

Endless 591

Chapter 591: A Place Of Memories And Tears [Part 2]

'This might be a bit dangerous,' Alex thought as he observed the map.

Not only were there six Field Boss Monsters, there were also many High-Ranking Monsters. Some were Rank 5, accompanied by even more monsters.

On the bright side, they seemed to prefer staying in their own respective territories. But while they didn't have to worry about roaming enemies, they understood this increased the danger of heading deeper inside the forest.

If Alex, Dim Dim, Fran, and Finn worked together and had enough time, they could probably defeat a Rank 5 Monster. But if the Field Bosses joined the battle, it would immediately become a battle of life and death.

Of course, if a Field Boss Monster was an Insect-Type Monster, they still had a chance of insta-killing it with a slap of Grandma Agnes' Sandal.

Unfortunately, based on the information on the Map, none of the Field Bosses were Insect-Type Monsters.

One was a Dryad, who went by the name Sylvara.

The other was a Tiger creatively called Tigrath.

And the last was the Ape, Gorath.

The young man checked for more hidden dangers. He sighed in relief when he realized that aside from the Field Bosses and the Rank 5 Boss Monsters, they would be able to handle the rest.

'We just have to be careful and avoid catching their attention,' Alex thought.

But recalling the dense monster population in the forest, it was inevitable for them to clash with monsters whether they liked it or not.

A few minutes later, breakfast was finally ready. It was a simple meal of eggs, bread, and butter. But since they were fresh from Fran's farm, they tasted lovely.

"Fran, we have to be careful when we enter the forest later," Alex said. "There are three Rank 6 Field Boss Monsters and a dozen Rank 5 monsters INSIDE. Regardless of the approach we take, we must be prepared to escape if need be."

"I understand." Fran nodded.

She didn't ask how Alex knew all that. The young lady had complete trust in him.

Finn didn't say anything, but he was also taking the young man's words seriously.

Their plan was to rest for a few hours to regain their strength and then enter the forest before noon.

If they didn't find the graves when the sun sets, they would immediately leave the forest and camp outside of it.

According to Fran's memory, the graves were at the northern side of the forest. They were currently at the southern part, which meant that they would have to travel in a straight line to arrive at their destination faster.

But going on a straight line was nearly impossible because there were too many obstacles and monsters that blocked their path.

In fact, while going straight was the fastest, it was also the most dangerous path of all.

"The three of you rest first," Finn said. "I'll be the first watch. I can function perfectly even if I don't sleep for a day."

His Profession was an Arcane Blacksmith. Sometimes, he would craft a piece of equipment for three straight days without eating or sleeping.

Finn had made the gauntlets Fran used in battle. Since she preferred throwing punches than swinging weapons, her brother had made her the strongest, and sturdiest gauntlets that he could craft.

Perhaps knowing that it was a piece of armor that would protect his sister from danger, Finn had worked incredibly hard to craft it. Because of that, the Item Grade of Fran's Gauntlets were Unique.

In terms of rank, the gauntlets were just below the Legendary Rank.

"Thank you," Fran said softly to her brother as she took out a bedroll from her storage ring. Since she was a dwarf, sleeping outdoors was not a problem for her.

Alex also took out a bedroll, and Dim Dim's sleeping basket from his storage ring.

The little bun yawned while the young man put it in its basket.

He was also very tired from all the running. So, it was not a surprise when he drifted off to sleep as soon as he laid down to rest.

Fran also fell asleep not long after. She trusted her brother very much, and she knew that she would be safe with him keeping watch.

Finn sat cross-legged on the ground. He glanced at the two sleeping behind him before he shifted his gaze at the forest in the distance.

Their camp was on a cliff, giving him a good vantage point. If any monsters headed towards them, he would see them without fail.

But just to make sure that he was prepared for any situation, he summoned his weapon and rested it by his side.

Just like Alex, Finn's weapon was a Warhammer.

He wasn't the most proficient warrior, but he was strong enough to overcome his weakness.

The weapon itself was ordinary in appearance, but Finn had infused it with Arcane Blacksmithing techniques that allowed it to hit hard and deal shock wave damage upon impact.

These attacks ignored the defenses and dealt internal injury to the foes that were unlucky enough to clash with his hammer.

Similar to Fran's, his weapon was also a Unique Weapon and he called it... Grimhammer.

It was a simple name. But it was far from being simple.

Suddenly, he smelled something sweet in the air.

The wind was blowing in their direction, so he assumed that this scent was coming from the forest.

It smelled like a fragrant flower. Finn wasn't a fan of perfumes, but he could tolerate it to a certain extent.

That was when Finn realized something. The sweet floral fragrance made his mind clear and the exhaustion he felt during their long marathon slowly subsided.

Then, from within the forest, Finn heard a soft chuckle.

He didn't know if it was just his mind playing tricks on him, but the sound of that laughter was very vivid. It sounded ladylike and definitely wasn't the kind of laughter that would come from a man.

Also, he noticed something peculiar. Despite the distance, the laughter was very clear. For a brief moment, he even thought that the one who laughed was laughing just beside him.

While Finn was thinking if he had just imagined the laughter or not, a pair of eyes locked on his body from the forest.

“It seems that we have guests,” a sweet voice that could make any man melt said softly.

Giggles and innocent laughter spread inside the forest as several ladies eyed the lone dwarf, who was keeping vigil just outside their home.

Chapter 592: The Lonely Fairy’s Grave

Poke

“Mmm...”

Poke *Poke*

Alex’s eyes opened wide. Just as expected, he saw the little bun’s little stubby hand reaching out to poke his nose one more time.

When Dim Dim realized that Alex finally woke up, it just giggled. The young man could only smile helplessly.

It had been a while since Dim Dim poked his nose. Truth be told, it might just be feeling mischievous at the moment, so he let it be.

“Good morning, Dim Dim.”

“Dim Dim~”

Alex slowly propped himself up from the bedroll. After his drowsiness cleared a bit, he realized that Fran was also up and awake.

Time had come for them to go. Since Alex hadn't woken up on his own, Dim Dim had taken it upon itself to wake its partner.

Still fatigued, Alex drank a stamina potion. It made him feel a lot better in just a minute, which greatly improved his mood.

"Ready to go?" Fran asked with a smile.

"Yes," Alex replied.

Knowing the mission would be dangerous, Alex proposed to lead the way with Dim Dim. Since he had the map, he could at least keep an eye out for any hostile forces that might endanger their lives.

Of course, Fran and Finn didn't know about this. But since Fran agreed to Alex's proposal, Finn didn't oppose it.

"Let's go," Alex declared before taking the lead.

He walked at a brisk pace, planning to avoid running on their journey. This minimized the noise, which might otherwise attract unwanted attention.

But the moment they entered the forest, Alex had an uneasy unfeeling that they were being watched.

He glanced at his map, but didn't see any red dots near them. Thinking he was just being paranoid, he decided to press on.

Five minutes later, the young man motioned for everyone to stop.

“Hey, do you guys feel like we’re being watched?” Alex asked, unable to shake the feeling.

“Yes,” Fran replied. “I felt it the moment we entered the forest. But since nothing happened, I thought the eyes on us weren’t hostile.”

“I also don’t sense any hostility,” Finn commented. “But the feeling of being constantly watched makes me feel uneasy.”

Alex felt relieved that he wasn’t imagining things, but he also knew he had to take this seriously. “I feel the same. They might not be hostile, but we shouldn’t let our guard down.”

Fran and Finn both nodded firmly. The group continued their journey, even more cautious than before.

An hour later, they heard the sound of giggles. The giggles sounded feminine, but that only made the hair on Alex’s arms stand on end. He immediately looked around his surroundings, hoping to see who—or what—was making those sounds.

Fran and Finn did the same, but neither of them were able to sense anything or anyone around them.

