

Warlord 221

## Chapter 221 Casualties

To say that Dilan was pissed off would be an understatement. He was furious about the stupidity of his Ascenders.

It had been obvious that some idiots would enter the Pagoda of Time together with more level-headed Ascenders, who knew what they were doing.

However, Dilan had never expected that the Ascenders, whom he had expected to be sensible, would push forward and try biting off more than they could chew. He found this behavior of his trusted warriors to be truly enraging.

Some of the Ascenders had come forward to him to report what happened in the Pagoda of Time.

By the time everyone, who was still capable of speaking, finished saying whatever they wanted to reveal, Dilan's entire demeanor changed as he released an aura that has never been seen before.

Nobody dared to look into his eyes, not even Kathrine, who had nothing to do with the situation.

She clearly knew that she had become greedy after receiving all the gains they had made just in a single raid of the Pagoda of Time.

Thus, she felt bad and hung her head low as if Dilan's chilly and furious presence was something that targeted her as well.

Everyone took a few steps back the moment Dilan took a single step forward.

The Ascenders looked away from him as rage and wrath waved off of him. They feared facing the brunt of his anger despite knowing that Dilan wouldn't kill them just like that.

Yet, for some, getting killed or punished by Dilan might be a blessing in disguise. They would be able to atone for their sins, for the mistakes they did and they would be able to lift their heads once again.

But instead of saying anything, and punishing the Ascenders, who had recklessly motivated others to keep going, and clearing just one more floor to gain more so as to become stronger, he kept quiet.

They had been tasked with the responsibility to protect others, and had felt the need to support him in any possible way.

Yet, in the end, it was exactly this desire, and their greed to gain more treasures that killed them.

While more than 300 Ascenders had entered the Pagoda of Time, only 85 had come out alive until now.

15 Ascenders had been reported dead, and more than 200 were still missing.

Even if the death rate would remain the same, a total of 45 Tier-1 Ascenders would have died, uselessly...

It was not even as if they died protecting their group from a monster tide or while valiantly fighting evil human Ascenders who had attacked them

Their death had been entirely useless because it could have been simply avoided by accepting that they had reached their limit and should retreat.

To Dilan, giving up on raiding the Pagoda of Time was not something shameful. As long as one learned from the mistakes one did, one could fix them, become stronger and try again.

However, the requirement for this was... to stay alive.

Dilan didn't look into the eyes of any of the Ascenders cowering in front of him. He didn't say a word for the entire hour he had been waiting in front of the Pagoda of Time's entrance.

A few more Ascenders had emerged from the Pagoda. Two of them were carrying corpses, while another Ascender carried a heavily injured female Ascender.

They looked devastated and desperate but froze in place the moment they noticed that Dilan's eyes were trained on them.

His eyes were ice-cold and he took only a single glance at the corpses of his Ascenders before he moved his head to the heavily injured woman.

"Mike, Rachel, Irvan, heal her."

That was the only time Dilan said anything before he averted his attention once again.

If Dilan had been quite happy and satisfied with the Pagoda of Time, his group, and their new life a while ago, his current opinion was the exact opposite.

He had warned the others about the dangers the Pagoda of Time harbored, and painstakingly detailed his experience to them. Hence, everyone who had chosen to enter the Instance Dungeon knew what awaited them.

It was not that much different from two days ago when Mason had begged to be allowed to join him on his quest to the Sun temple. Mason had been aware of the dangers but he still had willingly chosen to follow him.

Yet, he had died that day. Now other Ascenders had died once again.

However, Dilan didn't feel the slightest bit of guilt in his heart. He knew that this time, it was not his fault.

Instead of lashing out at the wrongdoers, he waited patiently for the missing Ascenders to arrive and several hours passed.

Some Ascenders from their base had come to the aid of the traumatized and injured Ascenders. The dead bodies that they had somehow managed to bring outside were also taken with them.

They would be buried together soon enough.

When the other Ascenders left, Kathrine decided to help as well. She had lost her earlier smile that had uplifted her mood after conquering the Pagoda of Time with Dilan. Right now, her heart was just aching, she felt bad and unsure of what to do or say.

Her sister had not yet returned, but Kathrine knew that Yvonne had entered the Pagoda of Time in the <Solo> mode. She was the last person who would let greed consume her.

Yvonne was also not someone who would overestimate her capabilities.

That was why Kathrine was not too worried about her sister.

In the end, only Dilan and a few Ascenders with healing abilities were left behind.

They spent the entire night without saying a single word and simply continued to wait for the other Ascenders, who arrived one after another.

Every now and then batches of Ascenders emerged in front of them but Dilan never moved a muscle. He remained glued to the spot with his feet firmly planted on the ground. He looked no different than a stone statue, as he looked around coldly.

There was not even the slightest change in his expressions the more Ascenders emerged with heavy injuries with some of them carrying their comrades' dead bodies.

Yvonne had walked out of the Pagoda of Time a bit later as well. With the help of her special trait [Wings of the Fallen Angel], her occupational abilities, and her Origin Ability [Angel of Death], it was possible for her to wear out the Gold Tier-1 Minotaur on the 15th floor.

If not for the ceiling of the final floor is more than 10 meters wide, and Yvonne's Agility exceeding 60 with her agility-boosting ability activated, she would have never dared to fight the Gold Tier-1 Minotaur Leader and the Silver Tier-1 Minotaurs.

It was simply too dangerous had she not been equipped with her ability and high stats.

However, owing to the fact that she could control two bodies of monsters around her level by now, she could kill two Minotaurs before starting to control them.

With that, she could continue to kill more Minotaurs until the corpses she controlled would be completely destroyed.

But by then she could switch her focus to controlling other corpses.

In the end, Yvonne might not have broken any record, but she had survived and earned a huge fortune in terms of the number of Essence crystals and other loot she had gotten her hands on.

Her stats had increased quite a bit as well.

Yet, even Yvonne had clearly understood that the Pagoda of Time was extremely difficult and that a single mistake could kill her, and her entire group if she were to enter the Instance dungeon with others.

That was also one of the reasons why her Origin ability kept notifying her about the dangers of this place. It felt just like a graveyard.

Her Origin acted up as intense as it was the case whenever Dilan was about to wreak havoc, killing hundreds of monsters, and evil Ascenders just like when he had eradicated the Sun temple.

Thus, Yvonne was not actually surprised when she saw a few heavily injured Ascenders, a few dead bodies, a bunch of Ascenders, who were focused on healing, and Dilan coldly staring at the situation ahead.

It didn't require much intelligence to understand what had happened, and Yvonne could only pat his shoulder reassuringly.

She was still not comfortable with men around her but Dilan was different. It was hard to describe what made her feel safe around him and even Yvonne could not come up with the correct answer. However, he was different and she didn't mind patting him in a consoling manner.

"You know, some people learn how to be careful the easy way, others learn it the hard way...and others die before understanding that they made big mistakes." Yvonne merely stated.

And it was at this moment that Dilan sighed deeply, moving for the first time in a while as he spat his words in disgust.

"Then these bastards should learn on their own by sacrificing themselves, not by pushing others to their doom..."

## Chapter 222 Silence

In the end, a total of 71 Ascenders had died that day.

Many more were severely injured, but they had survived.

When Dilan returned to their new base, he didn't say a word.

He stayed silent and ignored the gazes that lingered on him.

Most Survivors had heard of the tragedy that had befallen their comrades, and almost all of them couldn't believe that their strong protectors were no more to save them.

It may not be difficult to become an Ascender, but the 71 Ascenders, who had died, had been special. They were Tier-1 Ascenders, most with Rare occupations at that.

Their strength had been a force to reckon with, yet, they had died... just like that...

Instead of a great opportunity, the Pagoda of Time had now turned into an emblem of danger and death to the Survivors. They swore to stay away from it as far as possible and to never approach it if it was not necessary.

There were also a few Survivors, who blamed Dilan because he hadn't held back the Ascenders from entering the Pagoda of Time.

But they felt tongue-tied the moment they saw his ice-cold stare and all their grumbling thoughts never reached anybody's ears. Just one look at him was more than enough for them to gulp nervously and not dare to speak up against him openly.

Dilan was not someone who would hold back against anyone, even if it were his own people or normal Survivors.

He believed in freedom of speech and that everyone had the right to express their opinions but if they wanted to say something they had to be ready to participate in a discussion; one where he wouldn't hold back from unleashing his anger on those who dared to speak rubbish.

