if that sturdy foundation also found quality complements after it was finished?

It was only when all the soon-to-be Stark Troops had grown so much physically, mentally and spiritually, indistinguishable in their forte by their appearance, that Replicus had gathered them all from their separate training spots.

It had been both a joy and a relief for all of them to see their peers after what felt like decades. The soon-to-be Troops had commented on each other's appearance, discussed how much they'd grown and laughed about how much they had cursed their master.

Then, Replicus had addressed them all.

"I'm glad to see that you socketholes can smile again. That's a good sign. I'll ramp up the intensity of the training now," he had said and his subordinates had turned pale. "I'm just joking. Short of chopping both your bodies and souls to pieces and using a Rule to inflict eternal torment on them, there's nothing else I can do to toughen you up."

Everyone had been relieved. They laughed nervously, unsure if Replicus really was joking or not.

"I don't think I need to explain again why I've put you through such trials. The enemy I'm preparing you for tempers with souls and is at least a thousand times more cruel than I am. For that, you need to have otherworldly capabilities across all forms of your existence, not just the body," Replicus had said. "But you've already achieved that. Now comes the next step, what I call the Impossible Task."

The Unlimited and the rest of the experts had committed this name to heart. Some cursed, wondering if it was a new form of torture. They couldn't take Replicus' reassuring speeches seriously nowadays. The fact that they had each gotten closer to Replicus, even going as far as to consider him a close friend gave them the right to doubt him.

But what really was the Impossible Task?

"I'll bestow upon you skills and stats that match all your capabilities. However, I won't give you time to practise and get used to them on your own and by your own standard, or even by mine. Not strictly at least," Replicus had said before grinning. "But this Task isn't just to help you grow into your finest form. I want to choose among you those that will stand above the rest, distinguished and fierce. I've already prepared you for this trial as best as I can. All of you will make the attempt."

Everyone was growing nervous. Replicus let them stew in terror before continuing.

"For the next month before our time in here is up, each of you will fight doubles that will be created from the instant I give you the extra skills I've promised. You'll be fighting yourselves. To remain in my service, you will have to fight at least 100 of these at the same time, and kill them all, otherwise, I will discard you."

Everyone withered.

100 copies of themselves?

100?!

But these copies were extremely powerful. They were smarter than their original counterparts and they knew how their counterparts' minds worked and could damn near predict every action they took. They were also freakishly durable!

Would Replicus really kick someone out of the Faction just for failing to reach this target?

But before anyone could speak out (not that they would), Skullius continued.

"But as I've said, 100 is the bare minimum. Each double you kill will be replaced by another during this task, all in order to see what your upper limit will be. For those I will recognise as distinguished and worthy to be given a new title that may even transcend mine if needed, I have set a standard, though, if they so wish, they may go beyond it. For that, I would guarantee extra preferential treatment."

The experts gulped, shaken.

Replicus had laughed.

"Kill at least 1,000 doubles, and I will honour you as an equal."

Chapter 1335: Beginning In The Flames

"You know, I'll get a few opponents to fight soon and just like she did to me, I'll refuse to share," Grim said. The bitterness in his voice was practically naked. He and the Stark Troops trailed behind the five women as they marched towards the burning town.

Wordlessly, Nigerra, Franceesta, Porria, the fourth woman, Aizel, and Yuyui had decided to begin their battle amidst the conflagration. Grim imagined that such an odd decision had to do with the chiming of the bell of a temple. All five of these women had a relationship with an unholy sort of temple themselves, so perhaps, beginning their conflict amidst the chimes of one that was built to be proper and sacred, would give their battle a solemn meaning.

But it was not Grim's style. Yuyui was the poetic one. She had been a bard before entering Skullius' service. Her opponents, given that they viewed killing as a righteous act in their own macabre reasoning, suggested that they appreciated art too.

"Women are so complicated," Grim scoffed and he snapped his fingers behind him. "Ruge, make me a chair, will you?"

A scrawny, large-nosed troop behind Grim sighed.

"I thought you were going to be on your guard, sir. Whatever happens, more enemies will be flocking here as a result of the battle. I feel like our luck is about to run out with swarms of mediocre opponents," Ruge said and went on to form a large, comfy chair made of clear ice behind Grim. He was a formidable Ice Mage.

Grim sat down and folded his arms. The orange flames highlighted his face and left a strange collection of dark shadows in its contours.

"I'm counting on it. There's twelve members of this cult of evil women. I'm sure the rest of them are here, and they might show up once Yuyui begins fighting. I hope they are just as strong as those four," he said, an unnatural grin on his face.

"You look ugly with that grin, sir," Ruge said.

"You look ugly with that nose."

Within the burning town, Yuyui spared glances at the charred corpses, noting the young victims Grim had told her he had smelled. She had sympathy for them, but it was drowned by her focus on the enemies.

Yuyui was strangely excited. None of the Unlimited Stars had gotten a chance to prove themselves, to validate the strength they earned through the Impossible Task yet. This was one major reason why Yuyui wanted to fight and kill these women. She recognised and acknowledged that for now, it had little to do with righteous reason.

