

## **Few Wives 121**

### Chapter 121 Fear Women

Downstairs...

"So where do I start?" Elsa asked the others since she wasn't sure what they wanted to know and what they already knew.

"Well, we can all figure out the general idea. You killed your last beast and evolved; your Fairy Embryo obviously got involved at some point, and then the giant appeared. So I guess all you need to do is fill in the gaps. Like, was that the fairy after hatching, getting birthed or whatever it that it does?... If so, why the hell was it so big and strong? And things like that." Muku immediately gave Elsa some guidelines on where to start.

The others silently agreed. There really was no need to go through everything. After all, they were already veterans who had been through a lot. So, for the general stuff, they were all quite knowledgeable.

"Oh, okay, I'll do that then", Elsa replied while thinking of where to start within the guidelines she had received. Not to mention that it was the first time she would have to talk so much ever since she joined the group. On top of that, she was addressing the whole group, so she didn't know where to look.

"Okay...I, ah..." Her mind went blank when she looked around the room and saw so many pairs of eyes fixated on her. As a Rank One, she could now vaguely sense their suppressed strength, which felt slightly heavy to her. She felt like a little human being looked at by giants.

"Calm down, no need to be nervous. There's no stranger or any new people here. Not to mention that you cost me some of my food, so you better speak clearly," Emily spoke while trying to ease her sister's nerves. Her first words didn't help much but the last one did the trick.

"Is your food enough to hold a grudge against your own sister?" Elsa retorted while rolling her eyes at her sister who had suddenly become a foodie. Though she could understand, Rank Two meat was just that good.

"Okay. So where was I"? Elsa asked. After Emily's intervention, she had visibly gotten a lot more confident. As always, before your spouse, it's always your siblings who know how to push your buttons the best.

"You hadn't said anything yet stupid" Emily didn't take long to reply.

"I know. I was just saying" Elsa replied with a vein popping out of her forehead.

"Okay, so initially I awakened a different class..." Without waiting for Emily to say anything, Elsa continued speaking. She went on to explain everything to the others.

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A while later...

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"So you're saying that you initially awoke a weaker class due to your limited affinity. But then the Fairy Embryo got involved and your class and affinity were both improved?...how wondrous!" Muku repeated what Elsa said after she finished speaking. His voice was full of wonder. How could it not when he discovered that apparently affinity could be raised.

"Yes," Elsa replied. Her tone was a lot more relaxed. It seemed that the experience might have been just what she needed to get closer to the rest.

"Wait, does that mean that if I'm lucky I can find something to increase my affinity with and upgrade my class to legendary?" Jade interjected herself into the conversation excitedly. She hadn't been paying too much attention before.

"Well, based on this...I guess so. But from this very case, we can at least tell that just because you find the opportunity, it doesn't mean you'll get it" Muku found no reason to reject Jade's hypothesis. But he still made sure she understood that it wouldn't be guaranteed even if it was like that.

"Tsk, you just have to pop my bubble huh?... And I understand it seems to rely on what element you have. I'm not an idiot after all" Jade replied to Muku while rolling her eyes. She was starting to wonder if he really thought that she never used her brain.

"Oh, so you actually used your brain this time. Good for you, keep it up" Apparently Muku really did think that she didn't use her brain in normal cases from his words. Not to mention that he was even patting her head as he spoke.

Slap!

"Hmph!" Jade made an annoyed sound after she slapped Muku's hand away. She then looked away from him, expressing her stance to not want to talk to him anymore. If it was any other time she would have been happy to get the legendary head pat she and the others had wanted so much. But sadly the reason she was getting it wouldn't let her enjoy it.

"Anyway, let's continue. So you said that it really was the fairy's form, just magnified? And the reason for its strength was because of the extra energy that had been left over from the time it was an unowned fairy, which it had to get rid of since it was unpure?" Muku continued asking questions to make sure that he understood things correctly. Since Jade was ignoring him, he'd do the same.

"Yes, and the reason why I was unbearably hungry before was that the fairy needed new energy, which it obtained from my body. My body is like a purifier for the energy. And it's also why I wasn't overwhelmed by the energy since most of it went to the fairy," Elsa replied, as well as offered more information for clarification to anything that wasn't clear.

