

A Glitched 341

Chapter 341 Interrogations

Shade and Allan had been watching over the city ever since the children went to sleep. They left Faylen and Nepheline alongside Sylphy's Uncle protecting the tribe while they came here to investigate as they had planned to. However, something ended happening while they wandered around the city. Explosions, several explosions.

In seconds, they reached the orphanage, finding it unscathed, that wasn't a surprise for them as Faylen had set up a powerful high tier barrier without the orphanage even noticing, although it was merely Tier 5, it was good enough to protect from mostly anything people in this city could offer as a threat.

Higher tiered barriers cost more Mana and are more complex to conjure to do it on the go as she did, and often don't allow for people to walk inside and outside either if they're allowed by the caster. The more restrictions and special conditions given to a spell, the more burden they take on the conjurer at the time of invocation.

When they reached the orphanage, they were ready to capture them men, but ended finding Sylphy's Plant Monsters catching them instead. These were monsters she could create through seeds she enhanced using her Magic, but they never expected them to have special conditions to transform and emerge only when intruders with bad intentions appeared. Of course, they were not permanent, and usually withered away after a few hours of being created.

Although they seemed captured, they were using knives to cut the vines, so Shade acted quickly and called forth one of his oldest Dark Spirits, a Phantasmal Spirit capable of creating chains made of darkness that could chain a person's soul. The spirit was merely named Grief, and he had the tendency of groan like a zombie.

After having gathered the culprits, the two quickly turned off the fire that had spread into the unprotected surrounding buildings and left the place, entering an abandoned house and sealing it with a magic barrier, throwing the culprits inside a room and quickly beginning interrogations. The orphanage's residents had heard the explosion though, and walked outside the place to investigate what was going on, finding nothing and then quickly going back. Explanations were perhaps going to be delivered by Shade and Allan the next morning.

"Thank you Grief, you can go rest now." Shade said, as Grief gave a phantasmal groan and went inside of Shade's Soul Scape. Shade was a man of less words, so he left the interrogation job to Allan. The two had a very peculiar chemistry, Allan being the talkative "good cop" while Shade was the silent "bad cop".

The culprits quickly had their mouths freed from the robes covering them, as Allan sat down in front of them with a smile from ear to ear. He seemed frightening to their eyes, and rather intimidating despite trying to act nice.

"Now, now, just like Shade, I am very pissed for what you just tried to do... Why in your right minds would you try to burn down a house filled with little children?!" Asked Allan. "Who sent you here? And who gave you those Spell Jewels?"

"W-We won't speak!"

"Y-You don't intimidate us..."

"We came here prepared to d-die anyways!"

"Hooohh? Is that so? Are you sure about that? And what after that? you think I will let your souls go away to the afterlife easily?" Asked Shade with a malicious expression, the prisoners quickly felt chills run down their spines, feeling completely paralyzed by his deathly stare!

"You saw what my friend used to capture you, right? That was a Dark and Death Spirit! Guess what, he's slightly proficient in death magic... You know what that means?" Asked Allan. "He can touch souls!"

"Uugh..."

"Gulp..."

"W-Who are you?! The boss never told us there were such strong magicians in here! Did you protected the demons with that barrier?! Who the fuck are you guys?!"

One of the prisoners suddenly began asking questions, as Shade gently patted his shoulders, and then, his hands suddenly turned semi-transparent, as if they were phantasmal hands.

"Phantasmal Grasp."

FLASH!

Shade's hands suddenly grasped the prisoner's soul, making him tremble in fear and pain like he had never felt before. The pain of the soul, after all, could be dozens of times stronger than physical pain, simply grabbing a soul already inflicted pain as commoners often had very weak souls!

The ability to strengthen and cultivate a Soul was something not widespread at all, so only a few knew how to make it stronger. Entire continents had no idea about such methods; therefore, people's souls were often outstandingly easy to play around with for someone proficient at the death element such as Shade.

"Gyyyaaaah! P-Please stop touching my soul! It hurts! IT HURTSSSS...!"

"Then speak and I shall spare your soul!" Shade roared dominantly, as the man quickly nodded, shocking everyone else.

"You bastard! Don't say a word!"

"Are you going to sell us?!"

"Bear with the pain, coward!"

"Hoh? Do you want me to touch your souls too?" Asked Shade with a smirk, Allan himself feel like sweating bullets due to the intimidating presence of his friend sometimes.

At the end, it only took a single one of them to get intimidated for all their secrets to be revealed. The man ended telling them everything they asked for happily after realizing the agony of having been

touched with his soul. The rest of the prisoners also went through the same torture and ended speaking anything the other missed too.

"So you're telling me you were mere civilians some years ago and ended turning into this underground organization after the war?" Asked Allan. "Why?"

"Because we lost everything..."

"After the war, many villages were destroyed, those demons were merciless... barbarians!"

"Many of our family members perished, some of our comrades had their entire families slaughtered..."

"We were not even soldiers, but they pillaged us and burned our homes... The war made them grow desperate and hungry, some even... ate people!"

"Demons... they're all monsters!"

"They shouldn't be living in our city!"

Chapter 342 Criminals Disguised As Victims

Allan and Shade fell silent after a while of hearing the culprits. These people weren't even actual criminals, they were commoners that ended losing everything after the war and were forced to work in shady business with underground organizations to earn enough money to eat each day. The war left many people affected, perhaps more in the human side that Allan and Shade could have realized. After all, things were never truly one-sided, both sides killed one another, they slaughtered innocents mercilessly.

There wasn't a good or bad faction at the end of the day, as both had committed atrocities... But that wasn't really the point, the point was now that the war had ended, and some people were trying to let the survivors of the demons live in peace, the work of Darius was going to be in vain if these resented people were to kill the offspring of the surviving demons, who had nothing to do with what their parents had done.

"But you know that this is an orphanage, right? Most if not all the children inside of that place are innocent, they don't have any idea about the war, they weren't even there to begin with! They were all born after it ended... You can't simply blame them for the sins their ancestors committed..." Sighed Allan, although he seemed to feel empathy for the people, even though they were wrong in their way of thinking.

The people fell silent for a bit, being confronted with the fact that they were going to murder innocents. However, their biases were stronger, as they were fueled with lies from many others, especially their boss.