"I have never forced anyone to enter the Pagoda, nor did I ask someone to keep advancing even though others told them that they could not keep up and that they had reached their limit.

Talk to the garbage bin if you have more trash to talk about."

That was the only thing Dilan said in the span of three days.

While the Survivors and the other Ascenders had to sort out their confusing thoughts and cope with the incidents that had happened, Dilan had to do the same and a lot more.

He was not traumatized by the death of the 71 Ascenders but he knew that he had to change his attitude toward the others.

Everyone was still under the impression that he would save them whenever something would happen.

However, that wouldn't happen. First of all, he was not obliged to do anything to help them. He was doing so of his own accord because he didn't want to see all humans getting ripped apart like some piece of paper.

At the same time, Dilan knew that it was impossible to always be there for others. He could not cut himself into a million pieces and run around saving everyone, every single time, whenever, and wherever they were.

This was what the others had realized with the incident revolving around the Pagoda of Time. The death of 71 Ascenders was tragic.

It was a great loss and many were sad about it. But at the same time, it was also an event that allowed many Ascenders and Survivors to grow, to understand more about the ways of the world and to realize that though Dilan would always be there to protect them, they had to work hard by themselves in order to actually survive. He would not waste his time and energy to save lazy folks after all.

In the three days when Dilan had been mostly silent, he had focused on collecting treasures. He conquered the Pagoda of Time a total of three times, exchanged the Essence crystals he collected with treasures to increase the number of treasures he possessed, and also entered a few Gates.

At first, he decided to enter the weakest gate.

After stepping inside, Dilan ignored the fact that most monsters were running away from him due to the destructive and bloodthirsty aura he released without realizing it.

His focus was on gathering intel about the environment of the Gates, what kind of monsters resided within it and which monsters were the strongest.

It was also important to figure out whether there were other Gates inside the dimension their Gate had led them to.

If another Gate existed, it was possible that it would be similar to the Krendel's Underground Valley, where the large Gate provided better treasures in exchange for Essence crystals than the small Gate in the Rian mountainside hospital.

Dilan had spent a total of three days with less than six hours of sleep in total. It was not necessary for him to sleep much anymore.

After advancing to Tier-1 and after increasing their Health stat, most Ascenders' need for sleep decreased drastically.

Sven predicted that they would require to only sleep once a week after reaching the Peak of Tier-2.

This was just a prediction but it sounded quite intriguing. After all, it would mean that they might not even need to sleep after becoming Tier-4 or Tier-5 Ascenders.

But for now, advancing his Tier was the last thing Dilan could be bothered about.

By now, he had amassed 15500 Dungeon Points, and it was possible for him to purchase lots of treasures, powerful abilities, pieces of equipment, and so on.

However, Dilan was not sure what to purchase yet. There were too many things he actually needed, with one of the most important ones being to find a way how to properly manage the group of survivors under him.

On the fourth day, he chose to attend the daily meetings and join the others once again. Dilan had calmed down and he knew in these few days, he had learned to control his anger about the stupidity of his own people much better than before.

He finally found relief in the fact that he could just leave his group whenever he felt that he wanted to do nothing with them anymore.

This thought was oddly calming. It was weird but simultaneously quite funny.

But Dilan wouldn't just abandon those he had painstakingly nurtured, and neither would anyone be allowed to behave however they pleased.

Changing his decision about something was close to impossible because he was way too stubborn.

And that was something the others had long since realized. After all, he did whatever he wanted to, whenever he wanted to, and he treated his people the way he felt to be just and fair.

He listened to others but his decisions were not necessarily influenced by their opinions. And once he made a choice, the comments of the people around him turned insignificant.

Thus, he was able to listen calmly to the report Sven shared with a deep sigh.

"During the last three days, we encountered four groups of unknown Ascenders outside Shiron. They didn't attack us, and neither did we attack them. It might be possible to communicate with them if we encounter them once again, even if it would prove to be quite difficult."

This part of the report was something Dilan was already aware of. He had also seen a few groups of unknown Ascenders during the last few days.

They had been hunting in the Shikan planes and fighting a few Bronze Tier-1 monsters.

To him, they were not actually dangerous, and his people were also stronger than them. That was under the condition that his people didn't overestimate their strength needlessly as they had done while trying to conquer the Pagoda of Time.

However, what Sven said next was not something Dilan was aware of, but something he had expected to happen sooner or later.

"Also, during the last three days, close to 300 Ascenders and Survivors chose to leave our group. Their reasons vary a lot but they can be summarized quite easily.

Many want to search for their missing family, others are traumatized and they cannot live with the others knowing that they're guilty of having pushed their own people to death. Apparently, they feel that the gazes of the other Survivors and Ascenders are unbearable to endure.

As for others, they don't think that this group provides them with enough protection, so they want to fight for themselves, without anyone suppressing them..."

Sven said a few more things before he continued with his report. It took him only ten minutes before he was done. In response, Dilan's lips twitched before he grumbled.

"More protection? I won't carry them around in my hands. Well...either way, I hope the best for them. Let them try to survive on their own."

Chapter 223 Fruits and Vegetables are...motivating?

Dilan had never forced anyone to stay with them. That was why he didn't feel bothered when the traumatized Ascenders left them.

If they couldn't even endure some gazes of contempt, it was wrong of Dilan to think that they were worthy of being nurtured either way.

Those who fled from a battle were not worthy of being called Warriors, to begin with.

The Ascenders, who decided to run away after making a mistake, were not welcome in his group. It was best for them to leave because that meant they wouldn't try to fix their mistakes either way.

Almost all Ascenders thought that they led Dilan down, that they didn't meet his requirements, and that they were a burden to him.

There were many Ascenders who were trying to fix their mistakes, to become better persons, make up for the bad traits of their personalities, and to allow others to help them.

For many people, it was difficult to accept that they needed help and then ask for it. But it was only fortunate that many Ascenders were able to overcome the hurdle of putting aside their pride and the facade of being strong and unaffected.

They had a psychologist in their group, who proved to be quite helpful in tending to the traumatized Ascenders and Warriors.

In the beginning, Dilan didn't think that it was necessary for anyone to pick such an occupation. At least, he didn't believe that it was necessary to have an Ascender choose a Rare occupation in the Ancient Paths of Advancement, related to Psychology.

In his opinion, it would have been enough to have a regular psychologist and not a specialist. However, he was entirely wrong, which was what he clearly perceived when he saw how much better the Ascenders, and even other Survivors were doing after a single session with the young woman, who had chosen this occupation voluntarily..

There were many mysterious occupations, and all had their own unique use. The only difficult thing was to figure out how to use each occupation in the best way.

With time, everything gradually improved as the Ascenders worked hard to better their living conditions. The warehouse and the toy manufacturing factory turned into their actual base that kept transforming with every passing day.

Observing the way the base was transforming was quite interesting, and it swelled several Ascenders' hearts with pride upon seeing what they were capable of achieving as long as they made enough efforts.

However, nobody dared to believe that their new base was going to be their forever home.

The Red Dragon's might was still imprinted in the depth of their conscience, and it was impossible for them to ignore the possibility of monster tides and powerful legendary existences attacking them out of nowhere.

The Pagoda of Time was just one small incident. Many Ascenders might have died, but it was still not something that instilled deep fear within everyone.

It was the unknown they feared, and the fact that there were many Gates none of them was able to enter.

"If all of the Gates release a wave of monsters at the same time, we'll be doomed!" One of the most pessimistic Survivors said for the 10th time. It seemed as if he was trying to scare everyone with every single sentence he said.

"Yeah, and if another dragon appears, we'll be doomed as well. Can't you just shut up, and fix the gas stove?" Bianne retorted angrily, rolling her eyes before pointing at the gas stove that had stopped working, again.

While Bianne was still using a gas stove, their group had already found many treasures labeled [Magic Devices]. They were empowered by Mana and Essence crystals and didn't require any electricity to function.

Initially, many frowned at the prospect of using one of the Magic Devices because they didn't want to waste their precious mana or Essence crystals.

But the Magic Fridge, Magic Oven, the Tier-1 Electric Fence, and various other Magic Devices had become essential for their group.

Only a few Gates exchanged the Magic Devices with Essence crystals, and the possibility to get one of the Magic Devices was also quite low.



There were also a few Magic Devices, which they couldn't use yet, including a Magic Tier-1 pen. It was a pen whose ink would never run out as long as one had enough Mana.

It sounded interesting but was actually a boring Magic Device.

