

A Glitched 431

Chapter 431 Let's Enjoy The Present

I felt slightly more bitter and sorrowful as I continued thinking about everything. All of this piling up inside of my mind was killing my self-esteem...

"Hahh..."

"Sylphyyyy!"

However, the voice of someone that always brings me happiness resonated behind me.

It was Aquarina running to my side hurriedly.

"Aquarina...?"

"Sylphy!"

Aquarina suddenly jumped over me out of nowhere, hugging me tightly.

"E-Eeh?!"

"Dinner's ready! Heheh..."

"Ah..."

Without thinking it, I ended hugging her back, tightly, and rubbing my face over her shoulders.

"S-Sylphy? Don't you want to go eat?"

"I do but... Can we hug a bit more?"

"A-Ah... S-Sure..."

Her warmth was so comforting that it made most of my worries disappear, even if momentarily.

"Is something wrong?" She wondered. "I know you're tired about everything that happened today... but let's go eat so you can feel better."

"Hmm... I know." I sighed. "I was just thinking..."

Aquarina quickly freed herself from my hug, sitting over the grass.

"What were you thinking?" She asked, tilting her head curiously.

"I.... Have you never wondered how this world just continues to move forward, no matter what we do, and no matter what we think, it never stops?" I asked.

"H-Huh?" Aquarina seemed slightly confused at first, but she nodded. "Yeah... Papa always says that no matter what we do, we can't stop the world from moving."

"Shade said so?" I wondered.

"Papa... Papa said that no matter what we do, we can't stop time to take things easy and slowly process everything. We can't stop the world so it can go our way either... It always goes its own way." Aquarina said.

"Oh... Well, yeah..." I sighed. "I share his opinions."

"But..." Aquarina continued. "Mom always tells him that even if the world cannot be changed by our efforts, that at the very least, we can try to change as many lives as we can. It is better than nothing, right?"

"..."

For a moment, I found myself brought into complete silence.

Her response was very simple...

Yet it somehow made me realize that perhaps... I was seeing things too broadly.

Way too broadly for me to also see the small picture.

Perhaps, it is not always right to see things as the big picture.

Maybe concentrating into what's in front of you could save and change more lives than trying to change things as a whole.

I guess a part of my own self was being slightly over ambitious...

The power I hold might have amazing possibilities, but as of now, it is not as if I can just use it to resolve everything I want to.

"Sylphy, are you okay? Have you been worrying about stuff?" Aquarina gently asked, sitting at my side.

"Hmm... A bit..." I sighed. "Aquarina, don't you ever wonder what's going to be of our lives in this chaotic world?"

"Chaotic world?" Wondered Aquarina. "But don't you see? Tonight's a beautiful night... it is all... peaceful!"

"Ah..."

Aquarina pointed at the sky, the stars, as her beautiful blue eyes shone brightly and innocently.

"Yeah... You're right. It is... it is a beautiful world, isn't it?" I sighed, as I petted her head.

"Yeah!" She answered. "Now let's go eat, I am starving!" Aquarina held my hand and quickly forced me to stand up, leading me to the camp.

Maybe I should take it easy for now...

And just enjoy the present.

Worrying about everything all the time might really not be the right thing to do.

I suppose I am really a privileged person to be letting my mind get tormented by such thoughts when there are so many people out there just living day by day however they can.

Maybe there's one or two things I can learn from these people.

"Aquarina..."

"Hm?"

We suddenly stopped walking as I held her hand.

"I... I really appreciate your friendship this entire time..."

"E-Eh? You do?"

Aquarina seemed slightly flustered.

"Yeah... Thanks for cheering me up, I was really gloomy."

"Aw geez... Don't be like that! Come on, let's go eat!"

"Hahah... Alright, I am actually starving too! I can't believe I let my mind just make me forget that! I'm going to eat a whole cow!"

"Hahaha! How can you eat a whole cow? There's no way!"

We giggled like little girls, as we ran into the camp and we were greeted by everyone there. Zack was eating a big piece of meat stuck to a big bone by himself, while the rest were still preparing the food. My mother hugged me and gave me a kiss in my forehead.

"How are you feeling dear?"

"I'm good... A bit tired, that's all!"

"Hmm... I see."

She seemed to have not noticed the Curse I have, perhaps because it is incredibly strong, or maybe because I chained it with the System's power after modifying it.

"In a week and a half we'll be leaving this town, I hope that things can go well until then. I am excited to show you my home, even if... there are several people I would rather not meet again, there's still a lot of things you should learn there." She said. "Ah, though the trip to the sea is surely going to be a pain..."

"Hahah, it will really be..." My father laughed behind my mother. "Your mother is seasick so she hates traveling through boats... We'll have to let the baby be born first before going through the sea tough, so she doesn't have any complications there."

"R-Right... Well, it should be born soon, right?" I wondered.

"Yeah, in a bit more of time you'll have a little sibling!" My mother said. "Make sure to take good care of him or her, okay?"

"Sure!"

Honestly, I can't believe I let my thoughts get the better of me back then. I even have a little sibling coming to my life soon. How can I even feel bad like that when I am going to become a big sister?

I'll be happily waiting for the baby to come to this world!

Chapter 432 The Abyssal Eye

Within a secret and dark hideout, a group of demons gathered surrounding a large, round table. They covered their faces with masks and their bodies with long and black robes, each one seemed not willing to show their faces, even though they knew one another quite well.

They were a large group of resentful people, they were filled with hatred and frustration, and an undying desire for revenge. After having suffered so much against the tyranny of the humans who had not only never stopped treating them terrible after the war, but also have begun to enslave them and treat them like items, they were tired.

It was enough...

For them, who have hidden in the shadows, for those who have smiled pretending to be happy in a place that was unwelcoming of their kin. In a world where their children were enslaved and raped, a world where they were tortured and humiliated... how could they possibly feel happiness and fulfillment? How could they possibly live freely and peacefully?

When the war was finally over, thousands of demons ended being trapped in the human continent. Without any way to go back home through the dangerous Dark Seas at all, they were forced to adapt to human society.