"B-But who knows when they'll turn crazy?!"

"Y-Yeah! They still got the bloodline of those monsters... What tells you that they won't one day go insane and attack our people, and kill innocents themselves?!"

"If we give them a swift end, this circle of slaughter can end... with them!"

"So you're saying that you're willing to kill children just so you can satisfy your desire for revenge?!"
Roared Shade, hitting the table nearby, his sharp eyes suddenly turned from blue to bright red.

BAAM!

The people trembled in fear before Shade, but their minds were already decided to do what they had tried to attempt, after all, they were filled with such an undying grudge that manipulating them into doing such a thing wasn't so hard for the culprit behind their actions.

"I-I lost my daughter... in the war... She was burned alive by a red-skinned demon... I am sure he was the same race as that disgusting scarred nun!" Said one of them, suddenly bursting into tears. "I-I can't live knowing there is a member of that despicable race of barbarians in here, living as if nothing! It fills me with so much rage and frustration...!"

"You mean Mary?" Wondered Allan.

"That she's part of their race doesn't mean she would do the same, each individual is different..." Sighed Shade.

"She participated in the war though, she's not a child, isn't she? Hah... She's actually warrior from the demons that somehow survived, she was tortured and enslaved, but she's still alive here... Living as if nothing happened! You think that's somehow good? To live in her own enemy's country leisurely?! That damn Darius was an insane old man! He should had never abolished the legal enslavement of these damned and filthy demons... Living with our own enemies! Do you think that's a good thing, mister hero?!"

The only woman from the group suddenly ranted out her thoughts, impacting Allan and Shade's minds. Although she didn't knew they were the actual heroes of humans, she called them "heroes" for acting disgustingly righteously about demons being innocent, making her sick.

"I was okay if they were slaves, paying for their crimes with such punishment... But now most of them were freed from their owners! Of course, illegal slaves are still sold, and mixed with the legal ones. After all, the abolition of slaves was broken down some years ago... If you're so hell bent in letting them live, then give them as slaves so they pay for their ancestor's sins! They will learn the mistakes their kin committed and receive their well-deserved punishment!" Roared the man who had lost his daughter.

"Enough!" Shade roared, as he extended his hand towards the man in front of him, almost about to strangle him to death, but Allan stopped him, as he looked at the man's eyes. His own gaze was filled with emotions and empathy.

"I understand how you feel... there's other ways of doing things, you can't simply... do the same thing those did to you. Do you truly want to become the same murderers of children and innocents that those you hate so much were?" Asked Allan. "What would your daughter think about this if she were alive? Would she be happy her father is killing children that... could had one day become her friends instead?"

The man heard Allan's words, as he felt strange, he slowly realized a bit the reality of his actions, and what he had truly tried to do, but still, the bias inside of his mind and the resentment were stronger than his common sense.

"Tch! M-My daughter would be proud of her father... doing what's right!" He said. Allan felt frustrated he couldn't change the mind of these people.

"They're a lost cause, Allan, cut it out. You can't really change their minds." Said Shade, patting Allan's shoulder.

"But Shade... If I don't try to make a difference now, when will I be able to do one?!" Asked Allan, feeling the guilt of his actions eat his mind away. Shade noticed his friend's desperation, as he was being affected by the circumstances and the aftermath of a war they'll never forget.

"You can't change an entire society by merely convincing some street thugs that they're wrong." Said Shade. "Even if you convince them, so what? You won't be able to change nothing in the big picture... You're merely seeking to change their minds for your own self-satisfaction, because you can't keep living with your guilt... I understand your pain, but you have to bear with it... You got a daughter, remember this."

"...Right." Allan was suddenly brought to reality, as he sighed. "I have a daughter..."

Chapter 343 Interrogating The Culprits

At the end, Allan and Shade moved forward with a series of other questions, as they had already realized it was kind of a lost cause to continue trying to convince these people, no matter how many explanations they gave to them, these people were still willing to do what they did before again if they were given the opportunity. The decision of ultimately bringing the demon children with them and make them join the tribe of Amazon was growing stronger as a good option, this entire town seemed to have too big of a grudge against demons to let them live in pace. If they were to leave this place, there was nothing saying they'll be able to live and prosper happily.

At the end, Allan and Shade decided to ask more about this "boss" and the whole organization where these people came from. They wanted to find the hideout at all costs and put an end to them before they did anything more dangerous in the near future. However, things seemed more complex, this "boss" was someone that was rather closet to his subordinates, and he wasn't just the one behind this, there were many people involved... and perhaps the entire government as well.

"Boss... we don't know his name. But he's a good person. He welcomed us on his group and has been taking care of us. We do all sorts of works for him; robbing is not something we do... We actually often do rural work or maintain the city's structure by fixing paved floors..."

"There's also a stall where we sell food, and boss has a soft spot for the orphanages... the other ones. He always donates to them, so the children in there grow healthy and eat a lot!"

"We are not bad people... We are merely trying to do what's right to protect our place..."

"So you only did things like that? It doesn't sound criminal at all, but you're lying, aren't you?" Asked Allan, becoming quite serious, his gaze pierced the people's souls, as Shade approached his hand into one and touched his soul with it.

"Gyyyyyaaaaah...! O-Okay! I'll talk...! W-We often rob! We rob from merchants that pass through some routes, very little times, only when these merchants are bastards! The nobles pay us to ruin the business of other merchants... T-That's all!"

"Oh yeah?"

"Uuugh...! W-We also kidnap... demi-humans to sell as slaves, but everyone does that nowadays..."

"You guys are really two-faced. You tell me all the good things while hiding the bad things, you're not really good people at all..." Sighed Allan. "You're glorifying what you do way too much... I assume the stolen goods and slaves are stored in your hideout? Speak, where is it?"

"W-We cannot say that!"

"We'll never speak, torture our souls as much as you want!"

"Y-Yeah!"

"Hoh? With pleasure." Said Shade with a smirk.

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At the end, the thugs were tortured until they opened their mouths and revealed their secrets. Shade and Allan learned that the hideout was located within an area of the Red-Light District near a drugstore, there was a secret entrance that only opened to members of this organization, leading to an underground base where several of their stolen goods and slaves were stored. This organization wasn't the only one that held such a hideout, but one of the major three. And all of them colluded with various nobles.