Yuyui had managed to kill 3,764 doubles during her Impossible Task. It was impressive – more than triple the standard her master had set – but Yuyui didn't think it so grand after learning how many of their doubles Kintar and Pherdanta had killed.

The Commander of the Stark Troops had killed 8,009 while the True Myth Mage had slaughtered a staggering 14,876.

None of the other Unlimited came close to those figures. Yuyui knew Grim was eager to fight, just like her, because the gap between him and just Pherdanta was massive, not to mention Kintar.

Yuyui clicked her tongue just thinking about it.

The only way to complete the Impossible Task – as everyone figured while fighting bitterly back then – was to evolve physically, mentally, spiritually and even emotionally dozens of times past your own limits. Yuyui couldn't imagine just how many monstrous evolutions someone like Kintar experienced to kill that many of herself.

'Maybe that's why she's so weird,' she thought in passing.

The five had finally reached the burning temple letting out the gloomy chime, and they stopped. The noise from it seemed to fade slightly as time passed, but it was loud still.

Porria, Franceesta and Aizel spread out, surrounding Yuyui and Nigerra in a large triangle. The long-faced woman stood roughly fifteen meters away from Yuyui. The blaze masked most of her face in deep shadow, but her soft smile was clear.

'They are not prideful types,' Yuyui analysed. 'They are all going to fight me at once. They intend to crush me thoroughly,' Her eyes remained fixed on Nigerra. She reflected on another statement this woman had used to mock her.

'The fact that you'd resort to asking about leaders and hierarchy spells just how much men have poisoned you.'

As much as Yuyui wanted to rebut, she had to acknowledge that these women had a code and truth that they obeyed diligently, just like the Stark-Soul Order.

Yuyui wanted to make them break it. To her, this had just become a battle to validate the worth of the Stark-Soul Order over the Order of the Trodden Rose through a physical contest... in addition to the self-serving goal Yuyui already had, of course.

The bell chimed once.

"Shall we begin then? I hope you will not object to taking us all on at once," Nigerra said softly. She might have been whispering her love to a mate. The bell chimed twice.

But before Yuyui could retort, she noticed a change in the woman's eyes. Nigerra blinked and both her pupils and irises were replaced by purple arrows pointing downward!

'The Eye of Moving!' Yuyui thought, and readied herself.

However...

"That pretty boy and your minions seem to be looking forward to watching an exciting battle," Porria said as she stabbed her double-bladed sword into the ground. She then joined her free hands together in an odd gesture as gold quality mana exploded forth from her. "I'm thinking they should have a thrilling view, in that case."

The bell chimed thrice.

...!!!

"Majestic Territory Expulsion..."

The Territory whipped out in a cascade of Nitros faster than any Yuyui had ever seen!

It devoured the town and several dozen kilometres beyond it in less than a fraction of a blink!

As its Imaginary GeoScape formed rapidly, Porria's voice came after she had long called the Territory's name.

"...Rosen Apocalypse."

But Yuyui had reacted quickly enough. Nitros bathed her in a huge wobbly blanket to shield her from the Territory's Primary effects, whatever they would be.

"Good!" Franceesta cried joyfully as her dirty blonde hair flew everywhere around her head. "I was worried you'd be dead already, slow to defend against Porr's Territory!" She seemed to bulk up even further.

Yuyui's hands rose before in a stance. She was ready.

However, right then, she noticed something horrifying on her armour. Arrows that pointed at her hands, feet and head had appeared, and they guaranteed that the first hit she took wasn't pretty.

Chapter 1336: All's Fair In Women and War (1)

The activation of the Territory had also caught Grim off guard, but as soon as its bold, white boundary crossed him and the Stark Troops, he immediately lathered a massive amount of Nitros over his body to shield himself. He managed to save his ice chair from melting or shattering from the Territory's pressure, which was a rather impressive feat.

Grim didn't spare a glance to the Troops behind him or the guardian beasts they were surrounding protectively. (They had been put to sleep.) The Unlimited Star knew they would respond to the danger on their own, and they did.

Only a moment after Grim shielded himself, the Troops – in one shockingly synchronised motion – leaned forward and crossed their arms before their bodies. At once, Null Life and mana gushed from their Granted Armament to create sleek outlines of striking blue around them.

This was one of the Starmations imbued into the suits of armour the Troops wore, Tranquil Instance. It was designed to protect those without Territories from being harmed by them using the principle Skullius had learned several times over now – that Nitros could not bind Null Life Essence.

After the glare of staggeringly powerful Nitros came the rapid formation of the GeoScape which forced Grim to amplify the power of his own Nitros to defend. It manifested in an instant, a choking cloud of ash that blew against him and the Troops from the centre of the Territory. Then the ground vanished, only to be replaced by... a tranquil sea that accommodated all without forcing them to sink. The sky above became a net of interlocking orange-blue runes that looked like puzzle pieces, casting sparks below like rain. Well, they might have been intended to be rain, actually, though they gathered above the surface of the water instead of fizzling out.