At first, they thought they could run away, forming tribes, and living near mountains or in grasslands and woods isolated from the humans. They thought they could live freely and peacefully, only to be hunted down like monsters, one by one.

Those that ended being captured were tortured and enslaved, forced to work from day to night, many died out of exhaustion, while those unlucky enough to survive more, went through even worse fates. The surviving soldiers that didn't wanted to fight anymore now that the war was over were simply turned into slaves and forced to do horrid things, tortured by sick aristocrats, and made into sexual toys for the most sickest of them all.

Certainly, there was no right or wrong, humans might had gone through similar things back in the Demon Continent, or even worse ones, but what this group of demons was going through, and what even their children born in here had experienced was something that had now been deeply ingrained into their bloodlines. This hatred... this fury... this resentment... it cannot be easily contained anymore.

But they knew they didn't had the strength to fight back. Of course, not until THEY appeared. A group of demons that didn't originated from this continent, a group of demons that were not the children of the thousands of soldiers trapped in the human continent, but those born in the Demon Continent itself.

They called themselves... The Abyssal Eye.

Led by several remnants of the Demon King, the Demon Lords, their mission was to free the Demons of this continent and those of their own continent. Sent specially to this continent and this location as it had the largest concentration of their kin, they hurriedly offered these oppressed people a chance to change their fates.

A specially talented young woman amongst the demons accepted almost immediately when the chance was finally given to her. She, part of the new generation of demons born in the oppressed lands of the human continent who had been protecting her kin since she had consciousness of herself using the powers inherited from her mother, had been waiting for such a chance all these years.

And like this, six years ago, their plans began. And now, after six years of arduous planning, their plans seemed to be slowly falling apart, as a group of mysterious S-Rank Adventurers appeared in the city...

"Not only these bastards stopped our first attempt at attacking the city when we provoked the Dungeon Break, but they had dared to find our third hideout in the depths of the Wolf Steppes?! How did they even pass through the territory that young Fenrir was protecting? Are they strong enough to even make the Fenrir wary of them?!"

BAAAM!

Suddenly, a green-skinned demon hit the table, only his green-skinned hands could be seen below his black robes, as a few rings adorned his fingers.

"Calm down, brother." Sighed the voice of a young woman, her distinctive blue hair quickly made everyone realize that she had a higher authority than them, her strength was almost unparalleled.

"It wasn't within our expectations, but we had managed to clean the area from most things, and well, that place was our third hideout. We were only making an experiment there with the Flesh Demon." Added a second female voice, her hair was red and her mask resembled a fox.

"Nonetheless, that Flesh Demon was powerful, but it didn't obey our orders after growing so big, so we ended sealing him there..." Sighed another. "It is better it got slain than if it had gone out of control..."

"We used many souls from our resentful brothers and sisters to create him but at the end it was all wasted..." Another said.

"However..." The blue-haired young woman said, as her tail began waving around. "We already have our next plan scheduled. And this time, they won't be able to easily save them. After all, from our spies spying the aristocrats, they're current focusing themselves on learning what's going on with the slaves."

"Sigh... to think slaves are being brought in masse now, can we even free our people now?" Wondered another.

"Calm down." The blue haired woman said. "After we deal with the bourgeois, those of the underworld wont be of any use for us, we'll slain them easily and take back our people which they generously bought for us. I don't know how that small organization got so much money to buy so many slaves, but it is not like it is not making our job easier."

"I suppose you're right, leader."

"We'll have to wait a bit longer."

"I hope they can muster for a while."

"Our people have stronger wills and bodies than humans, they can wait longer, it won't be long before we take over this place, and free them."

"S-Rank Adventurers or not... True Demons have incredibly strength... Fufu, I wonder if they can deal with the menace we'll throw at this city soon..." The blue haired woman giggled devilishly, looking into an enormous red crystal glowing behind them all.

It emanated a monstrous quantity of demonic energy, as thousands of souls wailed within its interior...

Chapter 433 Corrupt Nobles

Within the castle of Eastgrain, many aristocrats gathered for an emergency meeting between them all, called by nobody else than the Lord of this Fiefdom, the son of the former lord who was overthrown through a coup d'état his son settled on him. This enormous country has been brought through countless political fights and problems, most of the time, regarding the large population of demons.

The previous Lord desired the demons to live in peace with humans and tried to use the funds of the country towards that. However, due to the distaste of his son towards his father's ideologies, he gathered many that thought like him and overthrow the current government, going as far as killing his own father to take over the throne.

Since that day, many of the laws put to protect demons were taken away and the demons were brought back to their former non-citizen status, treated lesser than dogs, enslaved, mistreated, and used as objects. Since that day, the new Lord had thought that things would finally go his way, and that this fiefdom would finally become his ideal country.

But that wasn't the case, year after year, there were disputes between the selfish aristocrats he put below his command. The only ones that ended accepting such a thing as a coup d'état were old and conservational men that only cared about their own pockets, sharing, and caring for the rest of the population was never part of their plans, and he had a very hard time trying to make them donate to the country so things could be improved regarding the enormous percentage of the population which was in poverty.

Despite his wicked ways, the Lord still cared about his own people, the humans, and wanted them to flourish and live happily after the war that shook the entire continent years ago. However, his ideal world was far from his reach, the people he had given the titles to command this fiefdom were terrible at their job...

At the end, expansion plans were always held on halt as the other aristocrats didn't want nor agreed to them and wanted to earn money in the cheapest and easiest ways possible. Some of them included making of this fiefdom's greatest source of income the illegal sale of slaves, alongside colluding with criminal organizations to exploit the citizens with drugs and other things, generating money without having to waste any in exchange. Instead of being worried about the production of food and more, the only thing they wanted is to become richer and richer in the easiest of methods possible.

This clearly frustrated the Lord, who had attempted to force them to cooperate with him, but time and time again, he had been stopped by his own supporters who threatened him with the power they had accumulated... And now, from all things, a thing as big as a Dungeon Break occurred, killing dozens of innocents in the process. However, although this was a catastrophe provoked by a mysterious demon cult, the nobles present here were all worried because of another matter, which was much more important to them than dealing with this mysterious cult capable of summoning a True Demon and provoking Dungeon Breaks.