The Duke himself seemed oblivious about this but if he had revoked the abolition of slavery, it probably meant he was happy that the market of slaves came back, as it gives a lot of money and helps maintain the economy of the fiefdom. It was unknown for the thugs if the Eastgrain Family were all like that, especially because the previous governor, the father of the current one had abolished slavery and pitied the demons.

"Lastly, do you know anything about the Dungeon and the recent Miasmic Pupa that have appeared? The Chaos Cocoon?" Asked Allan while slightly nervous, this was one of the major problems he came here for. The whole drama with the war survivors was something he had not expected, especially in the last city before reaching the port, their true destination. This ended being way bigger of a side quest that the Former Hero could have ever thought it would become, and he hasn't even discovered the mystery behind the primary problem he came to resolve.

"W-We have no idea, really!"

"Y-Yeah... We don't know about that... Boss was also worried about such a thing!"

"I-If Boss doesn't know, perhaps that might be the doing of a different organization..."

"Please believe us!"

Shade and Allan used magic they copied from Mary rather easily, [Heart's Reader], which they used to discern false from truth more easily than through things like checking their temperature or heartbeat, quickly concluding that they were saying the truth. The two nodded, quickly hitting the people in the neck and putting them down unconscious.

"No matter what, they're still doing illegal things, we'll catch them and bring them to justice." Said Shade. "Of course, let's delete the memories of what they learned from us, and about us as well... Memory Erasure..."

Illusion Attribute Magic was able to meddle with memories too, although it was not possible to delete old memories without causing a severe damage to people's head, it was possible to easily delete recent memories that were still freshly lingering within their minds.

After the memory deletion, Shade and Allan brought the thugs with them carrying them inside of Shade's Shadows through his [Shadow Storage] Spell that allowed him to create a pocket space inside his own shadows, big enough to fit a whole house inside, or more.

Without any delays, the pair of friends reached the Red-light district deepest streets, emerging over the roofs of the closed drugstore, in there, they noticed two thugs guarding the secret entrance in silence.

The two friends nodded to one another, jumping into action.

Chapter 344 Jack's Life

As a soldier that survived the war against demons, Jack always thought back then that he would be treated as a war hero and given a good pension to live the rest of his life in peace and tranquility, trying to forget the horror of seeing his comrades being slaughtered by the monstrous demons that he had to fight against. However, life never treats anybody fairly, for some reason, most of the soldiers after the war were given pennies for a pension, mostly for the doing of the previous Duke, who was very close with the church and the priests. Convinced that it was better to invest more into repairing his fiefdom while fighting to free the survivors of the war, he ended taking away a lot of the monetary investments that went towards the military, resulting in the miserably pay the soldiers that survived that hellish war got from their small country.

Back then, this caused a lot of commotion and the distaste of the citizens, many people went against the Duke's decision, thinking he was insane. Many other fiefdoms had been affected severely by the war and were investing into helping to recover their countries and also paying good pensions to their soldiers to reward them for their hard work. The big possibility of slaves also emerging was an excellent time to take away the abolition of slavery after the heroes that enforced it disappeared when they defeated the Demon King. Without anybody to stop them, many governors used this opportunity to get rich and gain free work hand through war slaves. All while using the war as an excuse to hunt down other demi-human tribes living in the Gallatea Continent that had nothing to do with the war that happened, which ended causing the heavy discrimination against beast-kin.

However, the fiefdom of Eastgrain wanted to make things different, their ruler was someone that believed that people deserved a second chance, and that demons and beast-kin were people, not monsters or barbarians. He worked hard with the church to free them slaves and continue the abolition of slavery, making illegal once more the slavery of demons, beast-kin, and anybody human or non-human, with only criminal slaves (mostly composed of robbers, bandits, and assassins) staying. Jack and his fellow soldiers, and even survivors from the massacres and pillages provoked by the demons ended being left with nothing at all, not even with homes to come back to sometimes...

Jack felt incredibly resentful against the government of the fiefdom he had been living for so long and protecting... Over time, he gathered his people and decided to protect one another. They did everything they could, organizing into groups to work in many things at once, both trying to protect and restore their home country while also earning pennies. Jack always saw these people that were as affected as him as brothers and sisters, and as the many children that ended orphans after the war as his children, the many orphanages all ended being protected by him, and a large part of what he earned was spent in these orphanages. Ultimately, they slowly seeped deeper into the underworld of the country, working in shadier jobs that offered large sums of money by nobles.

Ultimately, they ended helping in taking back their country when the son of the previous Duke reveled against his father, unleashing a coup d'état and defeating him and his government. His own son took his life as old as he already was, and quickly began changing things for the better... of humans, of course. The abolition of slavery was quickly taken away and legal slaves became a popular commodity and product. Although the demons that survived the war and were already citizens, and their children that were innocent were still protected by laws and it was illegal to enslave them, it was pretty much implied that as long as the authorities weren't looking... Jack and his brothers and sisters could do whatever they pleased.

It took a long time to finally reach this point, the government finally began to invest into the citizens once more, and also into its military, soldiers began to earn good pensions, but Jack and his group, who were desperate to earn and ended turning into criminals of the red-light district had no place on being citizens, hidden from society, they continued working in the shadows for the nobles, earning good

amounts of money they invested back into the city and all those in poverty, all the while slaves became a product that pretty much brought back the declining economy of the fiefdom. Illegal slaves easily mixed with legal slaves constantly, with the authorities pretending to not know, many of the former citizens ended being kidnaped and turned into slaves, sold as products...

Jack couldn't be happier about that, of course. Much like everyone else within his group, they hated demons and even beast-kin, and saw them as miserable and despicable monsters that even killed children and innocents. After having seen first-hand their brutality and how they even pillaged villages that were not even participating in the war, their hate against them transcended everything. For them, those children living in that abandoned orphanage made by Darius were dangerous, it was a nest of monsters more dangerous than the dungeon for them. Getting rid of them was a priority. If it wasn't because of that mysterious half-demon girl, Celeste, strong enough to kill them whenever they came looking for trouble, that orphanage would be long gone.