And then there was singing.

Somewhere close to the centre of the Territory, Grim heard sonorous voices crying in beautiful song. They were loud. Too loud. They caused his coating of Nitros to waver all the more.

'Well, that's not good...' he thought while slouching back into his chair. 'But you can handle it, can't you, Yu?'

At the centre of the Territory, Yuyui was experiencing a frightening ordeal. Despite her protective Nitros, purple arrows had somehow managed to brand themselves to her armour, pointing at her limbs and head. They had brute-forced their way onto her, ignoring her defenses and...

'I didn't know it could be used this way!' she thought, inspired and shocked, even when the song coming from above and around forced her Nitros inward in order to ensure she would be struck point-black by whatever Primary attack functions awaited in the Territory.

She felt inspired when the purple arrows imbued terrifying strain against her armour and flesh, generating kinetic energy in the direction their heads pointed. Blood rushed to Yuyui's hands, feet and head, and she was completely immobilised. All possible energy she could have conjured to move was simply added in five different directions towards her limbs.

She might have been torn limb from limb in the next few seconds.

This state of paralysis was abused by Franceesta. The beastly woman had already been storming towards Yuyui, cutting through the clouds of ash as she sped with a fiendish grin when the Territory was erected. Her large arm was cocked back, and she delightedly forced its fist into Yuyui's face.

The figures of fire swirling about, living, feminine, and with long tongues of flame as hair and beams of light for eyes reached a crescendo in their song at the moment of impact.

Yuyui remained stuck in place. Franceesta hammered her again, a hard blow to the temple, and a shockwave scrolled outward, so fierce it might have decimated a whole city of Advancement Stage experts. Yet Yuyui remained frozen, locked in place by the arrows. They 'moved' all the energy generated by the blows towards her limbs!

Franceesta laughed right when Yuyui spat a blob of blood.

"That's good! That's damn good! You're a tough doll!" she cried as she cocked back her arm again for another blow. There was a large lizard with reddish-brown scales and gleaming green eyes

wrapped around it to the fist. Some of its scales seemed to overlap and cover the freakishly large woman's arm. "You better do something before I smash in that pretty face!"

The other three ladies looked on with distaste as the third blow was delivered; another brutish shockwave shuddered outward, blowing away the smoke, as the flame sirens hovering in the skies in the thousands sang.

The skin on Yuyui's face had peeled and bruised. Even with her Nitros over her, Franceesta's blows reached her – a curious fact. They were not natural punches, of course, and many an expert had been killed in one shot simply because they judged them to be ordinary. But Yuyui had known even before the Territory was cast.

She had the guidance field, and as soon as it told her that Franceesta wasn't a Form User, a muscle-bound brute who only knew to fling punches, she had been wary.

As it turned out, Franceesta was a...

"No wonder your blows are no different to thrown cushions. A Summoner like you wouldn't have decent innate physical powers, would you?" Yuyui said with a bloody grin.

A vein throbbed on Franceesta's temple.

"Oh yeah?"

"HELL YEAH!" Yuyui cried, and suddenly she was gone.

"Look out!" Porria, who owned the Territory cried to Franceesta. The beastly woman's first instinct was to turn behind her, but that turned out to be a tragic lapse of judgement. Her opponent had only moved so fast that she flickered out of existence, but remained in the exact same spot.

And when Franceesta's eyes turned to a false location, Yuyui saw the chunk of meat wide open and ready to be brutalised.

Only Nigerra managed to see what followed and immediately deduced how it was done. In fractions of a blink, Franceesta's scaly plate armour was fragmenting after bearing the force of a horrible

blow, she, a Transcendent Stager had failed to see. Then she was flying up like a leaking spear at speeds that flirted with light!

She bore through the sky and shattered it, ejected from the Territory.

And Yuyui hurried to make use of the slot she had been forced out from. She propped up a finger and called...

"Nos Aggrante!"

And the Territory shattered in a beautiful explosion.

Chapter 1337: All's Fair In War and Women (2)

The burning town was no more. Not even the embers of the burning structures which had been within it could be seen. The ground was clear and slightly depressed. When a Territory was erected, it pushed all nearby constructs away to make room, and only pulled in its targets.

What the possessed Skullius had accomplished, binding man-made objects and the environment from Aigas with his Territory as it manifested, was a special feat which most experts didn't bother to learn as it didn't give any merit a majority of the time.

Yuyui wiped the blood from her face. One of her skills, [Tenacious], rapidly healed her peeled skin and exposed flesh. Her eyes were on Porria, Aizel and Nigerra. Two of the three women – Porria especially – were befuddled by how Yuyui had just obliterated the Territory so casually. Whether from inside or outside, once a Territory had staked its claim, it was extremely difficult to break; the sure-fire method was killing the user.

'I had to crush it instantly. Their tier of Territories is definitely greater than mine. Like that woman, Porria, they must all have Territories with living beings,' Yuyui thought, briefly thinking of those flame sirens she had seen. They indeed were living beings, and just their singing alone had been pressuring her defences. That was all before its more dangerous functions had been activated.