"There are no slaves!"

BAAAM!

A fat man wearing golden clothes hit the table furiously, the other men, mostly all fat as well, also agreed with his rage.

"Slaves?" The young lord asked intrigued.

"Haven't you learned, my lord? All the organizations that carry the handle of slaves had begun to sell all their products to a single and small organization! Without them available, how can we even continue living?" Wondered a second fat noble.

"Don't you think they might be planning to resell them later?" Sighed the young Lord.

"Wha...?! Of course we thought that beforehand!" One of them said. "We attempted to contact them, but time and time again, they only offered their other products and nothing else... they want to sell the slaves to another country or something! those slaves are our property! They should give them over!"

"Are slaves that important?" Sighed the Lord. "Shouldn't we use this opportunity that you're not focused on them so we can improve the daily life of our people? Also, the investigation of the cult, has it given any fruits?"

"Hm? Ah... the investigation? Well, if you were not so unwilling to help us get our slaves back, we would... be more willing to help you in that as well, milord." Said the man that had previous slammed the table with his big and fat arms.

"What?! So you've not done a single thing this entire time while I have employed almost all my knights into this investigation?!" Asked the Lord. "I have also tried employing adventurers but we have completely lost their trust after we allowed that dungeon break to happen out of nowhere, and those S Ranked Adventurers have completely ignored all my attempts at communicating with them..." The young lord sighed, as if tired of everything.

"Milord, with all due respect, if you aid us at assessing the slaves-"

"ENOUGH WITH THAT!"

BAAAM!

The young lord slammed the table now, shattering it with his innate strength. Although he wasn't the strongest out there, he was a man who had reached Tier 3 of his Physique through intensive physical training since he was four years of age, he was strong enough that he could easily kill single-handedly every pig sitting around this table... but he knew that their connections could easily put too much trouble on his life, especially to his family.

However, right now, he was growing desperate, the threat of the Demon Cult was a real thing, and he simply couldn't let that keep going on for too long.

"T-Then we should simply apprehend all the demons in the city, no? There are still a few that are living normally..."

"Yeah! That big orphanage over there, specially..."

"Most of the free demons are living on the slums, we should go pick them up then."

"Tch..." The young lord sighed, he felt like the only thing these twisted men only thought about was having slaves, collecting slaves, raping slaves, torturing slaves, and getting even more.

However, what they said made some sense to him, if they could simply capture as many demons as they could, they could easily find out more about this demon-exclusive cult by interrogating them all.

Children or not... they were all demons after all.

"Go on then... Do that." He sighed.

Chapter 434 A Week Later

It has been a week since the incident at the wolf's steppes, and a lot of things have happened in this little time frame. First of all, there's a lot of new people around the entire camp! Like... over fifty people were added through the entire week, they are all either demons or beast-kin rescued from slavery by my parents and the other adult's special strategy of pretending to be part of the criminal organizations and shadily buy all the slaves for themselves! This has also caused an immense drought of slaves in the entire city, and the nobles are raging stupidly at that!

And regarding the nobles, they had not been freed from the former's hero's punishment, as many of the slaves they held captive had been disappearing over time. Shade and my father ended infiltrating the houses of many nobles and used Shade's amazing shadow magic and stealth abilities to bring as many slaves as they could without leaving any clues at all. Many nobles had woken up through the week without a single slave now, completely despairing.

There's a lot of people now, and our small tribe is becoming more like a small village at this point. Many slaves were still traumatized, but over the week they had grown slightly more calmer and had lowered their guards enough for my mother to heal any wounds they had been hiding. And above all...

"Mama! Look! Mister Teddy was repaired by Uncle Shade, did you know?"

"Oh, is that so, dear? I am glad. I can't believe there's still such good people out there..."

"Uncle Shade and everyone else here is super nice! They always give me yummy food and played with me... But I missed you a lot!"

"I missed you a lot too, Celica..."

Just two days ago, my father and Shade brought a dozen of slaves they bought and ended bringing Celica's mother as well. Celica ended waking up yesterday with her mother sleeping at her side in her bed, which was a very emotional encounter. And this morning, both were enjoying breakfast with us.

Celica's mother name was Cecilia, and she was as very gentle-hearted woman that said she was indebted with my parents and Aquarina's parents.

"Sylphy's smiling!" Celica pointed at me as I couldn't help but smile as the two enjoyed a peaceful morning, something that they might had never had the chance to do in a long while.

"A-Ah... Hahah... I am just happy that you got your mother back, Celica." I sighed.

"You must be Sylphy, Celica has talked to me about you... You're like her big sister at this point. Thank you for taking care of her." Her mother bowed her head to me.

"Uwah! I-It's nothing, please don't bow your head!" I tried to stop her.

"In my culture, we bow our heads to show gratitude, it is not something I cannot do..." Celica's mother said with a smile. "But you're a very humble girl. I hope you can continue being my daughter's friend..."

"O-Of course! Right, Celica?" I asked.

"Yeah! Fwends!" Celica raised her tiny hands happily.

Cecilia smiled once more, as her eyes seemed to have regained their light. I still remember how she looked when she was brought here. Her eyes were dark as the void, as if she had lost all hope, all emotions, everything. Whatever they did to her when she was enslaved, it had completely broken her spirit.

However, the moment she saw her daughter once more, probably as she had assumed she had died, it felt as if her entire soul came back to her body. She felt incredibly happy and spirited. It wasn't as if those traumas she suffered went away, but something more important than her own life appeared before her once more, something that took priority above all else...

"You know... Back then, I really thought... I... I really thought that my little baby had... that she..." Cecilia muttered, as she began to cry.

"Mama?" Celica asked surprised.

Cecilia desperately hugged her daughter again, as she cried.

"I really thought she wasn't alive anymore..." She cried. "What those people did to us... I really thought that a child wouldn't even be able to survive something like that... I am so happy you're so healthy and unscathed... that you have... kept the innocence that I remember my baby to always have."

"Mama... Don't cry...!" Celica pouted, as she caressed her mother's face, cleaning her tears. "Mama's pretty when she smiles...!"

"C-Celica..." Her mother, however, couldn't help but cry even more.