Following the appearance of Magic Devices, more Ascenders chose to actively search for Gates, and more monsters to hunt, so that they would be able to get their hands on more treasures.

Most Ascenders hoped to get their hands on some seeds. The lifestyle of their group was certainly not normal because all of them were still forced to eat just meat.

Thus, to many Ascenders, finding grains had become extremely important. For a minority, it was their biggest motivation to keep going outside and fighting ferocious monsters.

Dilan felt the same, but he was not yet desperate enough to waste his precious Dungeon Points to purchase some seeds from the Shop, <Taurus, the Mighty>.

<Taurus, the Mighty> specialized in goods that were great for combat purposes.

There weren't many Magic Devices or miscellaneous goods sold at the shop.

There might be a few but they were not actually useful and overpriced in Dilan's opinion.

"Aren't there wild potatoes in the Silvergrass plains? The Mythical Forest has a tree with ripe fruits as well. Though, I cannot say for sure that you can eat them.

The Mountain ring of the Elements might hold some great items as well...have you guys even been at these places before?!" Oliver asked, feeling slightly weird.

He had entered a few of those Gates earlier, and he was pretty sure that it was possible to find something there.

If one searched well enough, it shouldn't be impossible to find something edible, other than the monsters.

Oliver's sudden question attracted everyone's attention.

Dilan was one of the only people who had entered the Gates because many Ascenders were still traumatized about the incident that had happened in the Pagoda of Time.

The human mind and self-confidence were fragile as glass and truly easy to break. However, they overcame their nervousness and could get their act together after some time.

They would grow from their failure and become better!

That was something Dilan noticed when the expressions of the people around Oliver brightened up at his comment.

"I didn't check if there were any wild vegetables, fruit bushes, or something similar to that, but it is not unlikely to find something there. If you guys want to take a look, go for it."

The moment Dilan said this, many Ascenders roared out in joy. They forgot about the pain they had felt in the past few days as they began to smile brightly.

“Let’s go!! We need some vegetables and fruits!!”

Dilan almost laughed out when they saw how much motivation the potential find of other food provided to the Ascenders.

He began to smile faintly and forgot about the anger that had been bubbling inside him for the past few days.

It was not healthy to dwell on the mistakes others made in the past. Rather, one should focus on the present and the future.

Dilan understood this much better than others because his past had been far from easy. However, he was also aware of the fact that one should never forget the past.

It was not necessary to think about it all the time, but one was never supposed to forget the past, how people had treated them, and what others had done to them.

This was one of the most important things Dilan had learned in his short, yet, eventful life.

He was observing the Ascenders, who were looking at Oliver as if he was some sort of Sage, who was knowledgeable and extremely intelligent.

Oliver felt a bit embarrassed because he was not used to being subjected to such stares. It was something new and he smiled bashfully.

When he calmed down, he led large groups of Ascenders to the different Gates to research their environment and to see what potential food could they find.

‘I guess Mira will have quite some work to do once they find something to plant. Well, it was about time that this little troublemaker could finally show off her abilities!’ Dilan mused before he averted his attention.

Meanwhile, Kathrine and Yvonne had simply watched the scene from the sidelines, and they had also seen Dilan’s faint smile.

“Looks like Dilan has calmed down again, you’re probably happy about that, right sis?” Yvonne asked, grinning slyly as she looked at her sister, who had an identical expression of relief as Yvonne had on her face.

“Yeah, I’m happy...that’s good...maybe everything will get better now...”

Chapter 224 Keep your enemies close

Ever since Oliver revealed the obvious fact that it was possible to find wild vegetables and different types of food in the Gates, the atmosphere in Dilan’s group had changed a lot.

While many had been frustrated about having consumed nothing but monster meat for weeks, they were much happier when Oliver and the others returned with some fruits and wild vegetables.

Dilan had not expected them to find results so quickly but he was not actually surprised.

The fact that the Ascenders were able to get their hands on something they wanted to clearly showed that their strength was higher than they assumed.

This was enough to boost their self-esteem once again after it had been crushed in their last mission in the Pagoda of Time.

Dilan's mood had gotten much better than before as well, and it looked like everyone was slowly getting back to their senses.

"Mira will have more than enough work now. As for the others, who wanted to become Farmers, we should provide them with enough Essence crystals so that they can ascend to Tier-1.

Their occupational abilities will shorten the growth period of the vegetables we found. Their maturity cycle seems to be quite short, to begin with.

That is at least what the report of the Appraiser says." Xenia concluded before handing over the report to Dilan.

He just nodded his head and agreed to what she said before handing her a small Penta Item Pouch.

"In this pouch, you will find more than 1000 ordinary Tier-1 Essence crystals. I think it is about time that we start nurturing non-combat occupations.

Right now, the Elite Combat Unit, the Scout Unit, and the ordinary Combat Unit are strong enough to fight Silver Tier-1 monsters in a group.

That should be more than enough to protect the base and Shiron. We have yet to come across extremely powerful monsters in the surrounding area.

I will take care of the Gold Tier-1 Silverhorn Coyote when your scouts report to me about its new position."

There had been a few reports about a powerful Coyote with a silver horn during the last two days, so Dilan presumed that it was a Gold Tier-1 monster.

He wanted to defeat it before it would attack their new base.

By now, more than seven days had passed since they had arrived in Shiron. Their base had transformed completely, and the alloy factory had also turned into a place that was used for both blacksmithing and for compulsory combat training of the Survivors.

Whether one was a Survivor or an Ascender, Dilan made everyone undergo the most basic combat training.

This had been frowned upon at the beginning because there hadn't been many ordinary people, who were still willing to join the ranks of the combat Ascenders.

They just wanted to stay alive and do whatever they had to do while avoiding fights.

To them, it was not necessary to even think about learning how to fight as it was entirely useless.

But that was only their opinion and not Dilan's, so they ended up learning how to fight, either way.

“The things I create should be on par with Bronze Tier-1 equipment. But are we really in need of such weapons right now? I mean, the equipment and weapons I create cannot even provide additional stats. Are they not a bit useless, now that we have loads of weapons stored in the warehouse?”

Old Jeff was a little bit frustrated. He had just gotten his hands on a few more materials to forge weapons and protective equipment with, just to realize that there were more than 200 treasures stored in the warehouse.

There were Bronze Tier-1 weapons, Bronze Tier-1 armors, and so on.

Some Ascenders were currently in possession of Silver Tier-1 weapons which provided an increase in stats worth 10 or more Units.

Old Jeff couldn't forge weapons like that because he didn't have the right tools, or proper ingredients and he had no idea how to add status points or special traits to his forged weapons.

His occupational abilities were quite helpful to forge and to learn a lot whenever he researched the treasures Dilan and the others brought back from their trips, but he had yet to achieve mastery over it.

“Did you take a look at the other blueprints and the books we've gotten in exchange for Essence crystals? Weren't they about wands or something like that?”

If you can create a wand, the strength of mana Ascenders, who are proficient at using Mana-based abilities, will increase. Maybe you can even create a combination of a wand and a weapon to allow all kinds of Ascenders to use wands, not only long-range fighters!”

Dilan was coming up with the weirdest ideas. However, that was something Old Jeff liked about Dilan. He was not narrow-minded and could think out of the box.

“A wand that can also be used by melee fighters? This would amplify the strength of mana-based abilities, decrease the mana consumption, and it won't restrict the close combat fighters as long as they wield the weapon-wand....”

For now, Old Jeff might not be able to create weapons with additional stats or a special trait, but the idea Dilan had just proposed was quite interesting.

It would allow Old Jeff to make a detour around his research and make it possible for him to keep experimenting and learning while actually doing something that would help the others.

“Not bad, that's a great idea! How come I didn't think of that?!” Old Jeff mumbled before excusing himself once again. After hearing Dilan's suggestions, his mind started to overflow with information and ideas which he wanted to test out.

Meanwhile, Dilan was left alone with a few more Ascenders, including Williams, Sven, Sarah, and a few others, who were also in need of his help, or to be precise, waiting for him to make a decision.

“By the way, what are we supposed to do with the new Survivors, who arrived at the base today? I don't think we should treat them differently than the others, but giving them the same benefits as the other Survivors which they worked hard for and earned over the last few weeks wouldn't be fair either.” Williams stated his opinion.

Dilan had heard about the new Survivors, who had arrived at their base not too long ago. There had been a few Survivors in Shiron, but they didn't want to join their group in the beginning.