"So the fairy is like a symbiote? You give it energy and it improves your strength?" Layla, who hadn't spoken since the beginning, finally made her thoughts known.

"Yes, I guess you can put it like that...and when I and it get a little stronger in the future, I can also summon it to fight alongside me", Elsa replied excitedly. After all, what little girl didn't like fairies? Hell, hearing her words the other girls in the group felt rather jealous. Why didn't they get fairies!? Totally unfair!

"Oh, good for you then", Layla replied before getting up with a little jealousy on her face.

Audrey, who noticed it since she spent a lot of her time looking at her daughter, couldn't help but smile wryly. She had long noticed that while her daughter wasn't a bad person by any means. She was also the type of person who didn't like it when someone had something she liked while she didn't. Luckily it only ended in a pout.

"So, what do you want as a present for reaching Rank One"? Muku asked Elsa with a fatherly smile on his face.

"Hey! Why didn't we get any presents then!?" Jade, who had decided to ignore Muku for the rest of the day, immediately complained.

"Well for the others, I simply couldn't afford to do such a thing then. As for you, even if I was able to, I wouldn't have. Why would I give a present to such an ungrateful brat like you?" Muku replied with a natural expression as if he was saying the most natural thing in the world. Which honestly he was...

"Tsk, like I'd want a present from you anyway" Jade, who couldn't think of any way to refute his words, just replied in the best way she knew how. Which was to shamelessly backtrack from her own words.

"Good. Then I won't have to bother getting you anything when I get something for the others in the future right"? Muku teased her a bit more.

"Try it if you dare!" Jade immediately snapped while glaring at Muku with her glowing green eyes. While she was okay with refusing when it was just talk, she wouldn't be so quiet to compromise when something tangible was up for grabs.

"Tsk! Hypocrite!" Emily commented with a slightly disdainful look on her face.

"Whatever" Jade replied uncaringly. As long as she got the gift. Everything else didn't matter. Who cared about face? Can it be eaten? Worn maybe? The answer is obviously no!

"Jade's hypocrisy aside, what do you want Elsa"? Muku spoke, not forgetting where the whole conversation began before Jade's interjection.

"I...can we go back to kill more beasts today?" Elsa asked hesitantly. She wasn't sure if she was asking too much. After all, the rain had only stopped an hour before and Muku and the others didn't seem to be in the mood to go out. But she just couldn't wait to get stronger.

"Oh, so that's what you want... I like it, sure! We can go right now even. Since it's so abrupt, whoever doesn't want to come can stay behind" Muku replied with a smile on his face. He quite liked it when kids were driven like Elsa appeared to be. He immediately got up, ready to leave. They had already eaten and relaxed for a while after, so there was no reason to wait.

"Wait, Big Brother!" Hope called out as she ran toward Muku who was already at the door with Elsa excitedly walking behind him. The two kinda seemed like a father and his tomboy daughter about to go on a new adventure.

"Yes?... Oh, I guess I was a bit too rushed and didn't give you all a chance to think about what you want to do. Is that it? So you want to come along?" Muku asked Hope after stopping at the door. He was more than willing to take anyone willing to go with him. After all, while he was confident in his strength, it was never a bad thing to have an extra pair of hands.

"No...well yes. But that's not the problem right now. I was wondering... When are you planning on giving us the presents?" Hope replied, getting straight to the point.

"Hhm?...oh, oh! That! I was just playing with Jade there...are no...real... I'll get you all your presents within a week," Muku, who was about to clarify that he was only playing with Jade before, immediately changed his statement.

He could feel multiple gazes on him that were getting more and more intense as he spoke. He could subconsciously sense that if he had said that there were no presents, then he might not have lived to see the next day.

Even Layla, who had left before, had come back at some point and was looking at him intensely along with the rest.

Seeing their gazes made him realise that he had dug his own grave. And he would have been thrown into it if he hadn't changed his statement.