"Come on now, Cecilia." My mother quickly interrupted her tears, serving some food over the table. Freshly baked bread, ham, cheese, milk, grilled meat in large quantities, rice, stew, and soup. It was an enormous feast for everyone. "Let's enjoy some food, alright? I am sure that it will warm your heart."

"Thank you..." Cecilia quickly began eating with her daughter happily.

"There's sure a lot of people nowadays..." Sighed Aquarina. Alongside our table, there were a dozen more with tons of people enjoying breakfast as well. We had to go hunt almost daily to feed everyone, but it also counted as our training so we usually didn't complained.

"In a week the population of the tribe almost doubled, it's insane." Zack added. "But what's more insane is that Sylphy got that giant wolf!"

"Ahaha... he's actually Furoh, I've already told you its not the actual Fenrir!" I sighed.

"B-But it can even conjure magic like the Fenrir!" Zack said.

"It is part of Furoh's' abilities... He can copy part of the power of what he mimics." I said, explaining Zack this "unfair" familiar I had for like the tenth time this week.

Furoh went from completely unknown to many to a loved partner that everyone seemed to have grown closer. Some even called him the wolf of the tribe and the guardian. He had never been given this much love before, so he had felt very happy about it.

"I can't believe he's the same guy we found in that old dungeon..." Zack sighed.

Chapter 435 Moving On

After breakfast was done, we gathered in the big camp where my parents and the other adults usually did their meetings. This time they were addressing what we would do today. In a few more days, we would had gathered all slaves, demons, and beast-kin, who were the oppressed tribes of this area, and bring them with us. It seems there are many more separated into wild tribes in the wilderness, but those that had survived enough seem to have learned ways to hide from the humans, so they might not need our aid.

My parents don't really want to get involved with literally everything, so this was most likely their limit. We had already taken almost two hundred people with us so... yeah, we can't just leisurely take even more. In fact I don't even know how we'll cross the sea at the same time with so many people with us. We'll definitely need a gigantic ship.

Nonetheless, what they were addressing today was the Cult's issues. As we were also part of the team that fought against them, even us kids were involved into these "adult conversations" as Aquarina and Zack called them.

Last week, my parents successfully removed the bombs from the bodies of the cult members they captured and managed to get to interrogate them, but even when being forced, they never spoke. So they had to use magic to take a peek into their minds. However, what they saw seemed rather... ugly. Apparently their very memories were foggy, as if black fog covered most of them, so even with that, they only managed to gather fragments of knowledge.

The people of the cult were not disposed of or anything, and when they came back to their own senses, due to their memories being disrupted, they had lost most of their memories and only remembered

most things before joining the cult. Most of these people were slum dwellers that worked for criminal organizations and were former slaves. My parents decided to take them in and ended putting some Soul Chains into them so they wouldn't dare betray us. Soul Chains seem to be some sort of special bow into the soul.

However, everyone gathered together every piece of memories they got, quickly learning a few things. The Cultists were being helped by a group of demons coming from the demon continent named Abyssal Eyes, and that there was a blue-haired leader leading them, which I quickly recognized as the same young woman I fought back then in the Dungeon Break. Aside from that, we only learned that they had a large "Demonic Core", a strange item they forged using forbidden magic and the materials extracted from demon bodies.

My parents and the rest of the adults had been using their methods to search for high concentrations of demonic energy around the city and the surroundings, trying to find their hideout, but we had yet to find any clues... And well, about the Chaotic Cocoon dwelling inside the dungeon, my father and Shade went to look at it the other day but found nothing in the dungeon. It might seem as if it had disappeared, or well... someone took it away.

Because of that, speculations about the cult having brought that concentration of miasma into the dungeon for some nefarious purpose rose within our family, and my mother fervently believed they might want to use it for something, perhaps another attack in the city. This time, perhaps, aiming at the nobles they despise so much.

However, our plans were still as usual, we were going to go visit the orphanage today as well and then probably my parents will tell the nuns about their plan of leaving this place, they'll do everything they can to persuade them, knowing full well they might try to reject their offer.

If possible, I also want Celeste and Mist to come with us, those two are already our friends as well... Ah right, we caught the guys that beat up Mist back then... To say the least, my father was not very merciful with them, Shade as well... I wasn't there to witness it but mother said it took her a bit of effort to heal the hundreds of broken bones they left on them. Yet somehow they still didn't kill them, and just made them into their underlings, forcing them to join the criminal organization they took over.

"We'll have to tell them everything we can to convince them about this." Sighed my father. "So we should be prepared to even reveal them the truth about our identities as heroes. Perhaps that might earn more credibility too."

"I guess you're right..." Shade said. "But what if even after that they don't want to?"

"T-Then for their safety... We might force them using magic." Sighed my father.

"Eh? Is that really okay?" I said.

"Sylphy, their stubbornness will only end up killing them sooner or later. It would be better to simply use magic to convince them and then bring them with us. We can apologize to them later. And I am willing to gain their hatred if that's necessary to save their lives." My father said without hesitation.

"Yeah... I guess." My mother didn't seem to want to argue with my father about this.

"Mother are you coming too?" I wondered.

"Y-Yeah, although my belly is getting bigger, it would be better if I go with everyone so we can convince them easily. The nuns and I forged a strong bond together." Said my mother.

"Aw... Well, whatever." I sighed.

"For now we still have to be wary..." My father said. "We don't know when they can attack once more."

"I wish things would be different..." Sighed Shade. "But these people's resentment is simply too strong."

"But aren't the Abyssal Eyes the bad ones here? They probably brainwashed the people here to do what they wanted!" Zack angrily said.

"I wish it could be that simple." Ninhursag said with a gentle smile. "But it really isn't, Zack... These people only seem to have given them the tools, but the resentment and hate... and everything else... it comes from their hearts."

Chapter 436 United Hearts

"Yeah, it is not so easy, Zack." My father replied, as the young boy lowered his head and remained in silence, it seems he felt ashamed to think that.

"These people had been harboring the hate for a while." Said Nepheline. "Well, we can't just always blame humans, right? Demons have also done an enormous part of the damage as well. There's just... no side that is right or wrong. But I still believe we are heroes, somewhat... Our duty as heroes is to protect innocent people, not just to protect a certain group from the other."