And tonight, Jack had finally unleashed another little plan he had. One of his sponsors had brought him some new merchandise named Spell Jewels, which could contain magic. He infused them with Tier 2 Fire Magic from a magician friend, and quickly gave them to some volunteers, their task? Quite simply, blow the entire orphanage with everyone sleeping on it. That half-demon girl won't even be able to see what killed her... Jack, as the leader of this organization, seemed decided to bear the burden of such a slaughter, as he thought it was the right thing to do for the safety of his country.

Sadly, things didn't go as he planned.

Chapter 345 Raid

"P-Please, let us go... This is illegal, you can't enslave us just because we are demi-humans...!"

"Y-You kidnaped us!"

"We'll tell authorities, this isn't right!"

"Mama... Where's my mama?"

"You bastards...! Your men destroyed my tribe! We were living in harmony with nature, you slaughtered my family! YOU MONSTER!"

The cries of many slaves caged resonated within the underground hideout, as Jack sat down over a large seat decorated with monster pelt and demo horns he had cut himself from their heads. His gaze was merciless even against the children. Immediately because they were not humans, they were simply deemed as merchandise in his mind. There was no room inside of his mind to think that demons and beast-kin, or any other intelligent race similar to them could even be considered people at all.

"Hmph, do you all truly believe you have some sort of right? Do you truly believe you're people here? After all what your kin has done to us humans, you truly believe we owe you some sort of good treatment? That we should treat you as if you were the same as us? Even after all the atrocities you've committed, you fully think you don't deserve any of this?" Jack spoke.

Jack was a gigantic man. He was abnormally large, with long and spiky brown hair and a beard that reached his chest. His fingers wore different types of colorful rings, emanating magical essence. His clothes were also made of the pelt, leather, and scales of powerful monsters... some even from demons and beast-kin themselves, which he had killed and used their bodies as trophies. He considered himself a hunter.

"W-What kind of nonsense are you talking about...?"

"This little girl doesn't have anything to do! I-I participated in the war but I only killed soldiers that came to kill me too, this is war, that's... what we do! Punish me if you want, torture me all you want but free these kids here, you sick bastard!"

"My tribe never participated in any war! You're talking complete nonsense, attributing the sins of other people to our kin! You're a delusional bastard!"

"All of you are the same at the end, savages, monstrous, too powerful... Your strength is uncontrollable. You'll go in a rampage and kill dozens. You think I can even consider such beings as "people"... You're the insane ones! Now get them out of my sight... I've already checked, bring those slaves to their respective ceilings. In a few days there'll be another slave market event, we'll make some good money out of these savages. They can only behave if they're wrapped in chains. Giving them freedom and allowing to live with us is the insanity here! That damn Duke made them too privileged, thinking they have rights like us... Well, that's why he got killed by his own son. At least his kid had some sense inside of his head." Sighed Jack, drinking from a large bottle of wine. "Don't you agree?!"

Jack looked at his subordinates nearby moving merchandise and other things from one side to the other, or transporting the slaves to their ceilings.

"Yeah boss, you're right."

"Well, that's a thing of the past, calm down a bit."

"Things haven't been this better in a while..."

"We'll rack up a lot of money! I'm gonna buy a house so I can live with my family..."

"Hahaha! I guess... I am happy for you, Pedro. Your little kids are an adorable bunch too!" Laughed Jack, completely changing his personality of a ruthless hunter to a gentlehearted man who acted with his subordinates as equals.

"You can come visit us at any time you want, boss, feel free!"

"Well, I'll think about it, but I am way too tall, kids get scared when I show in the orphanage sometimes, wahahaha!" Jack had a large laugh, filling his subordinates with cheerfulness despite their shady job.

"Hmm, come to think of it, what's up with those guys I sent? Is the job done already? should had been easy with the knife ears' tech we got..." Jack said while being slightly drunk after his second bottle of wine.

"Right... they had yet to come here, huh?"

"Maybe they're running away from the scene."

"I heard from someone nearby that there was a big explosion where the demon orphanage was, so they probably did it, boss."

"Ahh~ That's nice, now that really puts a smile on my face. I couldn't really concentrate each day knowing there was such a big nest of monsters there... I guess the Adventurers seen going to that place didn't stayed in, huh? That's good, they better not get involved with us... Those demons are gone from the picture now, I guess we can tell our kids they can sleep better knowing there won't be any little gremlin coming to bite them at night! Hahaha!"

As Jack and his subordinates laughed, the faint sounds of people being beaten down slowly began to enter the room from outside. The cries of pain and fists flying around quickly grew louder, as Jack quickly noticed something odd was going on, but it was too late.

BAAAAM!

Suddenly, a man suddenly broke through the door, falling in front of Jack, his entire body was covered in burns and fist marks, he seemed half-dead already. Jack's eyes opened wide as he saw two figures enter the room where he and his subordinates were organizing everything. One had bright red hair, with his fists blazing with flames, and the other had short white hair, darkness emanating from every inch of his body, both looked like the embodiment of fire and shadows.

Jack couldn't help but feel frightened by their very presence, jacking back on his seat as his eyebrows raised in utter disbelief... their whole auras gave out a threatening and very dangerous vibe. They were certainly not here to just make some business... Still, Jack tried to act friendly, knowing well their strength already.

"You can knock the door, you know?" He asked. "What business do you two require in my humble hideout?" Jack asked, beginning to sweat nervously.

Chapter 346 Confrontation

Allan and Shade easily got inside the hideout, destroying the magical system that only let those of the organization end would had been easy but they simply grabbed the unconscious bodies of the people they captured and then used Shade's [Shadow Puppeteer] Spell that allowed him to take control of an unconscious target. Like a puppet, he easily managed to get inside the hideout with it, beat down the guards, and left the door open for them to enter. After that, it was an adrenaline-filled rush of beating down people as "gently" as possible. Allan was simply punching them while covering his hands with Spiritual Flames, meanwhile, Shade simply kicked them. If both used anything else, they all would had died.

Well, Shade had the intention of killing them after seeing them enslaving and even planning and attempting to kill children just because they were demons, and Allan couldn't deny he had a murderous side that just wanted to do the same... However, deep down, Allan didn't wanted to do unnecessary slaughter. If there was a way to make these people pay without having to take away their lives, he preferred that. mostly because he was tired of killing, having killed since he was a mercenary child, he simply wanted to try for once to deal with things as peacefully as possible- or well, without killing more than anything, punching people until they were half-dead wasn't peaceful at all.