"Oh, okay. Thank you for being so thoughtful brother. But you didn't have to, though," Hope spoke with a sunny smile on her aura. The complete opposite of what was about to come out of Muku had said the wrong thing. Even the others who hadn't said anything from start to finish were also smiling merrily for no apparent reason to the untrained eye.

At that moment, Muku thought of one legendary statement by a wise sage...

{Fear women}

Chapter 122 Freya's Class

A little while later at the stadium...

"Oh, so you all chose to evolve last night huh?... Good, I like it when people are proactive" Muku spoke soon after the women from the previous day came to receive him.

As an advanced Rank Two Evolver, he could easily identify lower-ranked Evolvers even without them using their abilities. Not to mention Freya's group who still couldn't properly control their mana aura. Which was leaking all over the place.

After hearing his words the women heaved a sigh of relief internally. They were worried that even though he gave them the option he actually wanted them to wait for him. So, by not waiting, they might have offended him and made him think they had big heads or something like that. Fortunately for them, things didn't turn out like that.

"Y...Yes, we felt that we had bothered you enough." Freya, who had somehow become the women's spokesperson, replied meekly as usual.

"No, no. I wouldn't have minded. After all, it was my choice to help you all. So I won't ever feel bothered by you all... as long as it's nothing too much. And like I said before, I appreciate people who can take the initiative, so either way, you're good," Muku responded to Freya's statement in a way that reassured her group.

"O-okay, thank you again for helping us" Freya replied, taking the chance to express her group's gratitude once again.

Sure, no problem. Why do you seem sad though?" Muku accepted the gratitude and then asked about something that he had noticed since his arrival.

Freya's voice was lower than before, and there were bags under her eyes due to lack of sleep; then there was the bleakness in her eyes that wasn't there before. She seemed like someone who had their lives sucked out of them and was just living for the sake of others.

"Oh... ah... It's nothing. Just a little inconsequential problem of mine. It doesn't matter" Freya replied in a way that seemed to try and play down whatever was happening.

"Umm, okay. If you say so. I hope whatever it is gets sorted out soon" Although Muku could tell that something significant was happening with Freya. Stay connected via My Virtual Library Empire

Since the person herself didn't want to tell him whatever it was. There was nothing he could do about it. He wouldn't try to dig deeper or force her to tell him since they weren't that close. In fact, they were just acquaintances at that point, if the relationship was to be labelled.

"She's sad because she awakened a useless class!" A loud gloating voice was heard from the group behind Freya.

When the others searched for the source, it turned out to be an arrogant-looking average in beauty lady. The others in Freya's group immediately understood what was going on. The lady had been doing things similar to that for the past few days after all.

What Muku and his group didn't know was that their interacting with Freya more than the others made the rest jealous. While it was something Muku would have expected from a normal group in a normal setting. He would never expect such a thing from a group that has basically reached rock bottom. Sadly, he was mistaken, humans will always be humans.

The jealousy especially developed after the hug between Freya and Muku that went unpunished. While the others were rational enough to keep their jealousy tucked away since they knew their situation. Apparently, that one lady felt super insulted for some reason. And she had been targeting Freya every chance she got from then on.

She just hadn't done it in front of Muku's group since she never got a reason to. But after what Freya reviewed to them the previous night. Like a snake that had been waiting to strike, the moment the chance presented itself, she struck!

"Is that so?... And who are you again miss?" Muku asked two questions curiously.

Freya just stood by the side, her face blue, feeling betrayed. After all, while the lady had said some hurtful things before, it was when they were among their own people. Which was a lot different from the current situation, where such information could hurt her badly if Muku decided to leave her behind when he took the others to rank up.

"Yes sir. My name is Lisa. Freya here told us that she awakened some dumb class called House Heart. Like, what kind of class is that, right?" Lisa didn't answer what she was asked. She even added a little more information to hurt Freya even more.

"Wow, House Heart huh?... What a weird name indeed. Is it like a random class or something? Truly unfortunate" Muku exaggeratedly replied, seemingly encouraging Lisa to say more.