"Indeed, the demons also attacked, both sides are... well, I guess they're both victims and the perpetrators at the end. It is an endless cycle of revenge, war, and death..." My mother sighed.

Suddenly Aquarina and Zack felt very down, as they were listening to very heavy stuff.

"Faylen, don't talk about that in such a way." Sighed my father.

"Ah... Sorry. You kids have grown so fast now that I sometimes forget that you're still young... Maybe you shouldn't be present here..." My mother began wondering.

"No, we want to stay...!" Aquarina said. "W-We have already fought against these people firsthand; we have gone through all these things as well... we can't just ignore them..."

"Yeah, I know its hard but I want to know more. If I'll ever grow into the left hand of Aquarina and Sylphy, two future heroes... that's the least I can do." Zack said. He seemed to be very decided to become our "right hand" as an ally and reliable warrior as we move forwards in our future lives as heroes.

I don't really want to be a Hero myself, but I've been given the Divine Blessing already, everyone here is expecting me and Aquarina to take a decision eventually. With the strength we have and which will simply continue growing more in the future... I guess that's inevitable.

"I agree. I don't mind hearing these things and... well, I kind of agree with mom... It always feels like an endless cycle. I wonder if there'll ever be a way to stop this cycle somehow." I sighed.

"Many have tried, we are not the first heroes to have existed after all..." Shade added. "But they always end in obscurity, and the cycle continues without stopping. Sometimes it makes you feel like everything's hopeless."

"Shade..." Nepheline said, looking at her husband.

"Papa... N-Not everything is hopeless! Don't think so gloomily!" Aquarina reprimanded her father. "A-As long as we can help the people here... even if a little, we can make a change! Right? What always matters is the present! You've... always said that to me."

Shade's blue eyes shone brightly, filled with emotions.

"You're right..." He sighed with a smile, caressing his daughter's head. "As long as we can do a small change, even if small, even if temporary... we'll be doing our duty, and we'll be helping innocents."

"Isn't that the truth of our duty?" Said my father. "We can't really fathom to change the world... But we can change the small things we come across. With your strength, it is more than a given."

"I know this sound childish but as long as we keep ahold of this hope, we can continue moving forward without feeling regrets." Nepheline added.

"Well said my friend. I might not be a True Hero, but I have the strength to help, I'll do anything I can as well, even if these people are not related to me, and even if these things might not change things as a whole... I simply can't stand still having this strength and merely seeing how things end up becoming more catastrophic." Sighed Ninhursag. "Back then, I didn't had the strength to change my fate, I didn't had the power to do a single thing... Now that I have it and I can do something about the fate of others, why wouldn't I?"

At Ninhursag words, everyone nodded in unison. Zack seemed to see his adoptive mother with yet even more admiration.

"I can't disappoint my boy after all." Ninhursag said with a smile, patting Zack's head, and then giving him a kiss on his forehead.

"Ninhursag..." Zack felt moved.

As everyone spoke and was decided, the elves seemed to be more silent, me included.

"Hahah... You guys are always so spirited. Humans are sure amazing." My uncle laughed.

"They indeed are." My mother sighed. "That's why I've fallen in love with one."

"And from that "forbidden" love, little Sylphy came." Said Arafunn, a charming smile directed itself at me.

"Eh? Ah..." I felt slightly embarrassed when they spoke about me like that.

My mother suddenly approached me as she hugged me.

"Sylphy... Whatever decision you take in the future... I know it will be the right one. I will support you, no matter what."

"Mom..."

"Even if you choose to not be a hero, even if you choose to simply live your life as you please... Even if you simply adventure across the world, or close yourself inside a mountain... I'll support you."

"Ah..."

"I don't want to... put the responsibility of what we are to my daughter. That's not why I've been fighting all this time. So until the end of my days, I'll be a hero instead."

My mother smiled honestly, kissing my forehead.

"Of course! We are fighting all this time, trying to make a better future however we can because we want our kids to live as they please, in peace." Said my father.

"For now, let's do what we can." Said Shade. "As long as I have my daughter and my wife, I think I can do anything."

"Me too." Said Nepheline.

"Hahahah~ Oh my! You're all so cheery! Sigh... I guess I'll have to just join the fray, right? I'll support you all, my old friends!" My uncle said, suddenly feeling motivated for the first time since I meet him. "Onwards!"

Arafunn was the most charismatic man I've met, leading the party of heroes with his showiness.

Chapter 437 The Present Is A Gift

As we moved back to the city, I continued thinking about what mother had told me... About taking the responsibility by herself, as long as she could be alive.

But aren't elves very long lived? Is mother planning to be a Hero for thousands of years?

Even when... father, Shade, Nepheline, Ninhursag, or everyone here pass away... Will she continue doing "her duty" for her friend's legacy?

Ah... It is sad to think about it that way.

I've been having a blast through my entire life that I didn't realized eight years had already passed.

Life goes so fast when you're having fun...

Eventually, will I live as long as well?

Will I... see Aquarina and Zack... pass away as well?

Just thinking about it makes me so depressed...

But mother is an elf like me...

Maybe it is also my duty to stay at her side for all these years.

Maybe that's a part of my purpose too? To give my beloved mother company through her long life?

Huh...

Well, it is not worth it to overthink it.

If I overthink it, I may end up all sad like yesterday.

I love Aquarina and Zack so much... I can't really think about seeing them old and wrinkly and then... pass away.

It would literally kill me.

Ugh...

Has my mother also seen other friends she had in the past pass away similarly?

And uncle Arafunn, who has lived even longer, might have gone through similar things as well, perhaps even more than my mother, who lived in seclusion for hundreds of years.

Suddenly, I felt the large hand of my father petting my head.

It was warm and comforting.

"What's gotten into you? Are you gloomy, Sylphy?"

"I... Ah... Nothing..."

"Hmm..."

My father seemed a bit curious about what I had in mind.

But then he smiled.

"Sylphy, just take it easy."

"Eh?"

"You're young, you've got a ton to live. You've got friends, and parents that will do anything for you."