Yuyui locked eyes with Nigerra. Those arrows in her eyes...

'The Eye of Moving. She even has two of them. I didn't know they could create arrows that generate and control all sorts of motion. In this battle, she can force me to stop or misstep at crucial moments, and that could be fatal,' Yuyui thought. Then she again thought about what Nigerra had said before.

'I'm not sure how many eyes you have awakened, but it seems perfect to match yourself against us.'

'If she doesn't know that...' Yuyui thought, and her right eye suddenly changed. It became a blue eye with a golden slit in the centre; the Inhumane Eye. Her left eye's iris and pupil became one purple arrow pointing upwards.

Nigerra grinned.

"How sweet. All in then?" she said. Yuyui didn't respond. Instead, she braced, for this frightful woman attacked with ferocity right then, and she retaliated just a moment later.

Yuyui was suddenly in a large cavern with thick, unnaturally large fireflies attached to the walls, giving pale light. Many holes bore into the cavern walls, seeming to lead elsewhere from the main.

A figure sat a few dozen meters in front of Yuyui, clapping her hands while quivering and muttering some incantation in a language she couldn't understand. She looked old, haggard and frightfully similar to Nigerra.

But Yuyui had not come here to explore. She was already gathered a massive chunk of mana in her fist and she smashed it into the wall on her left side. The cavern shuddered, the fireflies flying in all directions, disturbed. Deep cracks limned their way everywhere and caused a massive portion of the cavern to start collapsing.

...And then Yuyui was back in Aigas, standing opposed to Nigerra as she had been just a moment before.

Blood sprayed from her eyes, nose and mouth, but she kept her sights on Nigerra.

The woman was still grinning, but drops of blood were also sliding down her nostrils.

Both women had used their Eyes of Moving nigh simultaneously to attack each other's Reflection of the Soul!

Yuyui had only gotten the chance to deal one blow to the cavern, Nigerra's Reflection, but Nigerra had dealt much more damage to hers before Yuyui forced her out with her eye; Nigerra had done the same.

Yuyui had learned to do this when she saved Stylla from the BoneTender. The Eye of Moving worked by actualising any form of 'motion', after all.

But Yuyui didn't have time to reflect and heal. Aizel, the stocky woman had rushed her, and Porria was only a nanosecond behind, her double-bladed sword spinning in her flexible grip; she was only lagging behind because she had had to restore her mana with Creeds after projecting her Territory.

Yuyui's Granted Vision was active. This Starmation allowed her 360-degree vision with extra focus when she needed it. She essentially had no blind spots. With her eyes keen, Yuyui saw Aizel's right eye change. It was suffused with a terrible, dark brilliance, and a white symbol, like flame sat comfortably in that darkness.

...!!!

A crown appeared over Aizel's head, white and afire. But Yuyui couldn't wonder what this was about, because though Porria was lagging, she had already launched her attack. She swung her sword so fast that the canvas of Aigas was pulled with force. Its edge blazed with crimson fire, and before Yuyui could even process what this kind of sword slash meant, she up in the air, dodging. Where she had just been, a line of flame was marked on space itself.

Yuyui had the feeling if she allowed herself to be caught by that attack... well, her fate would be most unpleasant.

But Porria was gliding in the sky after her, using Yuyui's momentary distraction to reach her. Porria was a Form User, Yuyui knew from the guidance field. Predictably, the stocky woman's foot came hissing at Yuyui's head with a torrent of Nitros, and Yuyui raised an arm to guard while preparing to unleash an Aggrante with the other!

But it didn't work.

She was not allowed to guard.

Yuyui's arm decided it didn't want to bear the attack coming towards her midway through, and she received the full force of an attack with the innate strength of a hand-to-hand master Form User with the basic enhancements given by their passive Territory!

The kick caught Yuyui on the neck. Because even her mana rebelled and refused to mobilise and guard against the attack, her neck bent inwards, nearly lopped off in a single strike. Yuyui remained alive and conscious, but it didn't help that her Reflection of the Soul was pulsing with pain.

'What... what did that black eye do?' she thought as she pointed a finger at Porria. But even her armour refused to attack the woman. Aizel grinned. Her hands whipped up to form a complex gesture.

It was a Territory, Yuyui knew at once!

She didn't hear its name, but she noticed how it quickly manifested, just like Porria's.

Unlike Porria's, however, it seemed determined to kill her at once.

Something howled in a terrifying bass above. Yuyui looked up and saw a gigantic volcanic mountain tipped over such that its open mouth, glistening with blinding bolts of silver lightning was aimed at her. Great serpents of many colours and many designs, numbering in the tens of thousands were coiling around this mountain, the mana in their bodies flowing into it.

And when Aizel cried, "Grand Gale!", one pillar of lightning fell on Yuyui's head with such horrifying force that the lime-haired girl knew without dodging, she was dead.

But she couldn't dodge.

She wasn't allowed to, not when an attack came from someone blessed by the Eye of the Prince.