Freya's expression got worse seeing his unfeeling reaction. She felt betrayed for some reason. Which was rather unreasonable since they went so close for him to defend her no matter what. But then again, when was the heart ever logical?.

"Oh no, she said it's a Unique Class or something like that. I've never heard of it. But I think it makes sense; after all,, it is uniquely trashy" As Freya's thoughts and feelings were a mess, Lisa continued speaking. The woman really wouldn't shut up if given a chance to speak.

"Well now, so it's a Unique class huh?... And what's your class?" Muku spoke with a smile on his face. Which Lisa took as motivation to say more. As for Hope, Emily and Elsa, who were standing beside Muku, they knew that things weren't as they appeared.

What Lisa and the others didn't notice was that while he was smiling, his eyes were cold. That was something that only his teammates who knew him personally could tell. He, in fact, despised Lisa's behaviour; they were just waiting for the moment he blew.

"My class?...it's nothing special. Just the Rare class Wind Whisper" Lisa replied to his question with an arrogant look on her face, the opposite of her words that seemed modest.

"Oh. A rare class huh..." Muku replied and trailed off at the end.

BOOM!

Suddenly his aura exploded and smashed down on Lisa. She who had been in the moment before confusedly found herself in hell. Her whole body was enveloped by imaginable pain and she couldn't move. The worst part, she couldn't even scream to somewhat ease the pain.

Emily and Hope, who had long seen it coming, protected everyone when their auras. Which was rather easy since Muku hadn't lost it, otherwise just the two of them might have had trouble with cancelling out his aura alone.

Freya and the others from the base looked on with blank minds. They were so shocked and confused that they couldn't think of anything. Wasn't he just smiling at her a while before?? Why was she now pressed to the ground and why did he look so mad??

Freya's heart rate couldn't help but quicken when her brain started working again. Is he doing it for me? Does he secretly like me and can't take her insulting me anymore?

Such thoughts went through her mind. Despite knowing that she was likely deluding herself. She still couldn't stop herself from hoping that maybe she really was the reason for his anger. Her cheeks reddened a little bit.

That's when she felt danger all of a sudden. Which was an ability every Evolver had to a differing degree. She looked in the direction she sensed the danger from. It was beside Muku. The source, the golden-eyed girl who was looking at her with a smile that didn't seem like a smile. Her slightly racing heart immediately went cold. Surprisingly, the feeling of being in danger also disappeared at the same time.

{What was that? Are my senses malfunctioning because of my terrible class?. Well whatever the reason, I think I should stay away from her if possible} Freya thought to herself after the feeling disappeared.

"YOU DARE LOOK DOWN ON A RARE CLASS WITH JUST YOUR RARE CLASS?!! Muku roared angrily at Lisa while walking towards her.

"Let me educate the ignorant you then. You see if a Random Class is a house cat. A Rare Class a leopard. Then a Unique Class is a freaking Sabertooth Tiger! So next time before calling something or someone trash, better know what you're talking about" Muku's voice returned to normal as he slowly walked to Lisa's side.

He then grabbed the back of her neck and raised her up. Then he threw her into the sky. The woman was thrown around twenty metres into the sky when Muku wasn't even trying. She then started plummeting to the ground. Just as she was less than thirty centimetres away from the ground, she stopped.

While she couldn't move or make a sound. Her eyes showed all the terror she felt. She even wet herself from terror. Then Muku made her float in the air in front of him to face him. She looked at him with nothing but fear in her eyes which were already filled with tears. Yet Muku wasn't made.

"But that's not even the problem since you aren't well informed. The problem is trash allies like you who easily sell out their teammates like that just to please strangers. I hate trash like that the most. But since you haven't done anything too major. I will let you go with a warning this time. Do it again and we'll have a real problem. Either get in line or leave" Muku continued speaking to Lisa after scaring her a bit more. Such people need such treatment, or they will always be plotting something in the background.

He then retracted his aura and his powers, making Lisa fall to the ground with a little thud. There was zero gentleman-like behaviour from start to finish.

Lisa, who fell to the ground and felt significant pain, didn't scream. Even though she could sense that she was free to do whatever she wanted, she didn't dare do anything. She was that traumatised by Muku. She was, after all, one of those lucky few like Freya, who didn't get defiled.