Alex checked his map again, but there were still no red blinking dots in their vicinity. Because of this, he decided to try something else.

With a few taps, he adjusted the map’s settings to not only show hostile enemies, but also neutral beings.

At the setting’s update, hundreds of blinking dots appeared on the map. But what concerned Alex more was that a few dozen of them were near them.

More accurately, they were practically surrounded by those yellow blinking dots!

“Dim Dim, can you sense anyone?” Alex asked a question he should’ve asked an hour ago.

“Dim Dim!”

“You can?”

“Dim!”

The little bun then pointed at the tree behind them. Alex, Fran, and Finn looked at what Dim Dim pointed at, but they saw nothing.

However, since the Dim Sum God was adamant that there was something behind the tree, the three decided to watch a little longer.

It was then that they saw it.

A small face peeked out from behind the tree, and when she realized that they had seen her, she immediately darted back.

“A-Are those Fairies?” Fran’s eyes widened in shock.

Dim Dim nodded. “Dim!”

Suddenly, the sound of laughter spread around them.

“Awww! They noticed us!”

“That little white thing was already aware of our existence, but it decided to ignore us. How mean!”

“No. No. It is clearly Dewdrop’s fault! She let herself be seen.”

“No! It’s not my fault!”

One by one, the Fairies made their appearance. Some of them had cheeky grins, some had mischievous smirks, while others only smiled mysteriously.

These fairies were only as tall as an adult's hand. Now that they had shown themselves, it was quite obvious that playtime was over... or was just about to begin.

"What are you doing in the Shadow Forest?" the fairy called Dewdrop asked. "Are you lost?"

She had long blue hair and looked like a girl that was only around six to seven years old, but Alex knew better than to underestimate her just because of this.

Dewdrop flew closer to Fran to take a closer look. She then circled her body a few more times before coming to a stop a meter away from Fran's face.

"Strange... You look like a dwarf, but you smell like a fairy," Dewdrop declared as she crossed her arms. "Are you half fairy perhaps?"

"It's complicated," Fran replied. "May I ask if there are more fairies aside from your group in the forest?"

"We have a small tribe, numbering less than a hundred Fairies," Dewdrop answered. "Some of them are not here because they are busy picking fruits and berries for dinner."

"You didn't answer Dewdrop's question earlier," another fairy with long red hair said while she fluttered around Alex. "Are you guys lost? Why did you enter the forest?"

"We're not lost," Alex replied. "We are actually looking for something."

"And that is?" the red-haired fairy, who went by Poppy, asked.

The Shadow Forest was a place humans and other demi-humans rarely visited. This was why the Fairies had stalked the newcomers, watching them as if they were endangered animals.

“Actually, we are looking for graves,” Fran answered. “Do you know of a place where five graves could be found? That is the place where we needed to go.”

“Oh? Are you talking about the Lonely Fairy’s grave?” Dewdrop commented from the side.

“Lonely Fairy’s grave?” Fran blinked.

“Yes! It is a place where a lonely fairy died all alone,” Poppy added. “In fact, when she died, her fairy dust scattered in the forest, then we were born. Perhaps, she wished Fairies could also thrive here in the Shadow Forest.”

Alex felt an ache in his chest after hearing Poppy’s explanation. What happened in the dungeon was only a reenactment of the past.

In the real story, the young man had really died, and Fran had spent her life watching over their graves until she, too, perished.

At death, Fairies wouldn’t leave any corpse behind. The grave she erected at the center of her fallen comrades was just symbolism. That way, even in death, they could be together.

Fran lowered her head, feeling the corner of her eyes moisten. She didn’t remember what had really transpired back then. The only thing that she knew was the “miracle” that Alex had created in his determination to see her again.

“It’s fine,” Alex said before hugging Fran from behind. “You are no longer alone. Finn, Dim Dim, and I will always be with you.”

Finn nodded before reaching out to hold his sister’s hand. He didn’t say anything, but that action alone made the young lady feel a lot better.

Seeing that the strangers weren't being hostile to Poppy and Dewdrop, the other fairies finally found the courage to come forward. Some of them even started to poke Dim Dim's cheeks, making the latter giggle.

The little bun liked to poke people and didn't mind being poked back as well.

A few minutes later, Fran finally regained her composure. It was also at that moment when they told the fairies that they indeed wished to go to the Grave of the Lonely Fairy.

"Can you take us there?" Fran asked.

"Well... that's..." Poppy hesitated.

"It's a very dangerous place," Dewdrop interjected. "We fairies only live at the outer edges of the forest. The deeper you head to the forest, the stronger the monsters are."

"The Orcs have been very active lately, so going there is a bit dangerous. Also, Tigrath seems to be in a very bad mood. Sometimes it roams on the outer edges of the forest, looking for something or someone to vent its frustration on."

"That big bad tiger is scary!" one of the Fairies exclaimed. "I hope it gets a toothache!"

"I hope it gets a stomachache!"

"A headache!"

"An aneurysm!"

The fairies joined in and started to sling childish curses towards the Field Boss Monster, who was one of the three Rulers of the forest.

Still, regardless of the danger, Alex and Fran were determined to visit the graves of their former comrades, whose names had nearly been lost to time.

Chapter 593: They Are Bullies!

“Can you guide us there?” Alex asked the fairies.

His question made nearly all of them flinch.

“It’s not only the Bad Tiger who prowls near the graves,” Poppy replied. “The Dryad and her kin also live nearby. they are also very annoying!”

“Worse, an ugly ape also goes there often to take a nap!” Dewdrop complained. “We used to live there, but those bullies chased us out!”

All the fairies nodded in agreement, their faces filled with injustice. After careful observation, Alex noticed all of them were Rank 2.

He thought this was the reason why they were forced to the outer edges of the forest. Weaker monsters usually had no choice but to leave the depths of the forest. Staying meant risking being hunted down by stronger monsters.

But this wasn’t the case with the fairies.

“No one from Shadow Forest dares to kill us,” Poppy said. “Anyone who dares will get cursed and die in a few days.”

“Since they can’t kill us, they forced us away from our home!” one of the Fairies complained. “They are bullies! I hate them!”

“”””That’s right!””””

“”””We hate them!””””

The Fairies complained in unison.

After asking the fairies why they had such a mysterious curse attached to their lives, they proudly shared that fairies were the first creatures to exist in the Shadow Forest after the Lonely Fairy died.

“The first Fairies told the next generations that ‘The World’ spoke to them. It said that no matter what happens, the Fairies will never disappear from the forest,” Dewdrop explained. “Anyone who dares to kill us will die a very painful death.”

“But there’s no punishment for hurting us,” Poppy added. “So those bad monsters hurt us repeatedly until we’re forced to leave.”

All the fairies looked sad as Poppy explained their situation to Alex and his friends.

But hearing it angered the Dim Sum God.

“Dim Dim!” Dim Dim took out its gangster sunglasses and mini megaphone.

The little bun held it like it was a gun, ready to shoot anyone that stood in their way. Clearly, it wanted to avenge the pitiful fairies chased out of their ancestral home.

Fran was also very angry and equipped her gauntlets. She felt indignant about the fairies being treated in this manner.

If their story was true, then that made them her kin. After all, she was that lonely fairy who died all alone after living the rest of her life in solitude and sadness.

Alex could understand Fran’s anger. He was angry as well, but he understood that fighting against Rank 6 Monsters would be extremely difficult.

Fran was Rank 4, he was Rank 3, and Finn was the same rank as him.

As for Dim Dim, the little bun was a pacifist. But when it gets angry, it also fights fearlessly.

“Can you tell us the general direction of the graves?” Alex asked. “We only came here to see them, so leaving before we do isn’t an option.”

Since the fairies didn’t want to go near the graves, the next best thing they could do was ask for directions.

“You’re going there even when you know those bad monsters can kill you?” Poppy looked at Alex in disbelief. “Are you crazy?”