Being Ascenders, who had already reached Tier-1, all by themselves, they were quite prideful and didn't accept Dilan's invitation before.

Rather than trusting Dilan and his people, they had been of the belief that Dilan and the others wanted to overwhelm them and force them into submission.

However, nothing like that had happened for the entire week Dilan had stayed in Shiron. Thus, after an incident where a Bronze Tier-1 monster wreaked havoc within the small Survivor group, those few who had survived the incident decided to join Dilan.

"Treating them differently is not necessary. Just tell them that they have to work if they want food and safety. I guess that they will join your former Unit, Williams. They're quite powerful. But who knows what they'll do. Just let them decide." Sven suggested nonchalantly, acting as if he was not really interested.

However, Dilan had a different opinion. He had seen the Survivors a few times during the last few days, and he knew that a Bronze Tier-1 monster wouldn't be able to defeat them.

After all, he had seen them fighting a few Silver Tier-1 monsters during the last few days when they had been traveling through the Shikan planes.

'They're up to no good. But what is the saying again? Keep your friends close, but your enemies closer!'

Chapter 225 Outsiders

Of course, Dilan couldn't be certain that the Ascenders, who joined his group, were actually evil, or that they had ill intentions.

They hadn't attacked his group before, and they seemed to be rather kind.

One wouldn't actually think badly of them, considering that they had survived the attack of a Bronze Tier-1 monster, while half of their people died.

A week earlier, their team had had more than 10 Ascenders, and all of them had been unscathed.

But when they came this morning, the group of Ascenders had been reduced to just four injured Ascenders.

Just by looking at this, one would usually feel pity but Dilan was quite sharp and saw right through them.

He knew that the four Ascenders were lying about the incident because a Bronze Tier-1 monster was not even enough to fill the gap between their teeth. These monsters were simply too weak to do actual damage to the Ascenders!

'They have something to hide, but it doesn't actually feel like it will endanger us...weird.'

Dilan's gut feeling was going haywire. He could tell whether someone was dangerous or not. But while looking at the four injured Ascenders, Dilan felt a bit uncomfortable but it was not to the extent that they were actually dangerous to him or his group.

Because he didn't feel threatened, Dilan agreed to Sven's earlier comment.

"I also believe that they should just do what they want to do. If they want to receive a fair share of food, they should do something to help the community. What they want to do is up to them and not for us to decide.

Rather than bothering about them, we should discuss how things are progressing with the Gates. I have yet to receive detailed reports about their environment, the monster types, all the treasures you can obtain within them and so on."

Dilan was the first one to have started to circulate reports about the Gates. Everyone could read them, correct what was wrong, and add their own comments.

Though the file might look a little bit messy at one time due to this, the details written in the reports were usually quite decent.

However, Dilan could also tell that everyone had slacked off a little bit when it came to working meticulously.

Only for the sake of receiving hot food did everyone give their best to contribute, which was a little bit funny. But mostly it was frustrating because the report about the Gates was supposed to help everyone survive.

'I also made a report on the Pagoda of Time, but nobody seems to dare to enter it anymore.' Dilan thought gloomily, not mentioning it out loud.

Somehow, the Pagoda of Time had become a taboo word, and Dilan had no idea how he should convince his people that the Pagoda of Time was a great opportunity, not a death sentence.

"Ah, well...about that. It looks like most Ascenders are becoming a little bit lax because Shiron seems to be quite safe. They're still doing everything they've been told to do and they will slowly fill the reports but I guess everyone is currently in need of a small break.

We are humans and not machines, after all. The last few days were very helpful to allow everyone to calm down and to cope with the Pagoda of Time's incident." Sarah said, honestly acknowledging that many, including her, had become a little bit lax during the last few days.

The dangers around them turned out to be minuscule, and the only threats came from potentially powerful monsters that might appear somewhere, and take them by surprise.

"Well, as long as everyone continues to work, I guess that's fine. I don't expect anyone to become powerful in a single day."

Dilan knew that not everyone could be like him, and grasp every single opportunity to become stronger. He was aware that the dangers on Milarn would only increase, that there would be more foreign races coming for them and that the Red Dragon was just one of the many legendary monsters they would encounter in the future.

In the end, the others knew about the dangers but not to the extent Dilan had gotten to know about the Sun temple, the Ligrav and Rasnian race, the fact that a Sun God had brought the Sun temple to the Shikan plains, and that Milarn was merely at the nascent stage of awakening its mana.

It would take some time, but sooner or later various stronger existences, whether it was other races or monsters would appear.

And even if a few would be peaceful, and attempt to build a neutral bond with them, or potentially a bond of friendship, Dilan could tell that the Universe was a lot more dangerous and hostile than one might believe.

He wanted to become stronger and he would give his best, to achieve what he wanted at any possible moment.

With that in mind, Dilan wanted to leave the base to enter one of the permanent Gates that harbored numerous powerful monsters; monsters, whose Essence Crystals he had yet to absorb.

However, even before he could make the first step to excuse himself, Yvonne's expression changed and she flinched.

"25 Deaths." That was the only thing she said as her eyes flicked to a specific direction.

While everyone would usually look weirdly at a person saying these two words, hearing Yvonne say them indicated great danger.

Dilan was the first to react. He didn't hesitate to activate [Thunder Step] and [Second Acceleration] to burst forth in the direction Yvonne was looking at.

The Blazing Serpentine Blade had already emerged in his left hand and Dilan was ready to fight with all his might if that were to be necessary.

'Outside the base.' He realized, emerging in the open where he could hear the sound of gunfire.

This astonished him a little bit because nobody in their group used guns anymore. They might have guns stored in the warehouse but they didn't use them.

The use of guns was insignificant after the bodies of Tier-1 monsters reached a certain threshold, which made their hide tough enough to block bullets of rifles.

'Do they belong to our group?' Dilan wondered before he jumped over the fence that was erected around their base.

Afterward, he rushed in the direction of the gunfire. His speed was extremely fast and Dilan reached the origin of the commotion just a moment later.

However, what he saw astonished Dilan greatly.

'Soldiers? The military?'

More than two hundred armed men and women, all of whom were wearing the same cargo uniform, were shooting at a group of Huge Hyenas, who were entirely unfazed about the rainstorm of bullets that impacted on them.

They were tearing apart a few Ascenders, who were at Tier-1.

In a single glance, Dilan could tell that the Ascenders might be at Tier-1, but that the occupation they chose in their ancient path of advancement was merely a common one.

The Soldiers' presence was weak and every single one of Dilan's Tier-1 Ascenders was strong enough to bash the entire group of Soldiers easily.

But the Soldiers' weak strength was not something he should be concerned about right now because the huge Hyenas were tearing apart the Soldiers, one after another. The beast's fur was silver in color and spiked, puncturing the poor Soldiers to death.

'Well, I might not like the military or the government, but it's not like the Soldiers did something to me.'

## Chapter 226 Military

Despite not thinking highly of the military, let alone the government, Dilan blasted forward to rescue them.

The huge Hyenas' stats had not even reached an average of 25. That made it quite easy for Dilan to eliminate them.

With the Blazing Serpentine Blade in his hand, he emerged next to the first huge hyena. It was about to tear the poor Soldier apart in two. He was struggling in vain and would have died if not for Dilan who lashed out with his weapon and beheaded the monster.

The hyena's head rolled to the ground, and soon its lifeless body followed suit. However, even before the Soldier, who had been struggling a moment before could say something, Dilan had already disappeared from his sight.

In the next few seconds, the remaining huge hyenas died at Dilan's hand. They were actually not worth his attention because he was much stronger than them.

It took the soldiers a while to figure out that he had rushed to their aid. More than the hyenas, the rain of bullets had been far more annoying to him. It only ceased when the magazine of the Soldiers' rifles had been emptied.

'They're still frightened, huh?' He could only think when he saw how most Soldiers were desperately trying to throw out the emptied magazine to replace it with one that was still filled with bullets.

"Yo, they're dead. There is no need to act like headless chickens." He informed them without showing any respect to the Soldiers.

However, the Soldiers couldn't care less about not receiving any respect right now. They feared Dilan more than the monsters he had just killed.

They knew that powerful humans were far scarier than wild monsters. Thus, they didn't even think about listening to Dilan.

Only when their rifles were reloaded and the rifle's barrels aimed at his head did their tension decrease just a little.



Dilan simply ignored this. Even before the first bullet would be fired, he could disappear using [Gale], or manifest [Aegis' shield].