BAAAM!

When Allan punched one of the thugs so hard it broke the door leading to the boss of the organization, the two hurriedly entered the chamber, finding Jack, the leader of this group.

"You can knock the door, you know?" He asked. "What business do you two require in my humble hideout?" Jack asked, beginning to sweat nervously.

Allan and Shade seemed to have dead serious expressions in their faces.

"Jack Armstrong, a former soldier that participated in the war, specifically the battles that happened when the demon army invaded the Continent. A famous illegal slave trader, part-time bandit, that tries to help the needy and poor with the money he earns doing through the suffering of innocents. Is that you?" Asked Shade.

"Yes... that's me... N-Now, aren't you guys... Oh! I remember you two, the new Adventurers that got to town just a day ago!" Laughed Jack. "You came here to ask me something? I-I'll do anything for you, my friends! Want merchandise? I'll give you the best discount! I can sell you as many slaves as you want... So please, don't beat my guys any more... Or I'll have to step in."

"We came here from the thugs that you sent to blow up the orphanage with the demon and beast-in children. Are you the one behind this?" Asked Allan.

"Y-Yes... I guess there's no point in hiding this." Said Jack while shrugging, he looked at his subordinates as they immediately began to slowly run away from the hideout, but they were quickly stopped by Allan

and Shade's spirits. An enormous phoenix stopped them from running to the backrooms, while a grieving phantom stopped them from reaching anywhere else...

"Sadly we are not interested in doing any shady business with you." Said Allan. "We want you to free all the slaves here, that's all, and that you stop enslaving more people. We won't hurt you anymore and we'll leave you be."

"Eh? T-That's it?!" Asked Jack.

"Yeah." Said Shade.

"Well... That's not something... easy to do though! Our whole economy is sustained with slaves, and you want me to stop finding them? Sir, you two are exceedingly strong! Do you even care about these pathetic monsters?" Asked Jack while raising an eyebrow.

"They're people, not monsters." Said Shade.

"Give them to us..." Said Allan.

"Hahah..."

Jack laughed for a bit, as he looked at the two men in front of him. both were powerful... but so what? He had also been training his entire life, his Physique had already reached Rank 8 of Tier 3, and his Magic Circle wasn't weak, at Rank 7 of Tier 2! He considered himself one of the strongest people in the entire city, and dominated the red-light district with brute force but also a kind heart... He wasn't going to simply give up all his business because of these two random guys, even if they seemed powerful.

"You guys are hilarious... I guess I'll have to beat you two until you regain some of your senses." Said Jack. Like a typical thug, he wanted to resolve things with punches, and seemed to be even more unchangeable than his subordinates.

"I am not a weakling that will easily fall to one of your fists... After all, I am prepared with more than my own strength."

Jack smiled, the rings worn by his fingers suddenly began to shine with different colors, as the equipment he was wearing also channeled his Mana... He was obviously a warrior, but he seemed to also strengthen himself through using Mana and special Magic Accessories. His muscles suddenly began to bulge, as his entire size grew up to three times its original size, reaching almost four meters of height, he was a titan amongst men now.

His hair grew long like the mane of a lion, and the scars he had made in war were all shown like trophies, magical tattoos made of infused elemental runes began to emerge, shining brightly colorful across his scarred and hairy body, his rings enhanced this further, giving him a series of elemental spells to aid him in battle... he was a pure fighter that used heavy weapons to fight.

"Magic Weapon Summon, Elemental Hammer."

TRUUUMMM...!

Suddenly, the magic of his rings unified together, as a giant magical hammer emerged out of thin air, materializing from the elemental energies coming from his rings, hitting the ground and making it tremble. Allan and Shade seemed completely unamused, however.

"Heh, not even a change of expression, huh? I guess I'll beat you until you change your stiff faces..." Jack said cockily, holding into the gigantic hammer and then making it rest over his enormous shoulders. "I am not know as the Savage Hunter for nothing! I'll show you what I am made of!"

Allan and Shade looked at one another, as they suddenly nodded and began to...

Play rock paper scissor.

"Paper beats rock. I won." Said Shade.

"What?! Damn it..." Sighed Allan.

"WHAT THE FUCK ARE YOU TWO CLOWNS DOING?!" Jack roared, rushing towards them with all his strength.

CLAAASH!

Chapter 347 A True Monster

Jack furiously swung his gigantic magic hammer, which he was able to materialize through wearing all of his distinct magical rings. This was a special magic item he had commissioned to a very talented alchemist and crafter of magical tools in this city, and it took him a year and a half to get done. It contained incredible might, and the hammer had the power of various elements, capable of unleashing lightning, storming winds, fire, ice, and even the might of earth through deadly earthquakes. Anybody that has received a direct hit from it hasn't lived to tell the tale, dying squished like a pancake.

CLAAASH!

However...

"Huh?"

Shade intercepted the hammer with a single black dagger he took out from its sheath, unleashing a large quantity of darkness reminiscent of a black fog covering his weapon. A small dagger blocking a giant hammer... the mere thought of it was completely insane and out of place for Jack. But it was simply a thing of common sense for Shade, a man who didn't look like it, but whose Physique had reached Tier 10... Despite his specialization in flashy movements, his strength was completely in another level still.

"T-This is... impossible! How can you withstand my hammer with that tiny body of yours?!" Asked Jack in shock. It was a thing of logic after all, why would a titan lose in strength against a small figure like Shade? But the thing came to the quality of a physique.

Shade might look smaller, but his entire body was ripped beyond belief, each inch of his muscles had been refined constantly, becoming near incomparably strong. Each muscle was tight yet flexible, accumulating large quantities of mass was inefficient as his fighting style required him to move quickly

from one place to another. Based in weight alone, he was lighter than Jack, but Shade's body was a nest for Mana, by a mere thought, his body suddenly turned as heavy as a gigantic boulder.

"What sort... of technique did you use?!" Asked Jack.

"Technique? Yeah, I guess I used to use techniques..." Said Shade.