“I’m not crazy,” Alex smiled. “We will do our best to avoid conflict. We simply wish to pay homage to that place.”

Dewdrop and Poppy glanced at each other before nodding at the same time.

“Then I will be your guide,” Dewdrop stated.

“No. I will be your guide,” Poppy interjected.

“No. Let me do it!”

“No. I’ll do it!”

“Me!”

“Me!”

“Okay calm down, both of you,” Alex decided to separate the two fairies before things escalated. “How about the two of you come with us?”

“Very well.” Poppy nodded.

“Good.” Dewdrop agreed.

The other fairies told them to be careful and wished them luck. Just as Alex assumed, the graves were indeed located at the North side of the forest.

This meant passing through the territories of many dangerous Beasts that could attack them at any time.

But he wasn’t too worried. As long as he had the map, he could steer them away from danger.

Two hours passed since Dewdrop and Poppy accompanied them on their journey.

Dewdrop sat on Fran’s right shoulder, while Poppy sat on her left. They said being with Fran gave them a feeling of peace and security, so they preferred to stay by her side.

Alex wanted to tell the two fairies that Fran was their great ancestor. However, he kept this to himself because he knew that neither fairies would believe him.

“Wait,” Alex raised his hand, signaling everyone to stop.

A giant red dot was moving in the map, and it was none other than the Rank 6 Field Boss Monster, Tigrath.

“Tigrath is up ahead.” Alex warned. “Everyone, please don’t make a sound.”

It was still a good distance away from them, and Alex believed that it still hadn’t sensed their presence.

For a few tense minutes, he watched as the red blinking dot moved away from their location and made its way to the west.

Only when Alex was certain that there was no longer any immediate danger did he gesture for everyone to relax. The danger had finally passed.

"The coast is clear," Alex said. "Let's continue. Where should we go next?"

"Just continue moving forward," Dewdrop replied. "We'll let you know when we're close to the Bad Dryad's territory."

"We have to detour and go a bit east to avoid her and her kin," Poppy added. "For now, let's keep going straight!"

The group moved carefully and with purpose. With Alex watching over the map, they were able to evade most monster territories. However, this didn't mean that it was smooth sailing.

There were many instances where Alex had to make a choice on whether they should fight or not.

Not fighting would force them to make a detour, which would take a lot of time, delaying their journey.

In the end, they chose their battles.

Alex focused on dealing with Monsters that were Rank 4 and below. These were monsters they could defeat with their teamwork, which yielded great results.

The young man stored the dead bodies of the monsters inside his storage ring since they had no time to dismantle them at the moment.

Another hour passed, and the Fairies cautioned them to make a detour to the east since they were drawing near the Dryad's territory.

Finn followed behind his sister, but he would look at his surroundings from time to time.

He still felt like he was being watched. At first, he thought it was the fairies. But the feeling didn't disappear even after they left the majority of them behind.

The gaze didn't seem hostile, but it still made Finn feel anxious. In the end, he chose to not tell Alex, and his sister about it because maybe some of the fairies decided to follow them in secret.

"Such an interesting dwarf. He's definitely my type."

The beautiful lady smiled faintly before she moved from tree to tree, following the teenagers as they avoided the territory of the dryads... or at least they thought they did.

Chapter 594: What A Small World

After traveling for nearly two hours, Alex raised his hand and asked everyone to stop.

Due to the incident with the fairies, he had changed the settings of his map to show neutral forces along with hostile ones.

And for quite some time, he'd noticed a yellow blinking dot following them. At first, he had assumed that it was just another fairy. But after utilizing the map's zoom in function, he realized that this creature was a Rank 4 Monster.

Well, calling it a monster was a stretch. Nonetheless, even if it was a neutral yellow dot now, that neutrality could disappear depending on the situation.

"How long do you plan to follow us?" Alex asked, looking at a tree that was at least a hundred meters away.

Fran immediately took a fighting stance, while the two fairies hid behind her.

Finn also took out his warhammer and followed Alex's gaze. He wasn't sure, but the young man might have sensed the same gaze that had been bothering him all time.

But Finn felt a sense of relief after learning that someone else had noticed the thing following them since the detour they had taken an hour ago.

“Be careful,” Alex said in a volume that only Fran and Finn could hear. “It’s a Rank 4 Dryad.”

Alex then summoned two magical shields to protect Poppy and Dewdrop. The last thing he wanted was for the two fairies to get hurt.

They had mustered their courage to guide them to their destination, and the least they could do was keep them away from their battles.

“So I’ve been discovered!”

A playful voice reached everyone’s ears. Moments later, a lady with green hair and eyes peeked out from the back of a tree.

Alex and Finn blinked at the same time. Even Fran couldn’t help but give the Dryad a good, long, hard look because she thought that she was just seeing things.

However, the view didn’t change.

Even Dim Dim had to raise its gangster sunglasses to take a better look at the dryad that had been stalking them.

Her hair and eye colors might not be the same, but they were certain of one thing.

The dryad, who seemed to be in her late teens, looked like a younger version of the elf, Medina, who had taken care of Fran in her past life.

“What gave me away?” the dryad asked. “I was doing my best to follow you guys stealthily, but I was still discovered.”

"It's really simple," Alex replied "I've smelled you from a mile away."

"..."

"..."

"..."

"... Dim?"

The dryad blinked before she sniffed her arm to confirm if she smelled or not. After smelling nothing, she looked at Finn anxiously.

"I-I bath regularly, okay?" the Dryad said defensively, looking very flustered. "I don't smell!"

"Why are you looking at me?" Finn asked.

"It's so that you don't misunderstand!" the Dryad explained.

Alex looked at the Dryad, then at Finn, then back to the Dryad, then back at Finn.

"I see... so it's like that." Alex smirked like he had just chanced upon a scandalous bit of gossip.

Finn lowered his warhammer. If the Dryad could still banter with them, she obviously didn't want to harm them. Still, he couldn't help but stare at the creature who looked so similar to his sister's beloved friend in her past life.

"Why are you following us?" Alex asked.

"I was just curious because it has been a while since I saw visitors enter the forest," the Dryad replied.

"Is that the real reason?"

"Y-Yes?"

Alex fearlessly approached the Dryad and whispered something in her ear. In the span of a few seconds, a red tinge appeared on the Dryad's face, seemingly confirming his suspicion.

"I-It's not what you think!" The Dryad tried to defend herself, but Alex the Love Expert had already seen through it all.

Why was he a Love Expert?

Because anyone could declare that they were one!

"Are you sure?" Alex whispered. "If you're honest with me, I'll help you..."

The Dryad glanced at Finn, then at Alex, then back at Finn, then back at Alex.

"You will?" the Dryad asked.

"That depends. If he doesn't want it, I can't force him."

"I-I see..."

Fran and Finn watched as the two continued to whisper at each other. This continued until Finn coughed loudly, trying to catch Alex's attention.

"I just asked her if she could help us go to the grave without alerting her sisters," Alex said. "She agreed to help. But she has a condition."

"And that condition is?" Fran asked, trembling ever so slightly.

"She wanted to accompany us, just like what Poppy and Dewdrop are doing right now," Alex answered.

Normally, Finn would shoot down the idea of having a stranger guide them. But for some reason, he didn't voice out any opposition. He even sneaked glances at the Dryad from time to time.

"By the way, what's your name?" Alex asked.

"Oh! Allow me to introduce myself. The name is Fran..."

Alex's eyes widened in shock, as did Fran's and Finn's.

"...cesca. My name is Francesca. But my sisters are too lazy to use my full name, so they just call me Fran."

"What a coincidence." The corner of Alex's lips twitched after hearing this. "Her name is also Fran."

The young man pointed at his lover. Fran smiled stiffly, not knowing how to react to this revelation.

"Really?!" Francesca looked genuinely happy to know someone who had the same name as her. She even grabbed hold of Fran's hand and shook it warmly.