"Ah..."

"Just live the present, don't think too much about a future that has yet to come."

"..."

"After all... The present is called like that because it is a gift! This life, this world... I love it all, you know?"

"Even after all you've gone through?"

"Of course!"

My father then spread out his arms, pointing at the beautiful blue sky, the clouds, the sun, the surrounding grasslands, the woods, the rivers, lakes, animals, people, towns, everything.

"Isn't all of this... Just amazing? It's beautiful."

"..."

I looked around, and then I also realized it was all so beautiful and calm somehow... even after I had already fought monsters, true demons, and everything else.

"Right... You're right dad!"

"Right? Heheh... Come here!"

My father quickly held me with his big arms, lifting me up.

"Let's see if you can reach the sky!"

"Uwaah! Papa you're lifting me too high!"

"Hahahah! Soar the skies, my daughter!"

My father lifted me high and then began moving me. I couldn't help but play along, as it felt like I was a bird flying around. With magic I had yet to fully become capable of flight, so this was actually quite fun.

"Geez, can't you give our girl a break, Allan?" Sighed my mother, giving my father a karate chop in the head.

BAAM!

"Geh...! S-Sorry, okay sorry! I got a bit carried away..."

My father quickly let go of me as he apologized.

"Ugh... My belly was shaken too much..."

"See? She got nauseas because you lifted her too much! Geez, you really act like a kid sometimes!"

"Hahah... Sorry, sorry!"

My mother reprimanded my father as my father laughed a bit.

These scenes were all I was living for to be honest.

Seeing the two of them just interact like wife and husband without a worry of the world.

"Sylphy, you're really a spoiled girl sometimes!" Aquarina pointed out, walking to my side.

"Eehh? Aren't you though?" I asked with a smirk.

"M-Me? Papa... doesn't spoil me that much..." Aquarina blushed a bit.

"Aquarina, I think your custom equipment will be done soon, let's go look for it. We can also buy you sweets if you want to." Said her father.

"Yeah... Oh! How about we buy you some new clothes though? I am sure you're bored of the same tribal clothes, right? My daughter will look precious with some dresses, or maybe some shorts or a skirt?" Nepheline wondered.

"W-Wha...? Well... sounds like fun!" Aquarina said cheerily.

"Ehhh~? So you said you weren't a spoiled girl, huh?" I wondered while raising an eyebrow.

"T-That's totally not it! Papa and mama are just... doing the bare minimum...." Aquarina said while averting her gaze from me.

"Hahaha, you can't really run away from that now, Aquarina." Zack laughed.

"Uuughh..." Aquarina felt slightly embarrassed.

"Here we are then!"

My cheerful father pointed at the gates. Just by seeing my father's face, the guards immediately made way for us to enter without issues. It seems he had already made himself quite famous around these places.

"G-Good day sir!"

"Have a nice trip!"

"I hope you have a good day!"

The three guards, including the one that got punched by my father back then, all lowered their heads to him.

"Hahaha, thanks!" He said with a cheerful smile, patting their shoulders.

As we walked forward, I noticed the hateful look of the guard my father had punched. He really was looking at us with a murderous intent... Did father had to punch him?

Ah well, I would had ended doing the same if he didn't do it anyways. We didn't brought Celica nor her mother today because it was more safe to keep them in the camp. Celica really wanted to meet Mist and Celeste, and show them her mother, but that'll have to be for later.

When we finally arrived at the streets where the orphanage was located, we found a commotion. There was a large group of guards holding weapons in front of the orphanage, trying to break through the magic barrier my mother set up there!

"Open this magic barrier! In the name of our Lord, we have come to apprehend you Demons!"

Chapter 438 The Might Of The Former Heroes

"What in the world is going on in here?!"

My mother was the first one to exclaim. As we made our way here, her connection with the barrier intensified and she quickly realized a group of over twenty men armed with magic spears and swords were trying to break through the barrier. However, even with magic weapons, it was quite futile.

One could even notice the children and the nuns looking through the windows of the building fearfully at what was happening outside. Mother Mary seemed completely confused, with no way to know what to do.

"Huh?"

The guards quickly stopped what they were doing, directing their gazes to our group. Their eyes quickly inspect all of us. Some of them seemed angrier than others, as if they were frustrated they had been trying to break the barrier for a while now.

"Who are you?! Do you have any involvement with these Demons?" Asked one of the soldiers in the group, as he walked forward and looked at my mother who confronted him. She was actually taller than him by a few centimeters, but the bold bastard didn't seem to even respect her, especially because he saw her being pregnant.

"Wait, those are elves?"

"That girl is an elf too, isn't she?"

"Wow, maybe we could..."

"The Nobles might be pleased if we give them away."

Hearing the disgusting words of the other soldiers behind him, the man that seemed to be some sort of commander gave a sick smirk as he approached to us.

"If you do, then I'll have to apprehend all of you, especially you too! Even if you're pregnant..." He said, suddenly extending his hand towards my mother's chest.

"Down."

FLASH!

With a mere word, my mother's eyes flashed with bright light, utterly enormous quantities of mana began to flow out of her mind. Despite looking so frail as she was, she was a behemoth in terms of magical power.

Her mere aura put the commander in the floor, falling directly with his face hitting the ground. The other soldiers quickly were forced to kneel in horror and fear, they were all sweating constantly, trembling, gritting their teeth, some even began to cry.

"W-Wha...?!"

"W-What is this pressure?!"

"Aaggh!"

"M-Monster! Monster!"

My mother looked down at the Commander with a pissed off look, however, she patted my father's shoulder.

"Calm down."

"Hm..."

My father's eyes seemed completely filled with bloodlust.

If it wasn't because my mother stopped them from doing anything more foolish, my father would have probably cut them all down to pieces in a mere instant.

"We are indeed involved with these demons. Also, did you just try to touch me?" Asked my mother.
"Depending on your answer, you'll be punished."

"N-No, I would never attempt to do something like that to such an incredible magician such as you, ma'am!" Cried the commander, falling over his own butt as he tried to stand up again, his pants were all wet, he probably pissed himself.

"Kneel and apologize."