His body had evolve to the point that techniques that temporarily enhanced the body's weight, power, and speed were simply part of his own body, and emerged as a reaction against a threat. His own body adapted to the threat of an enormous weight swinging his way, and he merely increased his weight to withstand it. And about defense and endurance? He already had it.

"T-This is ridiculous...! You're just a tiny man in front of a titan such as me! This doesn't make sense!!!
RAAAAAAH!!!"

Jack desperately roared, unleashing countless attacks using his hammer against Shade! His hammer suddenly gained the element of fire and wind, unleashing a fiery blast with each hit, it was as if a gigantic explosion was generated with each hit of his hammer!

BOOOM! BOOOM! BOOOM! BOOOM!

The explosions made the enormous underground chamber tremble, cracks emerging in the floor, the walls, and even the ceiling, as the hits made gigantic earthquakes. The thugs were all cornering themselves out of fear, although they were also cheering for their boss.

"You're doing it boss, pulverize him!"

"Kill him!"

"Beat him!"

"GAHAHAHA! I bet your friend is a pile of mushy flesh now!" Jack stopped his barrage of attacks, as Allan noticed he was quite tired, gasping for air. Using this technique both drained his physical strength and magical power a lot.

However, when he took off his hammer from Shade, he quickly realized the young-looking man remained there... completely unfazed. Indeed, he wasn't even scratched, there were no wounds on his body. Jack's eyes felt completely filled with disbelief... He had never met a true monster before, calling demons and beast-kin as monsters... was a complete mistake.

He finally meet a true monster.

"Despite how young I look; I am a few years older than you." Said Shade. "When your Physique reaches Tier 8 onwards, you stop aging and even begin to look younger... Apparently, my lifespan was increased by several hundred years."

"W-Wha... T-Tier... 8?!" Asked Jack.

"No, my Physique is Tier 10." Said Shade.

"G-GAH...!" Jack couldn't help but groan in shock!

For some reason, he believed Shade completely! After seeing him withstand his hammer attacks, he was already being quickly brought outside of left field, he was going nuts by simply thinking about something so small-sized being able to withstand his hits! He even began to think he might be dreaming or something.

But no, this wasn't a dream, and Shade was indeed a true monster.

"Haha, come on, don't play with him so much." Said Allan while carefreely laughing a bit.

"Hm, true... I should finish him quickly. Silently, and without saying another word, that's why I was raised as an assassin... You and everyone else has made me too much of a talker." Sighed Shade.

FLASH!

In a split of a second, Shade disappeared.

"Eh?!"

No matter how enhanced Jack's senses were, he couldn't find Shade anywhere! He tried to follow his speed, but it was impossible, it was merely a black blur moving around, unpredictable!

FLASH! FLASH! FLASH!

"Ggrrr...! D-DON'T FUCK WITH MEEEE!" Jack roared, frustrated about everything, he enhanced his body with all the power and mana he had, and swung his hammer around him, spinning like a tornado!

FLUOOOOSHHH!!!

An enormous explosion of magical power erupted like a volcano, as Jack attempted to catch Shade within it!

However!

"Parry."

SLASH!

Jack suddenly felt something sharp piercing another thing made of metal, his own hammer. He suddenly lost all his momentum, falling to his knees into the floor. When he looked at his own weapon, he suddenly realized it had a long line going all the way towards his arms. The line was also going through both of his arms... for a split of a second, he was too confused, and felt no pain to notice.

But the second after, his hammer was sliced in half, and his arms... cut off.

BOOM!

"N-Ngh...! AAGGGGHHH...!"

Jack cried in agony, as rivers of blood came out of his muscular shoulders, his entire arms were sliced off cleanly! And all of this was merely provoked by Shade parrying his attack...

"W-What... what are you...?!" Cried Jack, gritting his teeth, his eyes filled with utter horror!

"I am a father." Sighed Shade. "And I am tired, let's get this done with."

Chapter 348 True Identities

Shade mercilessly cut down Jack's arms with a single and precise slash of his knife. His magic hammer, generated by the combination of a variety of magical accessories was also sliced in half. The destruction of this magic tool made all the accessories making it possible break immediately as well. Although it wasn't as if it mattered that they broke or not, as Jack now lacked arms and was bleeding intensively. His entire body also slowly went back to his original size, and things were looking quite grim for him, if someone didn't stop the bleeding, he would die very soon.

Jack slowly looked up to Shade's merciless blue eyes, they seemed to shine with a redder hue, until they turned completely red. These red eyes and his white hair made him look like an albino, or even worse, a demon. The darkness that emanated from his body truly made him look like the root of all evil. Despite that, he was a Hero of humanity, and someone that was supposedly given the title of a good person, someone that saved others and protected humans. But now, a human in front of him was at the verge of death because of his strength.

Well, it wasn't as if Shade had never killed humans before.

"Y-You're... R-Red Eyes... White hair... Ungh?! D-Don't tell me you're... From those damned Darkage Family?!" Jack cried in shock as he realized the overwhelmingly strong young man wasn't merely a strong Adventurer, but someone that belonged to a prestigious yet mysterious family within the Human Continent of Gallatea.

"Oh, so you know my family." Shade said in silence, his eyes slowly turned from red to blue as he calmed himself down. One of the abilities that such family had was the power to turn their eyes red-colored when they were enraged. This also caused their magic and physical power to multiply in a burst, feed over by how many blood they could spill over...

"Uugh... Aggh...! T-There's no way I would ever win... against a Darkage Family Member... A-After all, you're all cold-blooded assassins trained since children, aren't you? The weapons of the Empire... You're all monsters... But how is one of you still alive?! D-Didn't you all die?!" Asked Jack.

"Hey, hey, man, you're getting a bit off-topic here. Don't you think you're not the one here with the position to ask questions? I am impressed you're asking my friend things so leisurely after getting your arms chopped off. Do I have to cut down your legs to realize how fucked up you are?" Allan quickly came to the rescue, knowing that the memories of his family made Shade uncomfortable, especially of the event that happened over thirty years ago, the one that Jack had recalled.

"I lost... You win! Take whatever you want... It is not as if I can do anything... Kill me already then!" Jack roared. His bravery left the two heroes rather shocked. Allan sighed, as he waved his head and patted Shade's shoulders.