Fran tried to smile politely. Despite the Dryad's friendliness, Fran's heart ached to see someone who looked like Medina but was not. It's almost as if fate was taunting her.

Alex and Finn looked at her in worry, already sensing the flood of mixed emotions threatening to overwhelm her.

What they didn't know was that Francesca had sensed Fran's discomfort earlier and was doing her best to cheer up the young dwarf.

And so, the journey continued with one more magical creature joining their party. Still, nothing would prepare them for what was about to happen next.

Chapter 595: Might Over Magic! [Part 1]

"So you're an Arcane Blacksmith!" Francesca exclaimed, eyes shining with excitement. "Isn't that amazing?!"

"Do you know what an Arcane Blacksmith is?" Finn asked.

"Not at all, but it sounds really impressive!" Francesca admitted. "I'm amazed to have met such an amazing person."

Finn didn't know how to react to the Dryad's positivity. Embarrassed and overwhelmed, he averted his gaze.

But Alex smirked upon noticing the blush on Finn's cheeks.

"That's the first time I've seen my brother talk so much with someone he just met," Fran muttered. "He only answers when he is asked a question, and his answers only consist of a word or two."

"Tsk tsK tsK!" Alex wagged his finger. "Fran, you might not know this, but guys are simple creatures."

"Simple creatures?"

"That's right. When a beautiful lady smiles at us, we smile back at them."

Unfortunately, the Love Expert had forgotten something. He had made the very simple, very easy to miss mistake of forgetting that he was talking to his girlfriend.

“Heh... so you just smile at any beautiful lady that smiles at you, huh?” Fran said in a teasing tone that made Alex feel a tingle run down his spine.

“Fran, you got it wrong.” Alex held Fran’s hand and looked directly at her eyes with a serious expression. “I might smile at other ladies, but in my heart, I only have four Queens... Well, five... No, maybe six?”

“Uh huh.”

“Hiiiiiiiiih! I’m sorry!”

Alex knelt and hugged the young lady, making the latter sigh.

“I’m not mad,” Fran said before patting Alex’s head. “I’m just teasing you a bit.”

“Really?”

“I lied.”

“Nooooooooo!”

Poppy and Dewdrop couldn’t help but shake their heads helplessly before muttering, “Men.”

“Dim Dim, don’t be like Alex, okay?” Poppy said seriously. “He is a bad influence!”

“That’s right, Dim Dim.” Dewdrop crossed her arms. “When you’re in a relationship with someone, you should be loyal to them!”

“Dim!” Dim Dim nodded.

Seeing that the little bun understood, the two Fairies once again shifted their attention to Alex, who was begging Fran to forgive him for his thoughtless words earlier.

“Hey, how long do you plan to stay there?” Finn asked in annoyance. “Stop wasting time!”

He was feeling irritated because the shameless bastard was hugging his sister without a care in the world.

Francesca looked at this scene with amusement and chuckled inwardly at the sorry state of the self-proclaimed Love Expert.

“Okay, calm down,” Fran said before kissing Alex’s cheek. “I was really just teasing you earlier. Now let’s go before it gets dark.”

After getting Fran’s assurance, Alex became happy once more and walked hand in hand with his girlfriend, making Finn flick his tongue in annoyance.

Francesca smirked and led the way to a detour that would allow them to reach their destination safely.

However, even when taking a cautious approach, there were times when things didn’t go as planned.

Half an hour later, Alex noticed dozens of red blinking dots heading toward them.

“Everyone, something is wrong!” Alex shouted. “Monsters are heading our way!”

Finn immediately glared at Francesca. “Did you trick us?!”

“No!” Francesca vehemently denied Finn’s accusation. “This is a safe path. Monsters rarely show up here. H-How did this happen?!”

The Dryad was genuinely shocked and angry at the monsters for choosing this time to come here, as if deliberately embarrassing her in front of Finn. She had already summoned dozens of vines in preparation to fight against the bastards who were ruining her plan to get along with the dwarf.

If there had just been a few dozen monsters, Alex would have remained calm. But this time, it was different.

A big red blinking dot that represented one of the Field Bosses was charging right at them.

“There’s no time!” Alex shouted. “Just trust me and jump on my shields!”

Alex summoned his magical shields and ordered Dim Dim, Finn, and Francesca to ride on top of them.

He carried Fran in a princess carry and jumped on Everguard.

“Hang on tight!” Alex shouted. “Shield Chaser!”

As soon as he gave the order, the shields moved across the forest, hovering a few meters above the ground.

He flew in the opposite direction from where the Field Boss Monster was coming and summoned more shields that would serve as their vanguard.

“Shield Spike!” Alex commanded, imbuing his magical shields with sharp spikes that could pierce through flesh.

“Enchant Fire!”

“Shield Charge!”

After buffing his shields, he ordered them to charge forward. A moment later, several Apes burst out of the thicket, poised to ambush them.

The shields rammed across these monsters, pushing them back and breaking their momentum.

Alex flew past them, followed by Dim Dim, Finn, and Francesca.

Poppy and Dewdrop were holding onto the little bun while screaming in fear.

The little bun, on the other hand, was wearing its gangster sunglasses and throwing brittle vials left and right, targeting the faces of the monsters that were still trying to catch up to them.

Finn swung his hammer and sent the apes that targeted him flying.

Meanwhile, Francesca summoned vine whips that coiled around the apes, allowing her to throw them like projectiles against their own kind.

Alex was still paying attention to his map as he maneuvered and dodged the trees in front of him.

The Rank 6 Field Monster was still hot on their heels. In fact, they could all hear the sounds of trees breaking or being ripped apart behind them.

Suddenly, a furious roar reverberated in the forest, making Francesca's face turn grim.

"It's Gorath!" Francesca hissed. "We can't even hope to defeat that brute!"

The Dryads and the Apes didn't really get along since their territories overlapped with each other.

They often clashed once or twice a week over territorial disputes.

Faced with such an opponent, Francesca decided to call for help.

“Sisters! Help us!” Francesca shouted.

A moment later, the entire forest seemed to tremble and the sound of hissing and chirping spread like wildfire.

It was as if the entire forest had come to life.

With one mighty leap, Gorath closed the distance between him and his targets. The Field Boss Monster was only dozens of meters away from the retreating group, which made Finn grit his teeth in preparation to fight.

The Giant Ape roared before grabbing a tree and throwing it at the fleeing students and Dryad.

Finn swung his hammer and broke the tree apart. Unfortunately, more trees came flying towards them. Each could deal fatal damage if they hit the fleeing group directly.

Still, he didn’t give up and continued to smash all the trees, acting as the rearguard of their party.

Francesca didn’t sit still. She summoned vines to wrap around the trees, stopping them in place.

Gorath roared a second time and propelled itself high in the air.

Alex turned around to look at the monster ape for the first time before raising his hand to summon more shields to block the monster’s descent.

Unfortunately, his shields shattered like eggshells the moment Gorath’s body clashed against them.

When all hope seemed to be lost, countless vines rose up from the ground and wrapped around the Ape’s body.

The Dryads had finally arrived, and all of them worked together to bind the Field Boss Monster, whom they hated with a vengeance.

Chapter 596: Might Over Magic! [Part 2]

The Gorath's hateful roars reached the ears of every single creature in the Shadow Forest.

Now curious, the two Field Bosses decided to seek out their rival to watch what was happening.

Nearly twenty Dryads answered Francesca's call for help. Their united effort allowed them to bind the Field Boss Monster... for merely ten seconds before the vines they controlled broke due to the Ape's overwhelming strength.

Gorath might only be a Rank 6 Field Boss Monster, but it had a passive ability called Rage, which drastically increased its strength stat the angrier it gets.

When his rage reached Max, its strength would be equivalent to a Rank 7 World Boss Monster, which was why no one in the Shadow Forest dared to fight it head-on.