And thus, the cruel attack met her in a fatal kiss.

Chapter 1338: All's Fair In War and Women (3)

Grand Gale was the sole Primary attack function of Aizel's Territory. The woman had decided that she didn't require a Secondary attack function. Thus, using Creeds, she instead sacrificed her Territory's ability to generate Secondary functions entirely, in order to create a Primary function that was strong enough to end her battles as soon as she invoked her Majestic Territory.

Because Primary Territory functions couldn't be anything too complex, Grand Gale was as simple as it looked – scorching lightning that fell continuously on a target for ten full seconds until they were ash. But a feat like this could only be accomplished by experts with Territories that had living beings to help amp up the power of attacks.

And thus, predictably, Yuyui met her death.

'I suppose I should have expected it. They aren't nobodies,' she thought as branches of the lightning in the aftermath traced along the ground she stood on.

The floor of the Territory was a kind of diamond for as far as the eye could see, likely to weather the intensity of the Territory's attacks. It was rather curious. The sky was wholly land and the ground was entirely precious diamond.

The Inhumane Eye had restored Yuyui and her armour, though she still felt a stinging pain from her Reflection of the Soul. She frowned.

How terribly annoying.

Since she had spawned in the Territory without protecting herself, all her mana reserves were bound, and she was unable to use Nitros.

However, Yuyui leaned forward and crossed her arms before her chest. An outline of Null Life Essence and mana in a mix spread from her, warding away the Territory's qualities. Tranquil Instance was designed to resist them, after all. Once Yuyui got a foothold against the Territory, she mobilised her mana to create Nitros, coating herself and then ceased the use of Tranquil Instance.

'Now...' she thought.

Porria, Aizel and Nigerra watched her, analysing everything she did. And then they all rushed her.

This time, it was Nigerra who reached her first, way faster than the others. But Yuyui's eyes gleamed.

'I'll force you all to fight on my terms!'

She was gone before Nigerra could reach her. She wouldn't risk a one-on-one with the Beyond the Veil Stager. Instead...

By the time Porria saw a shadow zooming towards her in a fraction of a nanosecond, it was already too late. She raised her sword to defend, but Yuyui had already gripped a chunk of her face and ripped it off!

The wide-faced woman screeched in agony. She couldn't have known, but Yuyui had intended to rip her head off. The only reason she failed was because Porria's body was enhanced further by the passive Territory lathered over her body.

Yuyui clicked her tongue. She discarded the skin and flesh in her hand, and narrowed her eyes when a seething Porria turned – bloody-faced – spun her double-bladed sword and unleashed a rush of flaming slashes against her. Each slash left a scorching brand on even the space in Aizel's Territory, but Yuyui dodged them all.

She was fast.

But then Aizel had flashed up to her. Her dark eye, the Eye of the Prince burned white at the centre. Yuyui immediately used Granted Warp to retreat from the stocky woman. She still didn't understand what that eye did, but it certainly worked wonders in this Territory.

Two purple arrows appeared on Yuyui's legs, pointing downward as soon as she landed on the diamond ground. She was paralysed again. She cursed.

And then Porria was upon her, swinging her blade to cleave her from shoulder to shoulder.

And then Aizel's upside down mountain was churning again, ready to release another storm of energy.

And then Nigerra had appeared behind her, pulling back her lime-green hair and whispering, "Don't get too comfortable. I know how to kill you permanently."

And Yuyui gnashed her teeth behind her lips. She had no choice. There was no use in hiding her cards. Not now.

An eye appeared on her forehead.

It had dark sclera and an icy blue iris. It was as beautiful as it was dangerous – far more dangerous than it had been before, in a lesser experienced Yuyui's hands. It unleashed a pulse of visible purple energy that whipped outward in a fraction of a microsecond, catching Yuyui's enemies off guard.

The Eye of Dispersal was relentless and tenacious.

In a weaker Yuyui's hands, it had held back the breath from the Vision of Misery, Jerthrax. And now, it released her from the power of the purple arrows bearing all her energy downwards, dispelled Aizel's Territory completely, and most important of all... even if it was only a second, it forced the three women's passive Territories, branded onto their bodies to dissolve!

Even Nigerra was astounded. Interest burned in her eyes.

But then Yuyui's hair slipped from her grip.

The Unlimited Star didn't waste the second she had bought for herself with her enemies' passive Territories dissolved. She flickered in and out of existence.

She was fast.

This time, her target didn't see so much as her shadow before their head was torn off.

Porria's body hardly recognised what had happened before it fell. It wasn't a matter of strength, after all. Yuyui's physical stats were slightly below Porria's and thus, she couldn't have pried off her head with simple force.

But Nigerra was quickly closing on the secret. She looked unhinged when she glanced at Porria's head in Yuyui's hand.

"Your eyes are superior to ours! How splendid! I didn't think we'd actually manage to do it after all!" she shouted, laughing as her passive Territory returned. "That was the whole point of a legacy, wasn't it, Aizel?"

Aizel scoffed and also paid a glance to Porria's head.