My mother asked domineeringly, completely changing her former nature and personality. Aquarina, Zack, and I were all shocked at that. But I guess it was justified after hearing what they were planning to do with us out of absolutely nowhere.

"I am very sorry!"

The commander kneeled in the floor and asked for forgiveness, all other soldiers did the same. He even began to weep and cry while constantly asking for forgiveness.

"I am sorry, please forgive me! I am sorry! I am sorryyy..."

"Hmph, I can't see the honesty in your words..."

My mother seemed to be ruthless.

"Gyyyyhh! I-I am very sorry!"

"Hmph..."

FLASH!

Suddenly, her pressure disappeared in an instant.

Just like that, my mother subjugated a bunch of soldiers, over twenty of them, in mere seconds and without moving a single centimeter.

"Sylphy, did you see that? It is called Magic Aura. It is a special power you'll develop as you evolve your Magic Circle and Physique." Said my mother. "I'll teach it to you later."

"O-Oh... That would be great..." I said with a bit of a flabbergasted expression.

"Anyways, you guys are going to have to answer a few questions now." My father stepped forward with Shade.

The moment the guards looked better at their faces, some quickly recognized them.

"E-Eh?! The S-Ranked Adventurers!"

"W-What?!"

"Why are they here from all places?"

"Wait, I remember someone saying they had some involvement with the demons..."

My father smiled, cracking his knuckles.

"Indeed we do!"

He quickly grabbed the commander by his clothes, lifting him up with a single arm as if he were a mere ragdoll.

"Now, buddy... you're going to tell us why you're here."

"Y-Yes...!"

The black-haired man with a funny-looking mustache that was the Commander quickly took out a paper from his pocket, it was some sort of Order written by the Nobles and signed by the Lord of this country.

"A-According to the law, t-these demons in the orphanage have been accused of working together with the Demon Cultist that had attacked before a-and they are... t-to be apprehended and captured! I-Inside jail... until they are either proven to be culprits or innocent..."

The man was having a hard time coming out with proper words to speak because he was trembling too much. My father had yet to even unleash any aura, but his normal presence as a whole was incredibly intimidating.

"Why would they do that?" Asked my father.

"W-We don't know, we are only following orders!" Cried the commander. "I-It is our job! Please spare us, we have families to feed!"

"Hmph..."

My father quickly dropped the man into the floor, walking towards the rest of the soldiers.

"Scram."

"Eh? But we can't leave if we don't take the de-"

"Scram."

My father's second warning came with a shockwave of his Aura emerging. Suddenly, everything around us got surprisingly hot, as if we were in the middle of summer- no, even hotter than that! Is this my father's Magic Aura? Or something else?

Chapter 439 Saving The Orphanage

"Tell your lord that the S Rank Adventurers are protecting this orphanage." Shade added. "We'll go meet him in a few hours, so make sure to welcome us with open arms."

Shade looked down at the soldiers, his blue eyes suddenly turned crimson red.

"U-Understood! Run! Run!"

The commander quickly commanded the rest of his troops, as they all ran away.

The tension remained in the air for a bit, until everything finally calmed down a bit.

"Hahh... To think that they would go this far already. We really need to get out of here." Said my father.

"We can't, we have yet to find the cult's hideout and everything else." Said my father.

"But for now, maybe it would be safer to get the people to our side already." Said my mother.

"Yeah, I had considered it." My father said.

After everything was finally done, the tension slowly dissipated as we walked inside the orphanage. My parents seemed a bit distressed, but the people inside was even more nervous.

Mary and Lucia quickly welcomed us while still sweating nervously. It seems that they had been holding on in here without interacting with the soldiers, which was for the better to be honest.

"Ah, I am so happy you're back, I was so worried... I really thought they would take us away, if it wasn't for the magic barrier you had set up..." Mary cried, hugging my mother.

"It's okay, everything is alright now." Said my mother, caressing Mary's hair.

The children were also all scared, hugging Lucia's snake tail. Celeste seemed to have gone out to the dungeon early this morning and was not here, but Mist was, quickly greeting us with a happy smile, showing her big teeth.

"Sylphyyy!"

Mist ran towards me and jumped over me. This time I didn't fell over the floor, and managed to catch her just fine.

"Mist! Are you alright?"

"I-I am... I was shcared but I'm fine now... B-But I am worried about Cheleste..."

Mist seemed more worried about others than herself. This girl always put others before herself.

I petted her head as Aquarina and Zack got closer and also patted her head. She loved her head pats.

"Don't worry, everything's alright. I am sure Celeste is okay, she's pretty strong right?" I asked with a smile. "Let's leave our parents to deal with everything for now."

"O-Okay..." Mist sighed, lowering her head and feeling slightly embarrassed that she was being given a lot of attention.

"Your hair is so fluffy! It is almost unfair how fluffy it is!" Aquarina said. "Are you sure you're not a sheep, Mist?"

"S-Sheep? I'm not a sheep!" Mist said while blushing a bit. "My hair was rough but thanks to the shampoo that Auntie Faylen gifted to me, it's always fluffy..."

"She even got the horns of a sheep, ahahaha." Zack laughed cheerfully.

"Geez! Zack dummy!" Mist suddenly got even angrier at Zack. With Aquarina we already kind of knew she liked him, so when he laughed at her, it hurt more it seems.

BAAM!

Mist suddenly kicked Zack's leg angrily.

"Ouch! What was that for?!" Zack cried.

"Dummy!" Mist said, blushing while pouting a bit.

"Eeh? Why me and not the other two? They were messing with you just fine..." Zack sighed. He was a typical clueless young man, so he had no idea that Mist had been building up her feelings for him.

"Because Zack... Zack should not laugh at Mist..." She said while blushing.

"Erm... okay." Sighed Zack. "Sorry Mist."

Zack had changed a lot over this time, and became more empathic as a result, so he apologized rather quickly. He was still stubborn, but not as much.

"Let's have some lunch while we adress everything for now." My mother said, quickly going to the kitchen. "Everyone relax please, as long as we are here, we wont let anybody touch a single hair of your heads."

With her reassuring words, everyone seemed to calm down almost naturally. The aura of an elf like her was really mystical and reliable.