Even Sylvara the Dryad and Tigrath the Tiger were very wary of having conflicts with the uncrowned ruler of the Shadow Forest.

"Run away, Francesca!" one of the Dryads shouted. "He's too strong!"

"Sisters!" Francesca knew that if she escaped, the Boss Monster would shift its attention to her sisters, who were currently trying to stall for time.

Without even saying anything else, she jumped off the flying shield and merged with the nearest tree.

Dryads had the ability to move quickly through trees, similar to short-distance teleportation. If they wanted to, they could escape Gorath anytime they wanted. But this would lead to dire consequences.

The Ape Monster didn't care even if it destroyed the entire forest by uprooting or simply obliterating all the trees in it.

As the Guardians of the forest alongside the fairies, the Dryads couldn't allow such a thing to happen.

When the leader of the Dryads, Sylvara, arrived at the scene, she was shocked to find out that the ones fighting Gorath were her sisters.

She had warned them not to antagonize the crazed ape, for it had once destroyed half the forest over a hundred years ago.

"What's going on?!" Sylvara shouted. "Calm yourself, Gorath!"

The Ape's reply was simple. It grabbed a tree and threw it at the Dryad Matriarch, forcing the latter to dodge.

Tigrath watched this scene from a distance with a frown. Gorath had been very irritable as of late. It had been doing its best to instigate conflict whenever it had the chance.

The Tiger and the Dryads had taken a step back time and time again to prevent the conflict from escalating. But they understood that it was only a matter of time before a full-blown confrontation exploded.

Suddenly, it saw something move from the corner of its eye.

Alex, Fran, and Finn decided to return to help the Dryads fight.

Originally, Alex didn't want to have any conflicts with the Field Boss Monsters. But now that the Dryads were fighting against Gorath, he thought that this was also an excellent opportunity to get on their good side.

"Fighting him in close combat will be extremely difficult," Alex said. "Are you sure about this, Fran?"

“Yes,” Fran replied fearlessly. “We can’t let him hurt Francesca!”

Fran didn’t know how it happened, but for some reason, she truly felt as if she was with her old friend, Medina, again.

The Elf had once been her older sister. At times, she had even acted as a motherly figure. Also, Fran felt something else that she couldn’t explain.

It oddly felt like she was growing stronger with every passing second. As if the entire forest was channeling the power of nature to give her some kind of buff.

At first, she thought that this was the effect of her Gaia Ring. The ring drastically increased her strength once she activated its power.

But it simply felt different. For a brief moment, Fran even thought that as long as the battlefield was the Shadow Forest, she was invincible.

Alex had no idea what was happening right now. However, since the dwarf decided to fight, he would not allow her to fight alone.

Lastly, since Francesca looked very much like Medina, he also didn’t want her to perish under his watch.

“No matter what happens, prioritize your safety!” Alex shouted. “I will focus on taunting, ranged attacks, and shielding the two of you. But this monster is very strong, so don’t attack recklessly!”

“”Okay!””

Fran and Finn wielded their weapons and allowed Alex’s magical shields to carry them to the battlefield.

Alex took the lead and also wielded his weapon, Sacrament.

“Hey! You overgrown ape!” Alex roared. “Come here, you punk!”

Alex’s skill, Taunt [EX], activated and made Gorath focus on him.

Francesca, who heard Alex’s voice, gave the young man a warning.

“Be careful, Alex!” Francesca yelled. “Gorath has incredible healing regeneration! Even if you injure it, the damage will heal right away!”

“Understood!” Alex replied before summoning dozens of shields.

“Enchant Fire!”

“Spike Shield!”

“Shield Throw!”

Dozens of spinning shields covered with spikes and flames bombarded the Ape Boss from a distance.

But just as Francesca had warned, the shields didn’t do much damage against the Field Boss. If anything, it only made Gorath angrier!

Still the exploding shields had momentarily blocked its vision, allowing Fran to get up close and personal.

“Meteor Drop!”

The young lady unleashed the strongest attack that she could muster at her current rank.

Using the magical shield under her feet as a platform, she propelled herself to unleash a devastating attack that made the Boss Monster stagger and take two steps back.

Sylvara and the Dryads were surprised by this. Even Tigrath's gaze became serious.

Even at full strength, it was unable to make Gorath take a step back, so seeing the young lady do such a feat piqued its interest.

Gorath immediately shifted its attention to the annoying fly that had landed a heavy blow on its body. Unfortunately for him, Alex and Dim Dim wouldn't allow him to do anything to Fran.

"Where are you looking at, you pig?!" Alex roared, once again activating his taunt ability.

The Boar Monsters watching the battle glared at Alex, grievously insulted. If not for the fact that the young man was riding on top of a magical shield, all of them would have already charged at him and gored him with their tusks!

Unfortunately, Gorath was stronger than the young man and managed to resist his taunt this time.

It focused on the retreating Fran with bloodshot eyes as its body turned into something similar to steel.

This was one of Gorath's abilities. It drastically increased its defense, making it an incredibly sturdy and deadly enemy.

If the Beast Conqueror, Diona, had been there, she would have definitely done everything in her power to tame such a rare monster, for it would've dramatically boosted her overall strength.

A moment later, a hammer smashed the side of the Ape's face, sending sparks flying everywhere.

Finn had come to help distract the monster and prevent it from targeting his sister.

“No, Finn!” Francesca shouted, and hurriedly summoned a vine that wrapped itself around the dwarf’s waist.

Without even any warning, she gave a strong tug, pulling Finn toward her just in time before Gorath swatted where he had been just a second earlier.

Alex’s shield that Finn was riding on earlier didn’t even last a second and shattered into particles of light.

Although it was a bit reckless, Finn had indeed succeeded in shifting the Boss Monster’s attention to himself.

However, it was too early to celebrate because the monster lunged at him and Francesca, whose face instantly paled from fright.

Chapter 597: Trust Me As Much As I Trust You

The Giant Ape ran as agile as it was strong.

It proved to be the true uncrowned king of the Shadow Forest. And with the buff of its passive skill, its strength brought it very close to breaking through the 7th Rank!

So when it lunged at Finn and Francesca, time seemed to stop completely still.

Alex had swiftly thrown his shields, but the two were too far from him. His shields wouldn’t arrive on time to push them off to safety.

Fran could reach them faster, but she needed about four to five seconds to land a hit on the Boss Monster.

But Finn and Francesca couldn’t afford to wait that long.

Just as Alex’s heart was about to leap off his chest, vines shot to the pair about to get swatted by the giant ape. They wrapped tight around their waists, then pulled out of harm’s way.

A loud explosion shook the forest as Gorath's palm sank into the ground, leaving a dozen-meter wide crater.

The Dryad Matriarch, Sylvara, stepped in perfectly, saving them by a hairsbreadth.

Finn's close encounter to a severe injury in his will to save her fueled Fran's anger, strengthening her physical abilities in turn. Her leg swung with devastating power, hitting the side of Gorath's face.

The Boss Monster staggered once more, forced to take a step back after taking the hit from the Dwarven Berserker.

"Dim Dim!"

Perhaps ready for what was to come, Dim Dim jumped to a height face to face with the monster, at which point it accurately threw out a dozen brittle vials, each with various effects that were equally devastating.

Glass breaking upon impact faintly reached everyone's ears. The little bun's special blend attack had aimed on the spot between Gorath's eyes, and the powder inside them instantly stung the monster blind.

Before the giant ape could react, Dim Dim had already summoned a magical shield under its body and flew away to escape.

Powdered black pepper, powdered chili peppers, skunk essence, strong acid, alchemy fire, tangle-sap, flash bomb vial, smoke bomb vial, and a few more things that caused chaos upon detonation—even more so when combined together—shrouded Gorath, letting it experience hellish pain.

Fran took that opportunity to punch the Ape's heel four times before ending it with a roundhouse kick.