His reaction speed was tens of times higher than the unlevelled Soldiers.

There were only a few Soldiers, who were actually in possession of proper weapons. Two Ascenders were wielding bows as well. They were Tier-1 Ascenders, and thus a bigger threat than the Soldiers, who were pointing their rifles at him.

Nonetheless, Dilan was not exactly happy about their reaction because he had jumped into their fight to save them.

Thus, he completely disregarded their authority as he turned toward the corpse of the hyena that was the closest to him.

"Why are you taking my Essence crystals?" Dilan asked in a cold voice when he saw that some soldiers had begun to carve the heads of the hyena corpses.

He took a step in the direction of the closest corpse to him, causing the Soldier, who had been working on the corpse to flinch.

"Stop! Don't move, or we'll shoot!!" The commanding voice of a woman reached Dilan's ears.

At that moment, Dilan noticed for the first time that there was one Tier-1 Ascender, who was stronger than the rest.

She had a slim body, slender legs, and looked quite beautiful. Her body was also very attractive if one were to ignore that she didn't have many curves.

Dilan looked at the woman with disinterest and was completely unbothered by the strength she released. The woman was likely to be the leader of the group, and the blood on her uniform indicated that she had been busy fighting a hyena.

'She probably killed one single-handedly...what an 'amazing' feat.' Dilan teased her in his mind but he didn't say anything to provoke her.

He wanted to see where the situation was going, which was why he kept his calm, for now, at least.

"Why should I stop? They are taking my loot. I saved your people and killed the hyenas. Their Essence crystals are mine." Dilan's voice was not as cold as before anymore but held a trace of annoyance.

However, his eyes pierced straight through the woman, who was in her early 30s.

She couldn't maintain eye contact with him because she felt as if she would be devoured and lose her sanity if she were to keep looking at him.

Distracted by Dilan's intense gaze, she was momentarily lost, giving a young Soldier the opportunity to speak on behalf of their leader.

"What are you, a thief? The hyenas were obviously our prey and you stole them from us. Even if we get the Essence crystals now, their value has decreased drastically because you killed them!" He shot back angrily, sounding as if Dilan was an opportunist.

He was literally accusing Dilan and was fully convinced that he was correct.

“Thief? Well, that is a new way of thanking me for saving your comrades. I wonder how many Soldiers would have died without my interference.”

The moment Dilan finished speaking, he disappeared from his location.

He had used [Gale] once, appearing behind the young man, who had spoken to him.

“I have a little tip for you,” Dilan said before he continued in a clipped tone as his hand shot forward, lightly grasping the young man’s neck.

“Don’t talk shit in front of those who are stronger than you.”

Afterward, Dilan disappeared once again, using [Gale] for the second time.

He reappeared in the same position he had been in before and acted as if nothing had happened.

In the end, he didn’t actually care about the Essence crystals of the Bronze Tier-1 hyenas. He wouldn’t even receive a single Status point from absorbing their Essence, let alone enough Essence to make use of.

Dilan was just a bit annoyed that the Soldiers believed they could act however they pleased.

Thus, he did the same and acted the way he wanted to.

The sole difference between him and the Soldiers was the fact that he had the right to act arrogantly and as if everything belonged to him.

After all, if he wanted to, he could do whatever he wanted, and the remaining Soldiers wouldn’t be able to do anything to stop him.

“Hand over the Essence crystals,” Dilan said as his eyes darted to the few Soldiers, who had worked on the hyena’s bodies and cut open their heads.

One could see the Bronze Essence crystals glimmering in their hands. The Soldiers grasped them tightly as if their life depended on those Essence crystals.

Yet, when they were subjected to Dilan’s soul-piercing gaze, their willpower crumbled and they nearly handed him the Essence crystal, just to regain their senses at the last moment.

“Just give it to him.” The woman gave an exasperated sigh before she added, “And lower the guns. Even if you aim at him, you’re the one to get killed.”

Felia Mahn knew that the young man in front of them was not to be taken lightly.

She hadn’t even seen him move before he had appeared behind the soldier, who had spoken up, only to return to his earlier position a moment later.

This was more than enough to show that he was stronger and faster than her.

Being the leader of the military’s scout group that had been tasked with the responsibility of searching for human survivors in Shiron and the nearby cities, Felia Mahn had to protect her people.

25 Soldiers had died because she hadn't been strong enough, and it would have been far more if not for the help of the powerful human.

After receiving her command, the soldiers lowered their rifles, while Dilan was given his Essence crystals.

He stored them in his storage ring without intending to hide them.

'A storage device?' Felia Mahn immediately understood, and her expression changed once again.

'Not even our leader has a storage device...' She could only think before she reassessed her opinion of Dilan once again.

"I sincerely apologize for my subordinate's behavior. We are a little exhausted and tense after traveling through the Shikan plains. As you might be able to imagine, it has become quite dangerous to travel around.

Thank you very much for protecting my subordinates. More would have died without your interference." Felia expressed her gratitude, before falling silent and waiting for a reaction from Dilan.

However, he didn't intend to say anything. Dilan was suspicious of the military, especially because he was pretty sure that they wouldn't travel through the Shikan plains, just for the sake of it.

Felia noticed that Dilan didn't wasn't interested in small talk. She tensed up a bit and began to sweat, thinking about a way to break the awkward silence.

"My name is Felia Mahn, and I'm the Captain of the 18th Scouting Group. We belong to the Blue Star Camp and are Mayor Clerens' people. Our mission is to search for more survivors and to bring them to our camp.

How about you and your group? Do you want to follow us? You will definitely be treated well!" Felia gained courage the more she spoke.

She was ready to take Dilan into their group the moment he accepted her proposal. She would try her best to recommend him to a good position in the Blue Star Camp.

However, what Felia didn't expect was to hear Dilan starting to laugh all of a sudden.

"Did...I say something funny?" Felia asked, utterly confused.

"Ah...noo..well yes, maybe," Dilan replied and calmed down after noticing that dozens of pairs of eyes were staring at him.

But just when he was about to say something, Yvonne appeared behind him. She landed on the ground with a loud thud with her black feathered wings spread out wide.

"Took you guys long enough to arrive."

Chapter 227 Camp

While Yvonne hadn't rushed behind Dilan, the others had been running in the direction of the commotion that had quickly died down.

Yvonne was still the first one to arrive because she knew where to head, and there was no obstruction in the air as opposed to land which made the others reach a bit late.

So when she finally found Dilan, Yvonne landed on the ground while flapping her wings a few times to slow down the speed at which she landed before retracting the wings.

Meanwhile, Kathrine, Williams, and the others arrived not long after Yvonne, just to see the military uniforms, Soldiers holding rifles, and a few corpses of both monsters and soldiers.

“Took you guys long enough to arrive,” Dilan said without the slightest change in his expression.

His words caused everyone to look down to the ground and inspect the corpses, except Yvonne, who knew that none of the bodies belonged to a member of their group.

Thus, she didn’t bother rushing over. Of course, only Yvonne could have known that none of their group members died.

The others had rushed over, yet, they took way too long because they got lost while searching for the origin of the commotion.

Everything had quieted down even before they could pinpoint the area of the commotion. This made things quite difficult for Kathrine and the others.

Only by following Kathrine was it possible for the rest of the Ascenders to find Dilan so quickly.

Yet, Dilan was still of the belief that they had been too slow and that they had slacked off, which was quite frustrating.

But it was not as if they could actually retort something to Dilan, so they kept silent.

The Soldiers and Felia looked at the group of Ascenders, who had arrived. Their shock was clearly visible because they had just seen someone flying through the air, with black wings on her back.

“I’m not dreaming, right? You guys saw that as well...r-right....?” A young woman asked, rubbing her eyes with her trembling hands.

“She has...or had wings. They...disappeared...” The young man next to her answered, feeling no less baffled than the young woman.

Meanwhile, Felia could only stare at Dilan and the people behind him with a conflicted expression.

‘All of them are much stronger than I am. Is that his group?’

It was now that Felia understood why Dilan had been laughing at her. Her invitation was a joke. Dilan didn’t look like he needed protection, and it was not as if the Blue Star camp could provide them with more benefits.

Maybe women, honor, and some titles were what they could give him. However, considering that there were four beauties in the group of people behind Dilan, she was pretty sure that he didn’t need women.

As for honor and useless titles, they were just decorations and their value was non-existent.