So she hadn't gone through anything as traumatic since the beginning of the apocalypse. On top of that, before the apocalypse, she was the pampered daughter of a minister. So to say that she was fragile in every way was an understatement. Of course, some daughters of ministers were strong, but she wasn't one of them...

Chapter 123 Battle Maniac Elsa?

"Ms Freya, can you tell me more about your class?" Muku then turned to Freya. Completely ignoring Lisa, as if the whole incident with her didn't happen.

"A...y-yes, my class description says I need to be in a house to use my abilities. And I need something called Beast Cores as well. From what I could gather, it turns me into something like the house's manager, allowing me to upgrade it as well as fight with it after getting stronger" Freya explained, a little nervous at the start but calmed down soon after. She didn't want to waste his time by stuttering all over the place.

"Well, that's certainly unique...It kinda sounds like you'll turn the house into a fortress or something" Muku commented, his curiosity peaked by her class.

"There's a big problem, though: I don't have a house. And there are none outside. Yet without one I'm useless" Freya finally mentioned the part that made her feel gloomy.

She had been quite excited about her class at the beginning thinking that it was super strong even when she couldn't understand some stuff. But when she realised that she had no house, she immediately fell from heaven right into hell.

"Oh... Yeah, that does seem to be quite the problem. But for now, I think you should continue ranking up with the rest instead of giving up. Who knows what the future holds right? You might be able to come across a house that's still standing one of these days" Muku spoke, trying to cheer up Freya.

Of course, he meant what he said. They had come across a few standing buildings even after the great collapse after the planet's evolution. So there's gotta be a standing house for her to occupy somewhere. However, he couldn't help but feel like he was missing something...

"Okay... I'll do that; I can at least make my body stronger for self-defence, even if I can only make it average at best", Freya replied, agreeing to his proposition.

After seeing what weakness could lead to, she wasn't willing to give up so easily. Maybe like he said, one day she will find a house and make proper use of her class. Or she could build it herself after getting physically strong enough.

"Good, that's the spirit. Now, your group of fifteen will join us today. Newbies can't join because my other team members aren't present right now. They didn't feel like coming. Anyway, you should all know that we won't be babying you like yesterday. I'll just throw a certain number of beasts your way and you will have to mostly take care of yourselves after that" Muku explained how the day was going to go if Freya's group wanted to go along. He wouldn't continue to baby them.

"Oh. I'm okay with it. I don't know about the others... And what about Lisa?" Freya didn't mind the arrangement, but she also didn't decide for everyone else.

She wasn't sure if Muku was willing to let Lisa join after all that had happened. So she hesitated when she asked. But she felt like she had to. While she didn't like Lisa's behaviour and how she sold her out. She didn't think that it was reason enough to break the girl's path to a better future. She just wasn't that type of ruthless person.

"How nice of you. And like I said, that matter is already done with. She can do whatever she wants now. Whether to come or not is up to her... Wait, I just remembered something..." Muku spoke with a hint of admiration for Freya's personality.

It was probably hard to find such people in the apocalypse, with good reason too. After all, the dog-eat-dog world had become even more so. The chance of death from showing mercy had increased as well. But he still liked such stupid people more than any other.

That's when he trailed off, having suddenly thought of something. He had remembered the remaining gang members from Mest's gang. They were so insignificant to him that if not for the random thought, he wouldn't have remembered them.

"I take it you're talking about the captives" Freya immediately guessed what he was talking about.

"Yeah... Where are they? What have you all decided to do with them?" Muku confirmed her guess.

"About that... They are dead. We found them all dead this morning. Their throats were sliced open in the middle of the night. We don't know who did it though. And we've already thrown their bodies away," Freya reported with a little bit of hesitation, not knowing what he would do. She dared not predict how he would react to things after what had happened with Lisa.

"Oh, what a shame. Seems someone couldn't wait to get their revenge. Oh well, it didn't have much to do with me anyway, so whatever. I don't know how Jade is going to take it when she finds out though. She had been looking forward to seeing how they would be punished. Whoever did it might have to watch out for her. The girl is rather petty" Muku replied, not too moved by the news.