"Yes. That was the point," she said and restored her mana with Creeds.

Yuyui threw away Porria's head. Her Eye of Dispersal closed. A look of distaste was on her face. She didn't particularly enjoy killing, even now with power that many envied.

"You're not bothered by the loss of your comrade?" she asked Nigerra, but the woman looked livid with eagerness.

"Cut the nonsense," she said as her mana bubbled out unnaturally in a towering storm. "Don't ruin my mood with questions of sentiment. No. The dead are dead and gone. Rather, show me more. Show me how you're doing it. I need to see how advanced of a legacy you are."

Yuyui braced.

The fact that Nigerra was already starting to figure out the secret to her powers spelled to Yuyui that indeed, she shouldn't have dared hold back against these women. She should have gone all out from the start.

But now she would, and they would see just why she was worthy of being called an Unlimited Star.

...And why exactly she had access to limitless speed.

Chapter 1339: All's Fair In Women and War (4)

Nigerra was unbelievably fast, Yuyui had to say.

Even though she (Nigerra) had just explained how Porria was one of the reasons the Order of the Trodden Rose existed, the woman's death didn't seem to bother her. In fact, it fuelled her desire to fight Yuyui seriously.

The lime-haired girl's senses drew taut. Nigerra was a distance away, and then she wasn't. Yuyui found that purple arrows had appeared over her, completely paralysing her. Even though she could break free, she couldn't do it faster than Nigerra could grab her by the hair, slam her violently into the ground and slam her open palm into her face!

Yuyui was stumped.

She died instantly.

When she spawned, she saw Nigerra flash her way again, and her leg whipped faster than light at Yuyui's head.

.... And the girl's vision was whisked away, as though her body was suddenly thrown into the distance. But it wasn't her body. It was just her head.

Yuyui had died again.

She respawned again.

Yuyui barely had time to think, but she wasn't flustered. She had already known that Nigerra was a Form User, so her prowess in close quarters was much greater than that of the likes of Porria. This, plus the fact that she was a Beyond the Veil Stager, and apparently knew how to permanently kill Yuyui, were all factors that increased her threat level to extremes.

But then again, she was a worthy opponent.

'I think I can start judging her speed now. Somewhat.'

Upon reviving for a third time, Yuyui activated the Starmation, Stagnant Parameter. A cube of highly-condensed mana plates appeared around her just before a hideously powerful blow could touch her. The cube shook slightly, but remained intact. From its safe embrace, Yuyui saw Nigerra grin.

"Now, now, don't hide away after all gall from earlier," Nigerra said. She couldn't see what was protecting Yuyui, but she felt its integrity.

Aizel rushed in from the side, her Eye of the Prince, active.

"Who said anything about hiding?" Yuyui said, and she dropped the protection of Stagnant Parameter right when her Eye of Dispersal appeared on her forehead. It released the same pulse of dark energy as before outward, but Nigerra was gone before it could touch her.

Aizel was a moment late in responding. Sparks went flying when the dark energy of dispersion met the shallow radiance of the crown she had received through the Eye of the Prince, and less than a moment later, the dark eye dimmed.

Yuyui honed in on that moment.

Just like Nigerra had said, Yuyui's eyes were stronger than those of the Order of the Trodden Rose!

She was a legacy, after all.

She was upon Aizel before the woman could realise what was going on.

The Eye of the Prince forced anyone she deemed to be an enemy to fail when intending to harm her. Conversely, it took away her enemies' ability to resist any of her attacks, which was why it paired very well with her Territory!

But now it had met the Eye of Dispersal and had been temporarily disabled.

Yuyui's body flashed with Perfect Aura as her eye closed, and the Aura streaked out like sharp light, formed a vague humanoid form – a Genuine Incarnation – and zoomed towards Aizel so fast that she only saw a sharp glare before being decked in the face by a fierce blow. The attack did no damage, but it distracted her from Yuyui coming on her. Her body, swimming with Nitros, was lithe and deadly.

She had landed a thousand blows under Aizel's arm before the woman could use her skills to defend. Bones crunched and pierced her flesh. Yuyui had forced away Aizel's arms when she raised them to guard, pulled her close and delivered a knee into her jaw. Her skull might have shattered.

But then purple arrows appearing on Yuyui's legs had forced her to stop, and Nigerra descended on her like a bolt of lightning. Before she could squash Yuyui like an ant, however, a purple arrow appeared on her chest, facing upwards!

...!!!

"Oh!" Nigerra cried, ecstatic, and was forced back up the way she had come.

Yuyui had copied her application of the Eye of the Moving!

But Aizel had recovered and her Eye of the Prince was restored. Yuyui broke free from Nigerra's arrows. Her Eye of Moving was stronger than that woman's after all. She surged to meet Aizel, her Eye of Dispersal opening again, but...

"WHAT A LEGACY YOU ARE!"

A beast of a woman had flown in and snatched Yuyui from the ground, taking her up into the sky.