"This guy's nuts, just like us I guess. He's really to die anytime. Probably a thing that he got from the battlefield." Sighed Allan. "To tell you the truth, Jack, I kind of understand some of your reasoning, and the reasons behind what you're doing. Maybe if I had ended without developing enough empathy through my life, I might had felt the same way as you did. And I might had done even worst atrocities than I already did."

"Just who... who exactly are you two?" Asked Jack.

Without nothing to lose anymore, Allan and Shade decided to reveal their true identities to Jack. They had already checked around and disabled all sorts of magical tools with a mere wave of their Mana essence. Perhaps Jack thought he could record what he heard and some of his allies would eventually pick them up, but such opportunities were already taken away from him without the former soldier even realizing.

"Allan Bravo Firebrand, Hero of Blazing Flames... Some others called me the Hero of The Blazing Sword too." Allan said with a carefree smile, his shiny orange eyes blazed with fiery hue as his spiky red hair

gave away that his affinity with flames was so strong that even his hair and eye color turned close to the color of the fire he wielded, a particular characteristic of the Firebrand Family, where his mother belonged to.

"Shade Darkage, I am the Hero of Shadows. Others call me an Assassin." Shade said, his appearance alone gave a frightening look in the darkness, even more a his terrifying powers to control this element were unparalleled.

"H-H-Heroes?!" Jack muttered in shock. "U-Ungh... Y-You're the Heroes?! Why...? Why are you trying to protect the demons?!" Cried Jack.

"I knew you would ask that..." Sighed Allan. "I am too lazy to explain it to you, and its not like you'll ever understand."

"We have not turned our backs in humanity or something." Said Shade. "But as heroes, we feel the necessity to help people in need... Although I've killed many demon soldiers prepared to die, and I did not feel as much remorse for that, I have also... taken the lives of innocents out of the selfishness in my heart. As a way to selfishly redeem myself, I am trying to help these victims. I know fully well that my actions contradict themselves, but I am already too deep into this to stop. And I feel like, for the first time in years, I am finally obeying my utmost desires instead of obeying the orders of others."

"Y-You... You regret what you did... in the... war?" Jack asked, his vision was getting blurry and his breathing slow, the more blood he lost, the quicker he was dying.

"Yes... More or less." Sighed Allan. "Though I am not so gloomy about it... My friend here is very depressed. I have to cheer him up, and there's no way in hell I am letting you enslave these people either. We abolished slavery for a reason! You bastards bring it back right after we ended our job... You sicken me." Allan said with a disgusted expression on his face.

Jack never thought a Hero that saved humanity would say those words to him, who always thought he was fighting for humanity.

Chapter 349 Interrogations

"You know? I should burn you into ashes before you die out of bleeding..." Allan said. Suddenly leaving away the façade of the "good cop", as he quickly realized that leaving a witnesser alive would be no good either. He didn't wanted to kill, but this man that has been enslaving and selling off innocent people for years wasn't someone that deserved to live in his book. However, Shade stopped him.

"No. We said we wouldn't kill..." Said Shade. "I know this sounds stupid, but if we kill, we'll only continue an endless cycle of hatred and slaughter... I know it is ironic to say this despite being someone that has taken so many lives... But if we never truly make a difference starting with ourselves, then who else will do one? For my daughter too... I don't want to take more human lives. I promised to myself that I would better myself after she was born, that I would do things right this time..."

"Well, too bad." Allan said, completely surprising Shade by his sudden change of nature, as flames suddenly hit Jack and engulfed him in burning torture!

"GUUUAAAAHHHH...!"

"ALLAN, STOP!" Shade roared back at Allan, as his friend laughed a bit.

"Calm down! I am joking! Look, he's healing." Sighed Allan. He was always the one of the group that did jokes a bit too crude for the party's sense of humor. Shade noticed immediately that Jack's limbs had been reattached by the flames magical properties, and his wounds were healing too.

"Phoenix Flames..." Sighed Shade. "I almost forgot you had this."

"Allan, I've always told you to not use me for stupid jokes...!" Suddenly, a beautiful and small phoenix emerged at the left shoulder of Allan, his Phoenix Familiar.

"It is not a stupid joke, we are healing him, right, Phoenix?" Asked Allan while trying to appease the terrible temper of the Phoenix.

"Sigh... I am sorry Shade." Sighed the Phoenix. "I swear I didn't wanted to scare you. This idiot requested my help and forced my flames out."

"I-It's alright." Said Shade. "Maybe I need to relax for a bit myself. I'll go to bed after this is done." Shade spoke casually with a mythical spirit such as the Phoenix as if both had known each other for years.

"T-These flames... they don't hurt, they're healing me..." Jack said in surprise. "Why? Why are you not killing me? I thought you hated me for what I've done..."

"We do." Said Allan while sighing. "But we are not going to kill ya. We got our daughters waiting back at home. We can't just greet them the next morning like nothing after slaughtering a person... You know?"

"To be honest, I am quite impressed by how you're so two-faced to pretend that everything is alright with all those orphanage children you visit and help, after having enslaved and made suffer so many people... You even tried to kill so many innocent children only because they were the children of demons... But they're people at the end, the same as the kids you visit each day. You were just going to kill the same kids you protect... Don't you understand the insanity of your actions?" Shade spoke with a stoic demeanor, as Jack's eyes shone brightly, opening wide.

Not only this man had defeated him leisurely but now he was lecturing him. However, it felt as if something happened deep within Jack. He wasn't as unchangeable and immovable as the two thought. His mind was swarming with thoughts, considerations, and a sudden spark of guilty that quickly began to spread more and more. His face distorted slowly, despair showing on his face, he looked into the floor and then at his own hands, he looked at the subordinates trembling in the floor, hiding behind a large wooden box, and heard the cries of the slaves he had imprisoned and selfishly made suffer to no end.

"Don't you think you're even worse now than those you resent so much? You've become even more of a demon than any of the demons you ever fought." Said Shade.

"Shade lecturing him won't work, the other guys never changed-"

"What... I've done until now?"

"Eh?!"

Jack's words suddenly stopped Allan from speaking, as he quickly glanced at Jack with a face filled with utter disbelief! The muscular man was crying tears of regret while looking at his own hands in utter

disbelief. He was even trembling and breathing heavily! He, a burly and grown-up man that shouldn't even be trembling and crying like a little girl!