Felia had completely misunderstood the entire situation, including the reason for Dilan to have started laughing. Her invitation might have been a joke to him but it hadn't been enough to make him laugh.

Rather, it was the way in which the military treated him with respect and a certain amount of fear that made him laugh. It sounded weird but the situation was more than enough for him to laugh his ass off.

Unfortunately, he couldn't do so, otherwise, his image might crumble and he might be deemed insane by his own people.

That was something Dilan wanted to avoid by all means.

[0]??? 'To think that those who treated me like shit are now acting cowardly in front of me. The Primordial Ascension is truly a God-gifted miracle and opportunity.'

Dilan clearly recalled the times he had encountered the police in the last few years, and higher authorities belonging to the government and military at every possible social gathering his father had organized.

There had been many social gatherings, and most had been to expand his connections to make more money, gain more power, and start his own little imperium.

Dilan had never actually bothered about the military and government but their deeds were, by no means, better than his father's. Too many higher authorities were corrupted, violent, and arrogant and all of them treated the poor and powerless like their pets.

In fact, the higher authorities' pets were treated far better than the poor and powerless. This was something Dilan had been forced to witness personally at the social gatherings that were more of an exhibition of power and influence than a friendly get-together.

That was why he couldn't hold back his laughter when he saw the Soldier's expression and Felia's careful approach that was somewhat filled with excitement.

He could tell that Felia had his best intentions at heart, but Dilan was definitely the wrong person to be asked to join the military.

"Is Mayor Clerens the only person in charge of the Blue Star camp? If so, will he cause problems for us if Survivors decide against joining him?" Dilan asked after he had gotten back to his senses.

He looked deep into Felia's brown eyes, ignoring the interested gazes from behind him.

"Blue Star Camp?"

"Mayor Clerens?"

"Deciding against joining?"

"What is going on?"

Dilan didn't intend to turn around and explain what was going on to his group. He was more interested in knowing whether Mayor Clerens would hold a hostile stance against them for creating their own group.

One might even consider Dilan and his people outlaws. If the government and military wanted to, they could even label him as a Devil, turn the survivors against him and his group, and attack him in the name of justice.

The truth didn't matter and Dilan actually didn't care. After all, he killed his own people, the moment they attempted raping someone.

That was definitely not something a normal group would do, let alone someone following the laws of the old world.

Felia instantly realized that Dilan was not only the leader of the small group behind him but that they had far more people in their group.

Thus, she was not sure what to say and how to convince Dilan, especially because she had been ordered to bring every single survivor back to the Blue Star camp, even if they didn't want to.

Felia hadn't been given a reason to execute this order, but when was there ever a time orders had been explained by the seniors?

However, even if she wanted to, it was not as if she could force Dilan or anyone in his group to follow her. She and her people would die trying to force the powerful Ascenders to obey her commands.

Thus, Felia felt her head beginning to ache at the thought of answering Dilan's question and coming up with believable reasons for why she couldn't bring the Survivors back to the Blue Star camp even though she had found some.

"Mayor Clerens is a good person...but he is not the only one leading the Blue Star camp. I don't know much about you and your group, and I'm not strong enough to force you to do anything.

However, I should be honest with you. We faced a few attacks from hostile Survivors in the past. So it is possible that the Blue Star camp leaders see you as a threat...

Even if you are not their enemy, they might send someone over to take a look at your base and so on, secretly or not. I..."

Felia wanted to say a few more things, thinking that she could help Dilan a bit that way. However, he only lifted his hand, indicating that she didn't need to say anything else.

'Well, she is kind enough to warn me and to reveal the truth. If her subordinates tell her superiors about that, she might even be exiled for the things she told me.' Dilan didn't know Mayor Clerens but he could tell that Felia whole-heartedly supported him.

That meant he was probably a good person as she didn't show any fear while speaking about the Mayor.

However, that didn't really change his point of view. He wouldn't join another camp, even if his entire group wanted to.

Rather than being ordered around, he was willing to be a lone wolf.

“You can take a look at our group, make your own assumptions of it and report to Mayor Clerens when you return.” He said in a nonchalant manner, before turning his head toward the Soldiers, whose eyes were filled with lust as they openly ogled Kathrine, Ailee, and Yvonne.

“But while you guys rest in our base, my rules apply!”

Dilan didn’t need to say anything else. Everyone understood that he had noticed the Soldier’s lustful gazes, and both his cold eyes and his bloodthirst upon adding the last line was an answer enough about what he thought of them.

Chapter 228 Soldier’s arrival

“Do you really think that it’s a good idea to bring them to our base?” Ailee asked, not hiding her discomfort.

She didn’t have anything against the military or the government but it was not as if she trusted them enough, especially after witnessing their creepy behavior.

And this was not the first time for her to see their true colors either. She had witnessed enough misdemeanors, and the abuse of power, even before the Primordial Ascension had occurred.

Nonetheless, others would not necessarily understand the reason behind her question.

“Why? Do you think that all Survivors and Ascenders will leave us? Or are you afraid of the Blue Star camp feeling threatened by us?” Dilan asked with a faint smile on his lips.

He understood why Ailee felt uncomfortable with Felia and her subordinates entering their base. The others felt similar to Ailee as well.

However, Dilan was not really afraid of the Blue star camp. Rather than hiding anything about his group, he wanted to get to know more information about the Blue Star camp, in exchange for intel about his own base, if necessary.

“Both...I guess? What happens if everyone leaves us? Or if the Blue Star camp attacks us?” Ailee answered in all honesty and raised a few doubts.

But even then, Dilan just shrugged his shoulders.

“Everyone can leave if they want to. To be honest, we might even be better off without those who leave.

In my opinion, everyone who stays can be considered loyal to us. It wouldn’t hurt to nurture them more intensely.

As for the possibility of the Blue Star camp attacking us, I believe that they would feel more threatened by us if we were to try hiding our base, and everyone inside.

Felia and her Soldiers have only seen us and we’re far stronger than them. Imagine what would happen if they report to their superiors that they found a handful of powerful Ascenders, who are not only leading a group of Survivors but also that they’ve been hiding their group from them for so long.”

Dilan had not actually given the situation a lot of thought beforehand.

His response had been spontaneous and he had instinctively invited Felia and the Soldiers to stay in their base for a short period.

This made it easier to find out more information, and it would make his entire group seem more trustworthy.

That was good, and as long as he could control the soldiers, and prevent them from doing something stupid to his group or their resources, everything would be fine.

'I expect a few Survivors to leave, but they will mostly be the remaining people, who want to reunite with their family, and those few, who think I'm too overbearing and a dictator.

I won't make much of a loss if the baggage leaves.'

While walking back to their base, Dilan didn't speak to Felia and her Soldiers. Instead, he was occupied with talking to his own people because most of them were rather uncomfortable with the Soldiers around them.

They feared that the government would try to subdue them once again. Before the Primordial Ascension, many laws had existed. The world was ruled by laws imposed by the strong on the weak and powerless, while those with connections and money had always been able to get away by not obeying the rigid rules.

It was openly known that the elites and the topmost class of the society were rotten, which was also the reason for Kathrine, Ailee, and even Yvonne to be bothered.

After all, the Soldiers' gazes were more than enough to tell them what would happen if they were weaker and if Dilan wouldn't be there to protect all women with his drastic measurements.

Dilan's actions against \*\*\*\* attempts and other crimes were something that would never be accepted by the government. At least, not if a higher authority would try to \*\*\*\* a beautiful woman from the lower economic class.

They would slap on the back of the higher authority's hand, but that would be it.

Meanwhile, Dilan didn't hesitate the slightest to behead a Tier-1 Ascender the moment he tried to \*\*\*\* one of the beautiful Survivors, who was not adept at fighting.

[0]??? She had been washing the dishes and was a good girl who would usually help Mira in the garden they had created. Even some survivors believed that Dilan had gone overboard for killing one of his strongest underlings, 'just' because he attempted to \*\*\*\* someone.

It was not as if he had actually raped her, in the end, because he had been found out before he could commit the heinous crime.

However, he would have raped her had Dilan not stopped him, and that was a fact.

Thus, Dilan couldn't care less about whatever authority others expected to receive just because they were stronger than the rest.



Everyone was important in Dilan's group, and they had to function as a properly working group, in which every single member trusted the others to gain the best results.

And Dilan had gained this loyalty and trust from many people. Those who didn't trust him were free to leave.