Franceesta had returned, and behind her back, Yuyui saw a pair of large, pretty silver webbed wings. As a Summoner, Franceesta had a wide selection of odd creatures to use for her benefit. She spun with Yuyui before flinging her down with all her might, but Yuyui flickered. She refused to be thrown.

Or rather, she had been cast down, but she was so quick, she had returned before Franceesta could register how she had climbed back up.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

The air was shrieking at staggeringly miniscule intervals. Nigerra was running on it and in a nanosecond, she had reached Yuyui and Franceesta.

Yuyui hurried to block before Nigerra's fist blasted her torso off. She had gathered all her Nitros to defend as well...but even then, her arms exploded like bloody balloons.

Nigerra grinned.

"Come now, you're catching up. Show me more," she said.

Franceesta laughed. Her arm was suddenly covered by runes and then it wiggled, churned and changed into a great, blue-scaled serpent that she forced towards Yuyui. The serpent hissed, opened its large, extendable mouth and spewed a concentrated stream of what might have venom!

The venom was potent, it poisoned the sky, turning it a sickly shade of green with bubbling boils and dripping ooze. Yuyui kicked off the air and dodged the stream easily, but Nigerra caught her in her course and in a horrifying feat of speed, her palm was engulfed by a throbbing golden light and she sent it forth at the same time!

This was the same technique that had killed Yuyui before.

But she didn't meet it with fear.

'Finally. I can see her movements!' she thought, as her eyes opened wide.

Yuyui swivelled and pivoted in mid-air, dodging Nigerra's palm. Then her foot was whipping into Nigerra's neck in the next instance. There was a crack in the air, and space shuddered and cracked, exposing Stagnant Space!

Nigerra grunted and spat out blood. Arrows appeared over her body to stop her from succumbing to the intense force that wanted to send her storming towards the ground.

The skin on her neck to her jaw was sizzling with fierce heat, and her teeth could be seen sticking out.

She gave a chortle just as Yuyui's [Tenacious] activated, healing her broken arms.

Aizel was shooting into the sky to join the others. Jets of Nitros were propelling her up from ground, and soon, she had joined the rest, making the battle a three-on-one.

Franceesta seemed to have a large collection of high-tier summoned beasts to use, and Nigerra was yet to even show the true worth of a Beyond the Veil Stager.

But Yuyui didn't mind. She was adapting, and in more ways than one.

Chapter 1340: All's Fair In Women and War (5)

Before. In the Timemould Mirror Box...

Yuyui was hunching over, panting so heavily that she felt like her lungs would soon give out. Her body was badly bruised and blood slipped slickly from her nose and mouth, dropping to the floor.

"Master..." she said when she managed to stand up again, straight and firm.

Replicus had two of his arms folded in front of his chest, and in the two others, he held two basic weapons: a sword and an axe.

"Yes?" he said.

"I wonder. You told us you'd give us all gifts if we managed to complete this part of your training. You said you'd modify our cores, our stats and so on. Could I make a request?"

Replicus was taken aback.

"What kind of request?"

Yuyui blew her hair out of her eyes.

"I don't think I'm ever going to evolve into a fighter like you, who can use dozens of skills at the same time and stretch his combat mastery over many different styles. I think with my eyes, the best style for me is simple hand-to-hand. Form Using," she said.

"Is that so? I never thought you'd take the initiative in deciding what kind of style you'd want to use in battle. What about Bassbion and Yagrina? What about creating a battle style that includes them? They are bound to you, are they not?"

"No. I'm not going to drag them back. I returned them to the Yormuness because I felt it was unfair for them to be duty-bound to me. They are Spirits. They shouldn't even be attending to the living. Maybe I'll call for them some other day, when I'm in real danger."

"Alright," Replicus said and he crouched in order to level with the lime-haired girl's face. "What augments do you want me to give you, in light of this new fighting style you want to adopt?"

Yuyui did not hesitate.

"I want you to somehow tether my Eye of Moving to my physical abilities. I can enhance my speed to any degree with my eye, but my physical body is my limit. It can't handle it, especially if it is trying to abide by the natural physical traits I was born with first. I only want it to abide by my Eye of Moving and move accordingly."

Replicus looked impressed.

"Oh. That's a brilliant idea. But it's easier said than done." He laughed.

Yuyui breathed out a great breath.

"There's no way it's harder than some of the things I've seen you pull off, master," she said. "I don't have a doubt that you can do it, since I also want that same result for something else."

Present time...

Yuyui produced a high-quality spatial ring she had been carrying around. It was the sort with a hidden space that was habitable for living beings, and stowed within it, was a creature that was no different to Yuyui's son at this point.

The creature stormed out with vigour, tall, humanoid, and with reddish-black scales. Large webbed wings spread from its back, circled constantly by orbs of blue flame. It hissed fire and allowed Yuyui to stand on its shoulders as it glided in the air.

This creature was Bubbles. It was the same little creature born from the eggs left behind by a Cluster General, Yuyui, Ferex and Skullius had taken down back in Genhuis City. The creature had

also been forced to undergo Skullius' brutal training regiment, and that was the only reason it was strong enough to stand by its 'mother's' side.