Gorath's right leg buckled, and gravity pulled down the rest of its body.

Dim Dim's and Fran's combination had been quite effective, giving everyone ample time to retreat and unleash their ranged attacks without holding back.

"Shield Spike!"

"Enchant Fire!"

"Shield Charge!"

Alex unleashed a barrage of shield attacks, targeting the monster's face without holding back.

It had incredible regeneration, so any attack targeting its body would be useless.

Face injuries might not be an exception to this regeneration, but Alex believed that blinding the monster for half a minute or more would better buy them time as they figured out how to land a decisive blow that could kill it.

The Dryads also didn't hold back, unleashing their combination attack called Leaf Storm.

Countless leaves flew toward Gorath's body, all as sharp as a blade. The Dryad Matriarch joined in and trapped the giant ape in a tornado of leaves, slicing through every part of its body without a shred of mercy.

If Gorath was an ordinary monster, it would have already perished from the injuries it was receiving.

Unfortunately, the Ape's strong regeneration was really an annoying skill, making all attacks feel like nothing was working.

But Alex knew there was no such thing as an invincible ability. Gorath's regeneration was indeed very strong, but there must be a big price paid that came with such a powerful ability.

“Don’t give up!” Alex shouted as he summoned more shields. “Everyone, hit him with everything you got!”

The forest trembled under the relentless assault by all parties.

Leaves sliced. Shields crashed. Flames roared.

And at the center of it all, Gorath howled.

The giant ape’s fur was scorched black in patches. Its face was raw and bleeding from Alex’s concentrated attacks. One eye was swollen shut, the other bloodshot and irritated due to Dim Dim’s earlier attack.

But it did not fall.

It slammed both fists into its chest and released a deafening roar that blasted the Leaf Storm apart.

A shockwave exploded outward.

Dryads were thrown back like scattered petals. Alex’s shields shattered mid-air. Even Fran was forced to dig her heels into the earth to keep from being blown away.

Then they saw it.

The wounds on Gorath’s body healed at an even more rapid rate. Seeing this, the Dryad Matriarch was tempted to tell its sisters to retreat.

However, Alex’s shout reached her ears.

“He can’t heal forever!” Alex roared. “Just look at him! His movements have become noticeably slower, and he’s panting now!”

The Dryads realized that Alex was right. Gorath was indeed panting for breath, its nose flaring with white smoke.

It may have already broken through the 7th Rank, making it the strongest monster in the Shadow Forest. However, it was showing signs of fatigue.

Their attacks weren't in vain!

"Sisters, together!" Sylvara rallied all the Dryads to continue their attack.

""Yes!""

""Leaf Storm!""

Once again, a tornado wrapped around Gorath's body. And just as Alex had declared, its movement had slowed down and couldn't even dodge in time.

Dim Dim unleashed over a dozen brittle vials, which were sucked up by the tornado. Several small explosions happened inside of it, changing the color of the Leaf Tornado to the colors of the rainbow.

Alex knew that throwing shields at the Boss Monster wouldn't work. He lacked the decisive blow that could deal true damage to their enemy.

It was then when he saw Fran riding on top of Dim Dim's magical shield. The little bun was perched on top of her head, controlling the shield to fly high into the sky.

Alex immediately understood what it was planning to do.

Fran was a Rank 4 Dwarven Berserker, and one of her trump cards was the attack skill, Meteor Drop.

The higher the drop, the more destructive it was.

Alex hastily followed Fran and Dim Dim as they soared high in the sky. A plan had formed inside his mind, but it carried great risk.

For one thing, there was a chance that Fran would get seriously injured after he used his skill, making her Meteor Drop much more devastating.

“Fran, you know about my Gravitax Dominion, right?” Alex asked. “I am able to control gravity. In your case, I can increase the gravity of your body when you unleash your attack.

“This will greatly increase the damage that you will deal. However, it’s also very dangerous. Your leg might break from the impact.”

Fran glanced at Alex, and smiled. “Trust me as much as I trust you, Alex. Even if my leg gets broken, you will find a way to heal it, right?”

“Of course!” Alex replied in a heartbeat.

“Then there’s nothing to worry about.” Fran looked down on the ground. They had flown so high that if not for the fact that they could see the tornado, it would be impossible to pinpoint Gorath’s exact location at this altitude.

“I’ll be with you,” Alex promised.

Dim Dim jumped on Alex’s head and gave Fran a thumbs up. “Dim Dim!”

Fran smiled faintly before shifting her attention to her target.

Her body glowed faintly in a golden light as she started to initiate her strongest attack.

A second later, Fran descended from the sky like a meteor.

Alex and Dim Dim were several meters behind her. The young man didn't use Gravitas Dominion right away, fearing that the pressure would break Fran before she could hit her target.

Instead, he summoned over a dozen shields to protect them as they entered the eye of the tornado.

Sparks flew as the leaves that were as sharp as razors clashed with Alex's shields, but they held firm because he understood that if he didn't handle this properly, he and his beloved would be sliced to pieces.

"Now Alex!" Fran shouted.

“Gravitas Domain!” Alex unleashed his powers, empowering Fran with five times the gravity of Arcana.

The young lady gritted her teeth as the pressure slammed at her like a hammer. Still, she endured and slammed her foot on top of the Boss Monster's head.

“Meteor Drop!”

A powerful shock wave blasted outward, dispersing the Leaf Storm, and causing flames to expand in every direction.

The blast was so powerful that trees were uprooted within a hundred meter radius of the tornado, sending the nearby dryads flying backwards.

“Fraaaaaaaaaaan!” Finn shouted as he, too, was blasted away by the shock wave that came from his sister’s strongest strike.

Chapter 598: Get Out Of The Way, You Fool!

"I can't believe it..." Tigrath muttered. "They really dealt a serious injury to Gorath."

He had seen Fran's kick smash onto the giant ape's head from his vantage point. But the young lady didn't stop there.

After her attack landed, the dwarf leaped to the side, making way for Alex to swing his hammer down on Gorath's head, giving the ape no time to even react.

Although the view from afar looked close to a blur, Tigrath noticed a little white blob throwing something at the ape's face before jumping away.

The combination of attacks had rattled Gorath's brain for sure. It now lay motionless on the ground.

Tigrath couldn't confirm the Ape's death by just looking, but such an opportunity didn't come so often. Eyes squinting with predatory intent, the opportunistic white tiger charged toward the battlefield, planning to deal the decisive blow to one of his rivals.

If he could also eat Gorath's Beast Core, that would greatly boost its overall strength!

"Fran, are you okay?" Alex asked while holding the young lady in his arms.

The pained look on the dwarf's face prompted Alex to look at the foot she had kicked the Boss Monster with.

They had descended from hundreds of meters above ground. The force of that collision, multiplied by Alex's Gravitational Domain, was not something that anyone could shrug off so easily.

"My foot..." Fran said with great effort. "I think... it's broken."

Alex hurriedly took out the strongest Healing Potion from his storage ring and helped Fran drink it all. With no way to check the condition of her foot, he didn't dare to take off her shoe lest he accidentally aggravated her injuries.

He believed that Gorath was dead. Even if the monster's regeneration was off the charts, their consecutive attacks had certainly dealt it a killing blow. Still, Alex didn't dare to lower his guard.

His focus had been on grabbing Fran after delivering his strike, but if he had seen it correctly, Dim Dim had also smacked the giant ape's head with its toy hammer.

The Toy Hammer looked harmless at first glance, but once the Dim Sum God activated its ability, it could deal internal injuries instead of external ones.

Dim Dim was currently by their side. Specifically, it chose a position right between them and Gorath.

Its little toy hammer was raised readily, seemingly guarding Alex and Fran just in case the giant ape could miraculously rise up after that devastating three-hit combo.