"Yeah, let's enjoy some food kids!" Said my father, as the children seemed to cheer up, some began climbing over his arms as my father played around with them, lifting them easily with his mere arms.

Of course, they were very worried deep down, but they couldn't simply show that facet to the children here. These innocent souls didn't have the age nor the mental maturity to understand what was happening at all. Therefore, they were comforted and the smell of the delicious food my mother prepares quickly made them forget the scare that the soldiers arriving here caused, making their bellies groan with hunger.

Like that, we spent the next hour talking and relaxing for a bit, although something very serious had happened, we would address it later. Mist had calmed down after we talked and cheered her up with the rest of the kids present, and we asked Zack to give her a kiss in her cheek to cheer her up some more, but he was completely against that idea out of nowhere. However, she gave her head pats, which were enough to make her happy.

"It's ready! Come eat as much as you want kids!"

My mother quickly served her special pizza, alongside Basilisk roasted meat, and other delicious preparations. The meat of Basilisks was actually delicious, the ones father hunted ended being purified by mother's holy magic and then saved for our consumption. Due to how tasty they were, I've earned a bunch of EXP when I first ate them, roughly 20k EXP. They were that delicious!

Thanks to the ability to absorb essence and transform it into EXP, every time I eat something very amazing for the first time, I get awarded with some EXP. Which has been slowly piling up the last week, until I have reached almost 100k once more. Ah, and of course, Spiritual Blessing and Ember are already soon to reach Max Level as well.

However, those things were worries for later, as it was time to enjoy the present and this delicious food my mother prepared for us with all her love.

Chapter 440 A Generous Offer

After lunch, the kids were brought upstairs by Lucia, while Mary stayed with us alongside my parents and the rest of the adults. She seemed to quickly change her face expression as she grew progressively more concerned. My parents quickly asked her if she had seen anything suspicious before, and she seemed to have noticed a few things.

"I've been lately seeing Soldiers around these areas of the streets. Usually this place is completely barren of any security, but the last week they had constantly been appearing more and more. And most of the time, always wandering around our orphanage. Due to fear this morning I didn't wanted to come out, nor let the children come out either." Sighed Mary. "And then, right after we had breakfast, they came in a group of over twenty people... We don't have any strength ourselves, against so many people, we would had been easily defeated trying to protect the children."

Mary seemed to be dispirited, the cheerful smile she always wore seemed to be nowhere to be seen, and instead, she looked very nervous.

"We were scared and had thought about running away from the back, but when the soldiers tried to break in, they were hit by the barrier..." Said Mary. "We felt so relieved that magic barrier was still working, but remained in fear, as the soldiers continued hitting it, they even brought magicians and magic weapons constantly trying to destroy the barrier, but it never faltered. However, they were very insistent, calling us to get out of the orphanage, and that for every hour they spent trying to break the barrier, we would all receive an even worse punishment..."

"Those bastards..." My father said, gripping his fists tightly. "I should had perhaps broken their skulls a bit."

"I-It was enough with what you did, so please don't overexert yourselves..." Mary said while panicking a bit. "But now, we don't really know what will happen to us... W-We know you're S Ranked Adventurers, but can you go against the country's government even with your Ranks? For some reason we are being accused of being criminals... If we run away, we will only give them more reasons to chase us down to the ends of the world..."

"Don't worry, strength is not our only forte." My mother said with a reassuring smile. "However, for now, you're kind of right. Things might not get any better if you stay here."

"Eh?" Asked Mary surprised.

"That's why we want to invite you and everyone in this orphanage to come with us, Mary." Said Shade.

"Yeah, this place is too dangerous, and trying to change the minds of people so filled with resentment is completely useless and a waste of time." Said Nepheline.

"It would be for the best of the children as well, if they can grow in a place where they're accepted and where they can find others like them too." Said Ninhursag.

"Others... like them?" Mary was confused.

"Well..." My father said. "We have our own caravan filled with the tribe of amazon of Nepheline's family, those people are our family and they're very open minded. We have been rescuing slaves these last weeks, buying them in secret by infiltrating the criminal organizations and then bringing them to our village to free them and protect them."

"We have freed those that wanted to go on their own, but most of them have remained with us as we have offered shelter and aid." My mother said. "My plan is going to the Atlanta Continent with everybody. I have ties with the royal family there, and they'll give me a piece of land, we'll build our own village there, where those we have rescued can live peacefully."

"W-What?" Mary was even more shocked every single second. "G-Going so far for us... why? Why would you go so far?"

"Well... We have the strength and the resources." Said my father.

"And... it is the least we could do. What has happened to the people here is partially all our fault. We ended a war we couldn't win, we never figured things out completely before, and we only made many suffer." My mother lamented.

"What... do you mean? Were you part of the war? Please, don't blame yourselves... E-Even if you killed Demons, that's all in the past. It shouldn't be a reason to force yourselves to go to such lengths..." Mary implored us to not do something so insane just for her and the children.

"Well... We are more than just soldiers that happened to participate in the war." My father said.

"But we can't disclose this information yet." My mother added.

"Indeed, dear. So for now, just come with us. Or are you telling me you prefer to have all these children enslaved and to be turned into those noble's playthings?" Asked uncle Arafunn, being completely direct and honest.

"Arafunn!" My mother reprimanded my uncle, but he was honestly in the right to be blunt about this.

If we were not blunt and told her how realistic she and the children would be treated, we would never be able to truly convince her.

"Mary you've experienced the horrendous things that have happened after war. Right? We can't change these people's mind no matter how much we could try. And if we keep trying, we will only make things worse... We have long ago stopped thinking about such ideals, it is futile to try to change such an enormous group of people's minds by mere words. Brainwashing them with magic is... not something right either." My mother sighed.

"Even as painful as it sounds. It is better to run away to a place where you can be safer. Don't you want these children to grow healthy and safe?" Asked my father.

"I... Ah..." Mary suddenly began to cry.

"M-Mary?" My mother asked worried.

"Thank you... I... Thank you for everything... I feel so ashamed I can't do a single thing to repay you for everything... Thank you..." Mary bowed her head. She seemed to have accepted my parent's offer at the end.