Like he said, they technically hadn't done anything wrong to him. So there was no reason to be bothered by how they died. As for Jade, however, she was unreasonable enough not to care about such logic.

"Oh... Okay," Freya replied, not sure what to say to such a thing. But she was relieved to know that he didn't care. As for Jade going after the killer, it had nothing to do with her. She didn't do it, nor knew who did, so there really was no reason to care. She was just the group's representative when talking to Muku, not their leader. She didn't even want such a position.

"Okay, we've delayed the journey for too long. We should set out now before little Elsa explodes" Muku indirectly ordered everyone to prepare to leave.

He had happened to look in Elsa's direction and noticed how the little girl was frowning. The frown was getting worse and worse the more time passed by. The little girl clearly didn't care much about anything that was happening, all she wanted was to slay some beasts. He wouldn't be surprised if she didn't even notice the whole episode with Lisa.

"Oh, finally, we're leaving" Elsa finally got out of her little world when she heard her name and setting out being mentioned.

She had long stopped paying attention to what was happening like Muku thought. Though not out of impatience. She was imagining what she would be like in the future, how strong she would be. Her frown was from when she realised that she might not be able to catch up to her sister anytime soon.

Emily had long told her about the "Half-step stage" which was in-between ranks. Which could pose a problem for her as unlike her sister and the others. She was pretty much growing up in a safe environment, which made it hard to go all out.

After all, her sense of danger was basically zero, which was a major driving force in the growth of the others. She wasn't sure if her hunger to catch up to her sister would be enough to get her through.

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Soon, everyone was ready, and they set off. Since everyone who was going already knew what to do, it didn't take long to prepare.

Surprisingly, Lisa actually joined. She had somewhat managed to gather herself up, with a little help from Freya who she gave a weird look but didn't say anything. But she still didn't dare look Muku's way, she had definitely been scarred for life by him.

Muku didn't care that she had become so scared of him, obviously. What he cared about was how she still decided to join everyone after what happened. It actually pleased him quite a bit. He thought that maybe she wasn't beyond saving, like he had assumed.

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Back at the ant colony...

Like before, Muku's group surveyed the area from a little distance away before finally getting close. He then kidnapped more than thirty Low Rank One ants at the edge of the colony.

There were so many ants of that rank that it seemed like he had only taken a lake's worth of water from an ocean. Not to mention the other unranked ants which were even more than that.

With the group's reduced firepower, he dared not fight too close to the ant colony. So he took the fight more than two kilometres away. Just to give themselves a headstart to run if things went south.

Whatever creature was hidden really gave him a faint uneasy feeling. While he had never dealt with a Peak Rank Two beast before. He was certain that whatever was hiding was of that rank at least. Which was the best-case scenario, really.

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"Okay ladies, I've brought your opponents. The only help I'll give all of you is confining them within half a kilometre. Other than that, you're all on your own. Now....begin!" Muku addressed the ladies and then released the ants immediately, not giving them a chance to adjust.

While the women were nervous. Elsa, on the other hand, was different. The little girl was so excited she could blow. Muku and the others had offered her the chance to fight only one ant at a time, but she refused. She also refused a highly guarded match as she joined the stadium women in the free-for-all.

"I think your little sister might be a developing battle maniac" Hope commented as she watched Elsa excitedly fight off two ants with her silver sword and weak water abilities.

"Yeah..." Emily could only agree as she didn't know how to refute it while seeing Elsa's behaviour.

Chapter 124 Realisation

A few hours later...

"Okay, everyone. We're done for the day. Gather around and get ready to leave" Muku, who had long gotten bored from looking on, called everyone back.

The women who had been fighting all day were actually not as tired as the previous day despite having fought more and resting less. Which emphasized the difference between an unranked person and a ranked one, even when it was just a Rank One. Of course, part of the reason they could hang on and do so well was because Muku was only letting them fight LR1s.