Suddenly, they saw something move in the distance. A white tiger at least three to four meters tall ran toward the fallen Boss Monster.

Despite never meeting the new guest before, Alex immediately knew it was Tigrath, one of the three Field Boss Monsters that lived in the Shadow Forest.

The young man couldn't deal with the opportunistic tiger at the moment since he was busy pouring healing potions on Fran's leg.

Her leg had likely been fractured due to her ultimate attack earlier.

"Oh no, you don't!" The Dryad Matriarch, Sylvara, understood what Tigrath planned to do. "You opportunistic bastard!"

Unwilling to let him be, she summoned countless veins. They shot out toward the approaching tiger to at least slow it down if binding it wasn't possible.

"Get out of the way, you fool!" Tigrath roared. "I'll finish off Gorath before he can recover!"

“You’re the one who should get out of the way!” Sylvara sneered. “I’ll be the one to kill him!”

Alex rolled his eyes. He desperately wanted to scold the two Boss Monsters for quarrelling during a time like this. But he also understood that the balance would be broken if either of them devoured Gorath’s Beast Core.

Suddenly, he saw someone else running toward the fallen giant ape.

Finn. Using both arms, he raised his blazing hammer, ready to strike.

Francesca had protected him when they were blasted away by the shockwave, allowing him to get away nearly unscathed. Upon regaining his consciousness, the first thing he had done was return to the battlefield to check if his sister was safe.

But he saw the giant ape before Alex and Fran and quickly adjusted his priority.

And now, he charged at it fearlessly, preparing the strongest attack in his arsenal.

“Megaton Smash!” Finn roared as he brought his hammer down on Gorath’s bleeding head.

The blow caved the monster’s head in, but the dwarf wasn’t taking any chances.

“Megaton Smash!” Finn activated his skill a second time, a third time, a fourth time, and a fifth.

He kept on hammering, even after the monster’s head was little more than a slurry of shattered bone and brain matter.

Tigrath and Sylvara paid close attention to what was happening and momentarily stopped fighting against each other.

As long as neither of them consumed Gorath's Beast Core, things could still remain the same.

Just as Alex thought about whether to stop Finn, he heard a notification that he didn't expect.

< Level Up! >

< Level Up! >

The two notifications made Alex finally sigh in relief. This meant that Gorath was truly dead, and they no longer had to worry about it.

If not for the Dryads helping to deplete its stamina, weakening its regeneration ability, his combined assault with Fran and Dim Dim might not have been enough to deal serious injury on their opponent.

Finn's relentless assault had finally ended Gorath's life. With this, one of the Field Boss Monsters in the Shadow Forest had perished. A new battle for supremacy would start between Tigrath and Sylvara.

Fran looked at her brother, who had finally stopped hitting the dead monster's head.

Her dear brother was covered in brain matter, but she couldn't help but smile at the thought of him dealing the killing blow to their enemy.

If Fran had fought normally, she might not have dealt enough damage to cripple the giant ape. It had been thanks to the Shadow Forest transferring the power of nature to her body that she temporarily surpassed Rank 4, even stepping into Rank 6 during her drop from the sky.

Even now, she believed she'd have no problem fighting against Tigrath or Sylvara if they were to pose a threat to her and her teammates.

After all, she had completely healed. Her legs felt as good as new, and not because of Alex's potions. Her regeneration ability had drastically improved for some reason, miraculously healing her leg and foot.

Hers and Alex's Gaia Rings also glowed faintly as if they were resonating with the forest's will to protect Fran from harm.

Tigrath and Sylvara glanced at each other, keeping the other in check to ensure they wouldn't make a sudden move to grab Gorath's Beast Core.

Tension still hung in the air, but now that one of their problems was dead, Alex could at least breathe a little easier while helping his lover stand up on her own two feet.

They both stared at Finn, who only nodded in their direction. Right now, the young man's body seemed to exude a pressure he never had before.

It was then that Alex realized Fran's brother had also broken past Rank 3 and was now officially a Rank 4 Arcane Blacksmith.

Chapter 599: I Will Let You Meet Your Maker!

Tigrath and Sylvara kept each other in check, each preventing the other from taking advantage of Gorath's death.

But the sight of the giant ape's dead body lying on the ground served as a temptation that both Rank 6 Monsters found difficult to resist any longer.

Alex understood the problem, but he had no idea how to solve it. If not handled properly, the White Tiger and the Dryad Matriarch would definitely try to absorb Gorath's Core using any method at their disposal.

Just as he thought about how to handle this situation properly, Dim Dim casually opened its dimensional storage and used it to suck the giant ape's body in.

The moment Gorath's body disappeared, Tigrath, Sylvara, and the Dryads all locked their gazes on the little bun.

Dim Dim blinked once, then twice, before jumping on top of Alex's head. It then covered its face for a few moments before taking a peek at the monsters, who were still looking at it.

"Everyone, please calm down," Alex said calmly. "We don't want trouble. We just came here to visit the grave of the Lonely Fairy. After paying our respects, we will leave the Shadow Forest."

"And who says you can leave without my permission?" Tigrath growled. "If you want to leave, then hand over Gorath's corpse."

But before Alex could give his reply, Fran stood up and glared at the White Tiger.

"And why should we do that?" Fran countered. "If you want to die, then come! I will let you meet your maker!"

Dim Dim blinked before tilting its body to the side. Was Fran referring to it since it was the one who had made Arcana?

Alex, on the other hand, wanted to say, "That's my girl!" However, since their situation was a little bit tricky, he shut up and summoned dozens of shields around them.

He could vaguely sense that Fran's strength was enough to deal with the arrogant White Tiger, so he decided to support her if she planned to punch and kick the Field Boss to oblivion.

Finn naturally went to his sister's side. His body was still covered with Gorath's brain matter, making him look intimidating in the eyes of their enemy.

"She's right!" Francesa appeared right beside Finn. "If you want to die, come! Sisters, let us work together to kill this arrogant bastard!"

Sylvara narrowed her eyes as she, too, prepared herself for battle.

Now that one of her rivals was dead, killing Tigrath didn't sound like a bad idea. If their guests could help kill Gorath, they might also be able to do the same to Tigrath.

Finding himself outnumbered, Tigrath decided to back down a bit. He was no fool. As one of the Lords of the Forest, his strength was only slightly better than Sylvara's.

If the Dryad Matriarch gained the help of the strangers, especially the lady dwarf that seemed ready to fight, their chances of defeating or even killing the White Tiger were very high.

After a brief internal battle, Tigrath decided to attack the strangers later when the Dryads were no longer around.

With its explosive speed and power, he was confident about making short work of the teenagers.

Unfortunately for him, Alex had no intention of letting it go.

Why would he?

Now that the Dryad Matriarch and the Dryads were ready to support him—and Fran seemed to be eager to fight as well—he did the only sensible thing that he could do.

“Come over here, you ugly tiger!” Alex shouted, activating his Taunt [EX] skill.

Tigrath suddenly felt compelled to attack the young man, despite the fact that he had decided to wait for the right opportunity to strike.

The tension was already high like a tightly drawn bow. So the moment the White Tiger lunged towards the teenagers, the Dryads moved to attack.

Fran took the lead and charged fearlessly against the Boss Monster, with Alex and Finn running behind her.

“Shield Spike!”

“Enchant Fire!”

“Shield Charge!”

Alex buffed Everguard before stomping his right foot on the ground, propelling himself to charge at the White Tiger.

Around him, dozens of shields spun and flew toward the Boss Monster, causing explosions at the moment of impact.

Unlike Gorath, who could have tanked such attacks, Tigrath’s specialty was speed. It could have dodged Alex’s attack, but the Taunt Skill prevented it from doing so.

The Dryads had also bound the White Tiger’s legs with vines, giving the young man that short window he needed.

Everguard collided with the White Tiger’s snout and drew blood. Alex held on for a few seconds, blocking the Boss Monster’s line of sight by increasing the intensity of the flames he had imbued his shield with.