That was also why he didn't actually care about the exhilarated expression some Survivors had on their faces the moment they saw the Soldiers, who followed Dilan as they entered the base.

"Soldiers? Are there actually Soldiers? Does that mean we are finally saved? The military will take care of us, hooray!" One woman exclaimed with tears in her eyes.

Meanwhile, another man looked at the soldiers and their weapons with a prideful expression.

"Maybe I should ask them whether I can join the military or not. Carrying a gun makes you feel much better. Fighting with swords, and bows feels like we have returned to the middle age. How tiresome fighting like this would be..."

"If there are Soldiers, there must be a military camp, or a camp made by the government as well. Maybe I can find my family there!"

More than ten survivors expressed their interest in joining the military or following the Soldiers, even before they had entered the factory.

This made Kathrine and Ailee frown, while Felia was slightly astonished.

'Why is he still smiling? Doesn't he feel anything despite seeing his people openly talk about leaving him?'

Felia could clearly tell that the Survivors were well-fed and healthy. There was no fear in their eyes and the only thing one could say against Dilan's treatment of his group was that the survivors looked a little bit exhausted.

However, Sven, whom she had spoken to earlier, had already told Felia that they had just moved to their new base.

Everyone had been working hard to reconstruct the base, and make it a habitable place.

Thus, it was no surprise to see the survivors' weary expressions.

But this made Felia feel even guiltier. Had Dilan treated his people badly, the survivor's comments would have been justified.

Yet, right now, it felt as if they turned a blind eye to the effort Dilan and his people had put in to ensure that everyone would survive and live a proper life.

Staying alive was actually not impossible after the Primordial Ascension. With a little bit of effort, this could be easily achieved. However, living a comfortable life was certainly not easy after the Primordial Ascension had occurred.

And from the looks of it, the base seemed to be even better than the Blue Star camp.

“Oh my gosh. Captain, look over there! They have more than 10 huge pots and cook warm meals for everyone.” One of the Soldiers pointed excitedly at the kitchen as his stomach rumbled loudly.

Meanwhile, another Soldier pointed in a different direction across the fence.

“There is a training ground too, and I can hear the sound of a hammer...” He exclaimed while his gaze remained in the direction of the alloy manufacturing factory.

There were many things that astonished Felia and the Soldiers. However, the most astonishing was definitely the way everyone treated Dilan.

While there had been 10 or so people, who had exclaimed in excitement upon seeing the soldiers, this situation didn't repeat itself many times.

A few more survivors voiced their interest upon seeing the Soldiers, but most of them looked at Dilan with bright eyes, their trust and loyalty toward him clearly perceptible.

When Dilan reached the center of their base, he cleared his throat before announcing in a loud voice.

“Today, we encountered Captain Felia and her subordinates. They belong to a different camp that is led by Mayor Clerens, and some others.

Their camp is called Blue Star camp, and it's a few hundred kilometers away.

Long story short, I allowed Captain Felia and her people to stay here for a few days. For those who want to leave, and join the Blue Star camp, they can do so.

As stated already, I won't hold anyone back, but I don't plan to take you guys back if the Blue Star camp is not to your liking.”

#### Chapter 229 Test of Loyalty

“Did he have to do that?” Kathrine asked quietly while looking at Sven. She felt frustrated about what Dilan had just said but it was not as if her complaints could change the past.

That was why Kathrine wanted to figure out what was on Dilan's mind, without openly asking when everyone's attention was on him.

“I think it was a good move,” Sven remarked, not properly answering Kathrine's question.

“And how about you elaborate what you mean, instead of leaving us in the dark?!” Oliver probed, feeling similarly frustrated as Dilan.

After all, Dilan's words made it seem as if he wanted them to leave. Why else would he immediately reveal that they were free to join the military?

Yvonne and Ailee were also staring at Sven, which he noticed immediately. However, even when he turned in Williams and Xenia's direction, he could tell that they were equally interested in getting to know Dilan's reason.

Sven sighed, before he organized his thoughts, and revealed what he presumed to be Dilan's reason.

“Well, first of all, Dilan shared that Felia and the Soldiers belonged to a different camp that is led by not only one person but multiple. Not many know Mayor Clerens, so sharing his name didn’t have much impact.

But that was not the important point. Dilan merely revealed one of the Blue Star camp leaders’ names to inform us that their camp was several hundred kilometers away.

They didn’t come in buses, and from what I know, they have only a few vehicles parked somewhere that we found later.

Dilan knows that as well. By allowing the others to leave, they would have to find their own way to the Blue Star camp first. Everyone with a few working brain cells can tell that Felia and her people are much weaker than we are, meaning traveling a distance of several hundred kilometers with many Survivors and ensuring their safety will be quite difficult.

Simultaneously, he indirectly hinted that he doesn’t intend to join the Blue Star camp.

Last but not least, Dilan put some psychological pressure on the survivors by making it clear that he won’t take them back if they decided to leave.

After all, they might leave again the moment another group would show up.” Sven finished his explanation and analysis of the situation.

However, there was something else Sven had missed out on. Dilan, who had heard Sven’s explanation, took a few steps back before he added in a quiet voice,

“Furthermore, by clarifying all facts from the beginning, I revealed the content of Felia’s mission. If they were to stay in our base for a few days without anyone knowing about their mission and true motives, it would have been easy for them to convince my people that the Blue Star camp is so beautiful and great, that they treat Tier-1 Ascenders like nobles and so on.

That might even be the truth, but now, whenever Felia and the Soldiers say something, everyone will question whether their words are true or exaggerated so as to lure over my Ascenders.

If it is the truth it would be great, but if not, they would not only have no chance to return to me, but they would have to live in the regret of having made a big mistake for the rest of their lives.”

Dilan’s expression didn’t change a bit as he revealed the final reason behind his act.

Everyone looked at him feeling slightly astonished, including Sven, who realized that he had missed out on that point.

‘True...everyone will now be suspicious about Felia’s words whenever she paints the Blue Star camp in a good light.’ Sven thought, his head flicking to Dilan, whose expression was overflowing with calmness.

The calmness he radiated suddenly felt eerie to him, and Sven began to wonder if it was Dilan, who was actually a strategist, or if it was Sven’s occupation and main role in the group.

Felia had also heard what both Sven and Dilan had revealed, and she frowned deeply.

However, there was actually nothing she could do against it. Rather than trying to deny the truth, it would be best to move forward and accept the situation.

Thus, with various conflicted gazes lingering on her, Felia stepped forward. She cleared her throat and began to speak, hoping for the best result,

“Hello everyone, my name is Felia Mahn and as Dilan already said, I belong to the Blue Star camp. I don’t want to beat around the bush, so I will be honest and straightforward. I hope that works for everyone.”

After saying this, she took a deep breath before she continued.

“I received the mission to bring everyone to the Blue Star camp. As per my instructions, I am supposed to use every means to do so. However, I believe that is useless. What is the use of forcing anyone to come with me, if they’re actually living a good life? Everyone, who is willing to come with us can later follow us, once we leave.

As for those, who are possibly interested in coming to the Blue Star camp, I and my subordinates are willing to share our unfiltered opinion about the Blue Star camp.”

Felia finished her short speech without making a single mistake or growing nervous.

Dilan was quite impressed by the way she chose her words carefully. She chose the only correct solution on how to limit the damage his words had caused.

In fact, Felia should have gained quite a bit of trust from her words alone.

“Not bad.” He remarked before he turned to Felia.

“How about we eat something now? You and your subordinates must be hungry from traveling through the Shikan plains. I’m very interested to know how the situation in the other cities is, how many survivors are there, and how many permanent Gates you guys found on your way to Shiron.”

Dilan had many questions but he didn’t wait for an answer from Felia. He turned in the direction of their newly constructed cafeteria.

Lunch had just been prepared, and Dilan, followed by his inner ring of trusted people, sat down after reaching the cafeteria.

At first, Felia was not sure how to answer him, or what to leave out while answering, but she quickly forgot about answering when the aroma of freshly cooked food made her salivate.

Not even a minute later she found herself in front of a huge plate of food, scarfing down everything as if she had not eaten for several days.

Her subordinates were in a similar condition, gorging themselves as if it was their last warm meal before they would have to go to war.

Kathrine and the others just smiled at this. They felt a little bit of pity for Felia and her subordinates because it seemed as if they had received a limited quantity of rations for their mission.

This clearly showed that the Blue Star camp didn’t have a surplus of food, but that they had less food and more mouths to fill, to be precise.