It noted the enemies and scoffed. But there was no need for words.

Nigerra looked intrigued, as was Franceesta, but Aizel looked apprehensive. She didn't quite like the fact that Yuyui had survived her perfect, paired arsenal of abilities, unlike her peers who welcomed the fact.

The momentary lull ended immediately.

Franceesta, with her arm transformed into a huge blue serpent that cast venom, sent a jet of it flashing towards Yuyui and Bubbles. But the scaled humanoid did not dodge.

The venom hissed and vanished in a spray of visible and invisible steam, torched by the awe-worthy heat surrounding Bubbles. And indeed, there was a fierce heat. It surrounded the creature like stalwart barrier.

Franceesta was taken aback, but then she was bewildered when she saw Bubbles suddenly condense into a ball of orange-pink fire that then vanished... along with half of her head!

She hadn't managed to see it, but Yuyui had kicked Bubbles' superheated, changed form at her with a speed she (Franceesta) couldn't comprehend!

As Franceesta fell from the sky, Nigerra was already upon Yuyui. The lime-haired girl responded in kind. The two women were kicking off the air, and soon, they were trading rapid blows. Nigerra was both surprised and pleased that Yuyui was keeping up now. When she flung seven thousand fists onto seven thousand different spots on her body, Yuyui deflected them all, and returned the same amount in retaliation.

'As I thought! She's found a way to use her Eye of Moving to amplify her speed to no end. As long as she gets used to certain movement speeds from her opponents, she can match them!' Nigerra thought, and then she threw a straight, staggering palm that Yuyui knew to dodge rather than defend against.

The lime-haired girl was behind Nigerra in the next nano instance, but Aizel was behind her in turn, her Eye of Prince active!

But Yuyui's Eye of Dispersal released a pulse that forced the eye shut, and right after, a stream of orange-pink flame blasted like a cannonball into Aizel. There was massive explosion of fire that reached all the way to the ground.

Yuyui found Aizel in the blaze, and sent her foot crashing into the woman's face. Aizel went flying, but then Nigerra had intercepted Yuyui, forcing three purple arrows onto her starry armour which sent the Unlimited Star plummeting towards the ground before she could stop them!

She had been halfway towards the dirt when...

"I'M NOT DEAD YET!"

Franceesta tackled her in the air. She was alive!

The right side of her head, which had been missing, was mending itself with coils of what might have been brown wire that quickly assumed the shape and colour of flesh. A brown beetle, visible from Franceesta's exposed brain was conducting the rapid procedure. Not doubt, it was part of her cache of summoned beasts.

Yuyui vanished from Franceesta's grip. A streak of orange-pink flame, faster than the beastly woman, shot down and crashed into her with malice, and soon, she was engulfed in flame while Yuyui kicked off the air, climbing up in altitude.

She once again met Nigerra who caught her by neck, and then...

"Majestic Territory Expulsion..."

And then they were back in Aizel's Territory. The mountain up high roared, silver lightning dancing and ready. But Yuyui's Nitros and Eye of Dispersal had also been ready. The latter forced Nigerra to back off, and the former allowed Yuyui to...

"Nos Aggrante!" she cried with three fingers propped forth; a Triplefold Aggrante!

The jet of romanced Nitros and mana that stormed from Yuyui was no less powerful than Aizel's Grand Gale.

The two attacks met in the middle, evenly matched, and then...

"This is my Creed, double Aggrante's output!"

And before even a microsecond could pass, Aizel's Territory had shattered again. She was left flabbergasted, but less than a blink later, something hot and searing reached her, sent her way through a lob kick from Yuyui!

Aizel's hadn't been terribly wounded the last time she received this attack, but this time, it carved through the side of her torso, blasted out her ribs and a portion of her guts, having bypassed all her defenses seamlessly.

How, was the question Aizel asked herself as she fell. How had it been done? Her Eye of the Prince should have at least stopped that creature Yuyui had summoned, right?

Thankfully for her, Yuyui didn't get the chance to finish her off. She was immediately pincered by Franceesta and Nigerra, whose smile was growing wider and wider.

'I see now. As powerful as her Eye of Dispersal is, she uses it in short bursts to make its effect much stronger than it would be with continuous use. But it has to be closed immediately after, perhaps to recharge,' she thought.

Franceesta, on the other hand, was cackling madly. She was now covered in a thick, brown armour that had elements suspiciously similar to those a beetle. It looked immensely tough, and bulked up Franceesta even more.

She stormed towards Yuyui while Summoning – from what appeared to be a small pouch she had been hiding in her scaly plate armour – all the beasts she contracted. There were more than eight hundred of them, and all were of tiers in the triple digits!

"YOU MAKE MY LOINS BURN, LEGACY! YOU'RE A DAMN GOOD MATCH FOR ME! YOU BELONG IN THE SECOND GRAND WAR, HUMBLING THOSE FOOLS WHO CALL THEMSELVES THE MIGHTIEST! COME, LET'S BATTER EACH OTHER TO PASTE!" she cried.