That was the opportunity Fran needed to get up close and personal. She unleashed a roundhouse kick at the monster’s front leg, which made it roar in pain.

Alex and Fran immediately retreated before Tigrath could counterattack by biting them with its jaws.

Dim Dim, the ever reliable little bun, also threw brittle vials on the Tiger’s face, stalling it for a few seconds.

Since Tigrath already knew what had happened to Gorath earlier, he didn’t underestimate the little bun’s attack.

He howled and unleashed a gust of wind that repelled the brittle vials and severed the vines that bound its body.

Finn had circled around the White Tiger while he was occupied and also coated his warhammer with flames.

He smashed his hammer against the White Tiger's hind legs. The beast staggered upon impact.

"Leaf Storm!" Sylvara and the Dryads once again unleashed their strongest attacks while Tigrath was still reeling from the pain of the consecutive attacks that it had suffered.

The Tiger knew how dangerous the Leaf Storm was, so he decided to retreat. However, he suddenly lost strength on its front leg, which had been kicked by Fran earlier.

This slowed him down drastically, allowing the Leaf Storm to trap his body in a tornado of leaves that was as sharp as blades!

Tigrath's roar of anger, pain, and frustration reverberated inside the forest. But now that they managed to corner him, Sylvara and the Dryads decided to go all out and finish their foe once and for all.

"Damn it!" Tigrath cursed, failing to muster any strength in his left front leg. He then used his right foot to stomp the ground and force himself out of the deadly tornado.

The proud and arrogant White Tiger limped away using his speed to escape.

But Alex was already waiting for him to do that.

"Come here, you coward!" Alex roared while bashing his shield with his warhammer to catch Tigrath's attention.

The White Tiger gritted his teeth and forcefully resisted Alex's Taunt skill through sheer willpower.

He understood that if he turned back, he would no longer be able to escape!

Using his superior speed, he zigzagged across the trees, preventing the Dryads from using the vines to bind his body.

Even if he was limping, he was still extremely fast. Faster than the Dryad Matriarch that was already hot on its pursuit.

Alex summoned magical shields and allowed Fran and Finn to ride on them. They soared above the trees, following the White Tiger by using Alex's Map.

The young man had no intention of letting Tigrath escape because that would be a very dangerous move.

Alex was simply waiting for the cooldown period of his Taunt Skill to finish before he would once again try to provoke the monster, who was desperately trying to escape with his life.

Chapter 600: Since You Want To Die Then Die!

'Damn it!' Tigrath cursed internally as it limped away at full speed.

Despite its injury, its speed still outclassed the Dryads, so escaping wouldn't be too much of an issue.

However, anger and humiliation pounded inside his head, driving it crazy. Those teenagers better pray for good luck, for the White Tiger had no plans to leave them alive if an opportunity cropped up.

As it indulged its thoughts of revenge, a shout reached his ears.

"Stop running, you cowardly tiger!" Alex shouted. "You call yourself a Lord of the Forest? More like Turd of the Forest!"

The strong impulse to attack the young man invaded the White Tiger's mind once again. It had no way of cleansing the taunt, but its sheer willpower stood strong and broke away from the young man's skill.

'Damn it!' Tigrath cursed as he continued to run away. 'I promise I'll kill you later!'

It sprinted as fast as its injury allowed and leveraged the trees as cover to shake off his pursuers.

Behind him, Alex was cursing the stubborn Boss Monster for repeatedly refusing his taunts.

If it weren't for his map showing Tigrath's location, he would've given up chasing the White Tiger.

Behind Alex were Fran and Finn, recovering their stamina atop Alex's shields.

The Dryads also kept up, moving from tree to tree. Their Matriarch, Sylvara, was in the lead and followed closely behind Alex.

Perhaps she also understood that this was a golden opportunity to get rid of Tigrath once and for all.

The chase continued, and everytime Alex's skill was in cooldown, he would use his Taunt skill at the fleeing Tiger.

And every time he did, his target would resist his skill with everything it had.

The repeated failures didn't discourage Alex. He repeated it again and again, not planning to let Tirgrath go. Not only was the Boss Monster dangerous, it also held a grudge against him and Fran. Either it lived or they lived. There was no in between.

Since the Dryads were helping him get rid of their rival, there was no better opportunity to end the Tiger's life.

All Alex needed was one successful taunt, and they could attack Tigrath all at once.

The chase had been going on for nearly thirty minutes. At this point, the White Tiger had noticeably slowed down. It had been running nonstop with injury and needed more stamina than its pursuers to run.

Alex was aware of the true nature of Tigers. They specialize in short bursts of speeds, not in running marathons.

Tigrath was exceptional in its own right for running this long. Perhaps it was because of its high stamina as a Boss Monster. But the young man believed that sooner or later, the Tiger would reach its limit.

The Dryads used trees as a medium to travel at great speeds with minimal stamina. But while they were in a better state than the Tiger, they were also starting to get tired.

“Come here so Dim Dim can hit you, you trash!” Alex shouted while activating his Taunt Skill.

“Dim Dim!” The little bun had also taken out its little hammer, ready to whack the Tiger that threatened the safety of its friends.

Tigrath once again tried to resist Alex’s taunt skill. Unfortunately, it was already exhausted from running. The taunt finally managed to connect, making the Boss Monster turn its head in Alex’s direction.

“Since you want to die, then die!” Tigrath roared before using its remaining strength to sprint toward the annoying young man who refused to let him go!

Alex grinned. Finally! After chasing the Tiger for who knew how long, he finally taunted it!

He was also reaching his limit since he had been using Shield Chaser over and over to continue their pursuit.

Just as Tigrath thought that Alex would face him, the young man actually stopped moving his shield and made it hover in place.

Sylvara briefly glanced at Alex before striding forward in order to intercept her rival, who was now on its last legs.

Fran and Finn also delayed their moves by a few seconds, making sure that the Dryad Matriarch took the lead as their vanguard.

“Bind him!” Sylvara ordered before unleashing countless vines that shot toward Tigrath like living snakes.

The other Dryads did the same.

The vines successfully wrapped around the body of the Tiger. To free itself, it did its best to bite and rip them to shreds.

Unfortunately, its stamina was now depleted, and it could no longer break free from its bindings.

Sylvara wrapped the Tiger’s body with her vines and slammed the bastard to the ground. She repeated this a couple more times, using Tigrath like some kind of flail.

Alex watched the pitiful Boss Monster get repeatedly slammed on the ground. However, he didn’t pity it one bit.

Blood was already seeping out of Tigrath’s jaws, but Sylvara had no intention of stopping. In fact, she looked like a crazed warrior princess who was making sure that her opponent would die and stay dead forever!

Fran and Finn moved, timing their attacks as soon as the tiger’s body was slammed to the ground.

“Meteor Drop!”

“Megaton Smash!”

Two consecutive full-powered blows landed on Tigrath's head, making it cry out in pain.

Alex only watched while leaning on a tree, trying to recover his strength. His role had ended the moment his Taunt successfully activated. Now, it was up to Fran, Finn, and the Dryads to finish off their foe once and for all.

Dim Dim also joined the fray and coordinated its attack with everyone.

"Eyah!" Dim Dim smacked the side of Tigrath's head with its toy hammer before jumping to a nearby tree branch.

It had wanted to throw some brittle vials at the Boss Monster. But Fran and Finn were fighting it up close as well, so it decided to drop the idea for now to prevent friendly fire.

After a few minutes of intense battle, Alex heard two notification sounds inside his head, which made him sigh in relief.

< Level Up! >

< Level Up! >

The familiar level-up sound confirmed that Tigrath was already dead. With this, two of the threats in the forest were now gone.

Alex only hoped that the Dryads wouldn't turn on them after they worked together to remove their rivals inside the Shadow Forest.