The most outstanding was, of course, Elsa, who had been getting guidance from the best even before she killed her first beast. While her water abilities weren't that strong yet, her water blade, shield and bullets were quite effective on LR1s.

Surprisingly the one who followed after her was Lisa. The lady might have a rather nasty personality, but she was quite good at fighting. Her Rare Class was called "Black Earth Knight". It boasted super-high defence, even at such a low level. Even the attack power which comprised of Earth Spikes, Shields, Bullets... She had cleverly copied anything from Elsa that she could.

Which was quickly noticed by Muku and the others, but none minded. They were impressed instead. Such people tend to live longer after all. Lisa became even more ferocious after noticing that Muku's

group didn't care about what she was doing. Even then, she was not anywhere close to Elsa's strength level or kill count.

At first, she had been quite hesitant in her actions, but she bit the bullet after realising that she had no idea what to do. Of course, her fear for Muku still didn't decrease. She avoided him from start to finish.

As for Freya, the poor girl with a Unique Class that had terrifying potential was just average in her performance. While others had their abilities to rely on, she could only fight with her blade and pure energy attacks.

Attacking someone with mana was like hitting someone with a stack of money. Money could be said to be the "currency" people use to "buy" spells, which would be "guns and swords". While there were a few beasts that could attack with their "stacks of money" in a way that was as good as any "bought weapon"

Sadly that wasn't an ability any human had. Without spells or some kind of ability that wasn't attacking with direct mana... You'd basically be screwed.

So it was understandable that Freya was struggling. It was already good enough that she kept up with those who had uncommon classes who were the majority. It seemed that the women were a rather talented group, considering that during Tom's "rule", there weren't any people with uncommon classes. Most were common, like Tom and Dom, or random, like Adam.

As for the issue with classes. Muku had been researching it on the side. So far, he had found out that there was Random Class, which was the lowest. Followed by Common, then Uncommon, then Rare, and at least two in-between Rare and Pseudo-Legendary Class since the gap in strength was just too great. Then Legendary was the highest he had come across so far.

As for the Unique Class, it was a special Class equal to Pseudo-Legendary in strength. And from its name, it was easy to guess that there could only be one at a time. So it was debatable whether it should be on the class ranking list. Or it should just be a subclass of Pseudo-Legendary that's mostly unmentioned since most people will likely not come across even one Unique Class.

Anyway, back to the matter at hand. After hearing Muku's words the group gathered together. Other than Elsa, everyone else was okay with calling it a day. They had killed a decent number of beasts and were close to reaching MR1 after all. Lisa had managed to reach MR1.

The reason Elsa didn't want to leave yet was because she was already close to the peak. She felt that if she was allowed to fight an hour or two longer she would reach the peak.

There were enough beasts around, so it was a real possibility, actually. But she overlooked one thing. Her mana was almost depleted. And for some reason, the higher your class level, the slower your natural mana recovery was.

And she had already used up the only beast core she found, so nothing could be done. Emily was planning on lecturing her when they got back as her reckless behaviour could get her into trouble one day. And as an eventual part of the team, it will implicate the others as well which was something she didn't want to see.

Even Jade, despite her numerous personality defects, knew when to stop. The times she acted recklessly were just that, an act. When the situation required it, she was a super dependable teammate.

Elsa wasn't; she was just reckless. That made Emily wonder if they had babied her too much. She immediately started thinking of countermeasures on how to set her straight. Which she was planning to discuss with everyone later on.

With that, the group left with little fanfare. At least it appeared so on the surface. But behind the scenes, something's anger was increasing by the moment. It had never been so disrespected before. For someone to come and randomly take its children and leave like that. Even if the children weren't anything important, they were still part of its kingdom.

Only if it could move at will would it make the little "ants" suffer...

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Back at the stadium...

"Okay, so change of plans. Helping all of you will take too long. So we'll just help the group we've helped so far reach the peak then they will help the rest. As you all know, the world is constantly evolving, so we can't stall out progress for too long," Muku addressed Freya's group after they arrived at the stadium.

While his group would be willing to go along with his decision he decided to stay for longer. They were his priority so he wouldn't make such a decision. Along the way, he had thought of it a bit more and realised that he had been too rushed before.