"W-What? Is this guy really crying? You're shitting me? Shade did you use some sort of spell...?" Asked Allan.

"No." Shade answered swiftly and emotionlessly. He seemed just as shocked as Allan. When Shade got surprised, he would become as stiff as a rock, just like right now, he looked like a statue staring down at Jack.

"I-I... You're right.. What... What have I been doing this entire time?! After experiencing near death... and realizing you're the heroes... I've always acted because I thought I was in the right, but aren't I the worst then? I've only done bad things after bad things, without stopping, always justifying myself by thinking that was... the demons deserved." Jack cried, tears flowing out of his eyes like rivers.

"No, he must be trying to trick us or something." Said Allan. "Reveal me the truth of your Heart." Sylphy's father quickly conjured the spell he copied from Mary with his amazing magic comprehension (acquired after intensive magic training by Faylen for over ten years), as he read through Jack's heart, his emotions, and truest intentions.

What showed there was an incredibly dark heart, but there were no longer bad intentions, only incredibly big amounts of guilt.

Was it truly possible to change a person's mind like this?

...Or maybe, Jack was simply too stupid and stubborn to realize he had been doing evil things, and finally realized it when two figures he admired told it to him straight to his face.

Chapter 350 Freeing The Slaves

Jack had a sudden change of heart! The sudden change completely left Allan and Shade shocked and threw them off completely. This wasn't something they expected to happen, but deep down they felt it was quite welcomed. Now the true question was... How could they use this to their benefit?

"Is there something I can do to help you? To redeem myself?" Asked Jack, supplicating the two heroes.
"I've always... since I was young that I admired the heroes, both of you... You brought down the Demon King and started a new Era of Peace..."

"He seems to be saying the truth." Said Allan.

"...I see." Shade said in disbelief.

The two heroes looked at one another and quickly ran away from Jack, beginning to speak with one another alone while ignoring the grieving Jack.

"So what do we do now?" Asked Allan.

"Our plans won't change; we'll rescue the slaves and then we'll delete their memories." Said Shade.

"But won't they just enslave again? What if we use Jack for our own benefit?" Asked Allan with a smile.

"Allan, no." Shade said, quickly rejecting Allan's wonderful idea.

"What do you mean 'no', bud? If we use him we could get connections with the other thugs and learn more about them so we can assault them better. We could even learn more things. Simply leaving them away would be wasteful, we have to use them instead. If it is to save those demon and beast-kin people, I don't think it's a bad idea at all..." Allan said while raising an eyebrow.

Shade remained in silence after hearing Allan speak, he couldn't help but feel like Allan was right.

But there was something that was stopping him from taking such a decision.

"...I don't feel it is alright to manipulate them. Wouldn't that be evil as well?" Sighed Shade.

"If by doing that we can save more lives, then it is not that bad. Don't look at everything with black and white... Sigh, this is the primary reason why you did the things you did as well, we were unable to see that everything was actually gray. There is never everything evil and bad, it always varies, changes, and everyone has their own views of morality..." Sighed Allan.

"...Fine." Shade was quickly convinced by Allan, being reminded of his past hit him strongly emotionally, so he ended giving up to his friend's idea when he considered the good things.

"But to reassure ourselves that they won't betray us..." Said Allan.

"Yeah... Come." Shade said, suddenly summoning Phantasmal Spirit as the zombie-like phantom emerged behind him, groaning lugubriously.

Allan quickly brought all the subordinates hiding, intimidating them with his presence alone, as everyone lined up in front of the two heroes.

"I accept your help, we'll use your assistance to learn more about this town, the other organizations that might be trafficking slaves, and more... However, we cannot easily trust you, therefore, we'll use a method that can ensure your cooperation to an extent, but also assure us that you won't go telling everybody about us." Shade said coldly, touching Jack's forehead as shadow chains emerged from his Phantasmal Spirit, flowing inside of Jack's entire body and chaining down his soul. The chains quickly spread out, chaining the souls of everybody else within this underground facility. Allan put the work to bring even those unconscious guys left outside.

"W-What are these chains?!"

"What did you do to us?!2

"M-My soul feels heavier... Wait! I can feel my soul now?!"

"This must be some sort of curse...!"

"That's right, it is something like a Curse. It is called Soul Chains, and you can call it a forced contract. With this, you'll be incapable of speaking the truth about us and many other things, to keep everything a secret. And also, it might ensure your loyalty over time, as you realize that going against us will only bring you more pain than anything else." Sighed Shade. He disliked using this, but he had used it many times in the past to apprehend and capture alive various foes.

"With this, you can trust us?" Wondered Jack.

"Mildly so, it doesn't stop you from thinking whatever you want, but lying to me will become difficult if you feel pain in the soul." Said Shade, his eyes slowly turned red out of nowhere, frightening the men in front of him.

"Now that we are done with this, all of you come to help us free the slaves. I also want you all to apologize to them." Said Allan. "I know it is rather childish, but it's the least you could do. Many of these people hate you to death, by freeing them, we are risking them attacking you or killing you, which we'll protect you from. The least you could do is apologize to them for the shit you've brought to their lives. Most if not all of these people had nothing to do with your personal problems but you blamed them for it, you have to know how much of a scum you are and repent." Allan ruthless said as the thugs in front of him looked at him hatefully, although a few of them began to realize that perhaps things were not so simple and that demons weren't simple evil just because they were demons.

However, it didn't matter what they felt within their hearts anymore as they were now chained with Soul Chains. After Allan and Shade gave them the orders, the thugs, led by Jack, quickly began to free all slaves with Allan and Shade's supervision. The two stopped various slaves from attacking the thugs with anything they found laying around, and had to explain to them that they were being freed now, at long last.

"Freedom... I am not going to be sold as a slave...?"

"Hahh... Thank you... Thank you so much..."

"But where do I go now? My entire tribe was burned down... I have nothing..."

"My mama... Sir Hero, can you find my mama?"

Most if not all the people here had nowhere to go now, those that lived in tribes had their homes burned down, and those kidnaped feared suddenly going back to society, only to be kidnaped again anyways...