Once she was done eating, Felia rubbed her inflated stomach, until she noticed the amused expression on Dilan's face.

?'[0]???' 'Shit, I forgot where I am...how humiliating.' Feeling embarrassed, Felia turned her head away. It took her quite a while to calm down, and not let out a hysterical shriek.

However, when she finally got back to her senses, Felia decided to divert everybody's attention by changing the topic.

"You asked about the situation of other cities, and how many survivors there were, right?" She asked to make sure that she remembered properly.

Dilan just nodded his head before adding,

"I also asked you about the permanent Gates and how many you guys found near Shiron."

Felia nodded her head at his words. To them, Gates was not that important. They didn't have enough time to bother entering and conquering the dimensions behind the Gates.

As such, they had never paid that much attention to the Gates and only took note of the required information to figure out what to do when waves of monsters emerged from the Gates.

"Other cities...they look better than Shiron, but that is only obvious. There was a huge horde of monsters that were migrating from the south quite a while ago.

As for the survivors...there are quite a few larger groups of such people. The Blue Star camp is probably the biggest one for now, but we've yet to search through the entire Shikan plains.

But overall...I guess more than 95% of humanity's population was killed until now. At least, that is what seems to be the case on the Shikan plains.

We have no idea what it looks like outside, after all, there is no way to contact others because even the frequency of radios seems to malfunction..." Felia replied with a deep sigh.

She looked sad when speaking about the fact that mankind's population had dwindled so much. They were far from being considered apex predators now that the Primordial Ascension had changed everything.

"95%...? That aligns with my calculations." Dilan stated while nodding his head as he digested the information Felia had shared.

'How can he be so unruffled by this?!?'

Chapter 230 Dilan will love it!

Dilan was actually not worried about Felia and the Soldiers. Most of them were quite nice and they quickly found people to connect with.

Quite a few Survivors and Ascenders were interested in switching to the Blue Star camp. Dilan knew that some were not willing to stay under him, to listen to his orders, or to those who were with him.

This was fine with him, and in fact, he would feel relieved if such people chose to leave them.

The loss of Tier-1 Ascenders might be a little bit frustrating because they would have to fill that gap and nourish newer ones again. However, that was not much of a difficulty.

"I will go hunt in the Mountain ring of the Elements Gate," Dilan announced before leaving everyone behind.

The Elite Combat Unit was more than enough to hold Felia and the Soldiers in check if something were to happen.

This gave him more than enough freedom to do whatever he wanted, which was exactly what he did.

"Okay..." Felia could only mumble, feeling a little bit dumbfounded that Dilan had already turned and left.

His speed was extremely high and he leaped over the huge fence as if it was no problem.

However, instead of being interested in Dilan's actual strength and how high his stats were, Felia was more intrigued about other things.

'Are Gates that interesting? Did he become so strong because of them? I don't think so...'

While Felia's gaze followed Dilan until he disappeared behind a large building complex, Kathrine's eyes narrowed as she stared at the little Soldier Captain.

"Calm down, Sis. You don't need to eat her alive. Dilan is not interested in her, at all. You can keep him all for yourself...for now." Yvonne teased, laughing cheekily upon seeing her sister's reaction.

Kathrine blushed when she heard Yvonne's comment. Her head turned to the ground as if it was fascinating and tiptoed on her feet, just to get back to her senses when she heard several men and women around her laughing heartily.

Her sister, Ailee, Sarah, Williams, and Sven joined in the laughter and were quite amused at Kathrine's reaction. She looked cute while trying to act coy and innocent.

It was interesting to see this side of her because her fighting persona was the complete opposite of her actual behavior.

Kathrine fought in a brutal manner, using her Lightning Warrior occupation to the fullest. That was why her shyness was a nice change.

"Wait...Yvonne. Why did you stress on the words, 'for now'?" Sarah suddenly asked. She had noticed the weird way Yvonne had uttered the word immediately. However, before pointing it out, Sarah wanted to see if someone else had noticed it too, and how Kathrine would react to it.

Yet, when Sarah saw that Yvonne began to smile with her eyes gleaming brightly as if she was scheming something grand, her hair stood up on its ends.

'She is...noo, that won't be the case, right? Kathrine already likes Dilan.' She could only think while awaiting Yvonne's answer.

"Who knows. Dilan is quite popular, which is only obvious." Yvonne merely said before shrugging her shoulders and turning her head away.

“We have other things to do. Let’s not waste our time here.”

That being said, she left the group which she had baffled a little bit. Only Kathrine was oblivious to what was going on as her mind was still overwhelmed with what Yvonne had said.

‘Keep him all for myself? Is that even possible?’ She thought at first, only to slap each side of her cheeks hard.

“What am I even thinking?!” Kathrine exclaimed all of a sudden, startling the others before she dashed away.

‘Do I like him? Noo...I’m just feeling grateful for everything he did. Exactly! That’s it...’

Her mind was in disarray and she could not stop running. After she couldn’t run anymore, she stopped and ended up in front of a large group of monsters.

They were Bronze Tier-1 monsters, who were at a lower level than Kathrine and with much lower average stats.

For Kathrine, their strength was not noteworthy. That was why she unsheathed her Silver Tier-1 longsword before entering the fray.

“Distract me a little bit, little doggos!” Kathrine shouted out before blasting toward the huge group of Crimson Wolves. The beasts had just emerged out of the Gate that had appeared less than a minute before Kathrine had arrived.

Her body was shrouded in electric currents all of a sudden and her eyes turned purple. Kathrine’s stats had been amplified and each of her attacks was accompanied by the power of lightning as she slashed out with precision.

Her movements were smooth and there was no wasted step in her motions. The Crimson wolves died at her hand before they could even react.

With her Agility exceeding 40 units easily after her stats had been amplified, Kathrine ended the lives of the Crimson Wolves in front of her in a matter of minutes.

Kathrine was not a killing machine and neither overly fast at killing her opponents. But what she was good at was controlling the electric currents crackling around her, and turning them into bolts of lightning.

This was more than enough to make it seem as if she was like a flash of lightning herself that would pass through her opponents before they collapsed on the ground, and met their deaths.

“Well, that was some good stress relief,” Kathrine mumbled the moment the last Crimson Wolf died at her hands.

Only then did she notice the Gate that was just a few dozen meters away from her.

‘Another permanent Gate? I should note that down.’

She approached the Gate and was ready to make a mental note about everything it would say.

[Temporary Gate to (Wild Varan Oceanside). Requirements to enter are not met! -All Stats- 45]

“Oh...just a temporary Gate. Well then, it doesn’t actually matter...” She mumbled before her head turned to the Crimson Wolf corpses and back to the Gate.

‘Well, why not?’

An idea popped in her mind, and she quickly collected the Crimson Wolves’ Essence crystals, and absorbed four for herself before the remaining Essence crystals were thrown inside the temporary Gate in exchange for a Bronze Tier-1 treasure.

[0]??? [<Bronze Tier-1> grade treasure can be exchanged with 50 <Bronze Tier-1> Essence crystals of the same type.]

The exchange rate was quite high but they had already researched that a higher exchange rate indicated a higher potential of receiving rare treasures.

This was as per Kathrine’s liking, and the moment she received the Bronze Tier-1 treasure, her hands began to tremble, while her heart began to palpate wildly as she exclaimed in joy.

“Oh my gosh. That is amazing. Dilan will love it!!”

Holding a piece of parchment in her hands, Kathrine read through it while beaming. Not wanting to waste any time, she rushed back to the base and searched for Dilan.

‘Oh, right. He is still away.’ Kathrine quickly realized, and the wide grin disappeared from her face, plummeting her great mood instantly.

She knew that the parchment she held was still exceptional and more than enough to make everyone happy.

However, even then, Kathrine didn’t feel like sharing her knowledge with anyone else but Dilan.

At least, he had to find out the good news first.

That was the most important thing in her mind, right now, not the treasure she got her hands on.

Unfortunately, Yvonne saw her sister when she returned, and the parchment in her hands attracted the little sister’s attention.

“Kathrineeee, what are you holding there?” Yvonne asked excitedly as her bewitching and cute voice resounded through the hall.

A moment later, she disappeared from her earlier spot to appear right in front of Kathrine.

Black feathered wings had emerged out of her back and her eyes gleamed brightly as she reached out for the parchment in Kathrine’s hand.

However, Kathrine moved backward, and electric currents engulfed her body as her Agility skyrocketed.

‘I knew it!’