Just because they had gotten a large boost from killing Ares' lesser avatar didn't mean that they could relax. While they were likely the strongest humans at the time, it didn't matter since their real enemies were beasts. And he was certain that there were still a lot that were a lot stronger than them in the current world. Not to mention those that will come.

While making allies was important, he shouldn't let it blind him. Like Author-san always says, "One shouldn't lose the fact while stuck on the idea of it"

His current situation reflected the saying quite well. While trying to increase their protection by getting them allies. He was ignoring their strength. Fortunately, he realised before it was too late. So he slightly changed his plans with the stadium.

"No sir, don't worry, it's fine. We understand. You've already done so much for us after all" Freya didn't even wait for the input of the others before replying.

She knew for certain that they were of the same mind. After all, without Muku's group, they wouldn't have their freedom, let alone Rank One strength. And he was even going to make sure that they reached the peak, so how could they complain?

"Great that you all understand. See you all tomorrow morning then. Rest well, we have to make sure that you all reach the peak before the day ends. Then the evening after, Audrey will give you all a lecture on potential realisation." Muku gave the women the rundown for how the following day was going to go then leafy with his team.

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Back at the mansion...

"You're finally back! I see it was quite productive" Jade was the first to shout out from the couch the moment Muku and the others entered the inside. Her later comment came after she'd noticed that Elsa had reached the peak.

"Yeah, if she's lucky, tomorrow she might realise some of her potential. Emily replied proudly, after all, Elsa was her little sister. So whatever impressive feat she accomplishes would make her proud.

"No fair! I wish we had strong seniors and an unlimited supply of beasts in one place when we levelled up," Jade complained after remembering all the trouble they had gone through to rank up. Which was something the others could all relate to so no one spoke against her statement.

"Well, life isn't fair... Anyway, Audrey, did you have any luck on your hunt?" Muku commented briefly on Jade's complaint before moving on.

"Oh that, no luck at all. We only found a few Half-Steps, no Rank Twos at all" Audrey replied. While Muku, Emily, Hope and Elsa went with the stadium women. She and Layla had gone out looking for Rank Two beasts while Jade and Chloe remained at the mansion.

"Oh, what a bummer. I guess we really have to move on soon. This place really isn't good for people of our strength level" Muku spoke in a disappointed tone. His plan to leave gets reinforced in his mind.

"Okay... Anyway, we killed the beasts and brought back the meat. We thought we could give it to the stadium residents if we don't need it." Audrey replied. She didn't have much reaction about leaving earlier than expected since she was okay with anything Muku decided. The others agreed, and the area around the stadium was rather boring with zero danger after all.

"Oh, okay. How nice of you. We'll call a few of them tomorrow to retrieve it then..." Muku replied.

After that, they went through their usual nightly activities and then went to sleep. Of course, they mediated for a bit before that...

Chapter 125 The girls' turn

Next day...

Like he promised, Muku helped the group of fifteen all reach Peak Rank One. His whole team was present, so it was easier. They even got to the point of helping anyone who was struggling. So by the end of the day, all fifteen were at the peak.

It surprised them how easily they reached the power level they feared just a few days before. Unfortunately, no one realised any of their potential. Not even Elsa managed to realise any.

Which was understandable since she had progressed way too fast in so little time. To the point that her foundation was unstable. While the others could offer her some helpful tips from their experiences, they chose not to.

They felt that the situation was actually good for her, it would maybe ground her a little bit. After which, she'll possibly come out a lot stronger than she would have been had they helped her.

And so, the little girl had spent the whole morning just fighting PR1 beasts to improve her technique. It also gave her some much-needed experience, which would come in handy in future battles.

"Okay. Now that you are all done, stand aside. It's our turn to fight. If your comrades back at the base are lucky, maybe some ants for them to kill will survive." Around twelve in the afternoon, Miku called the rookies back as they had already met their target.

"Yey, finally it's our turn!" Jade exclaimed in happiness. While there were a few Rank 2 beasts they sensed deeper in the area, they had been ignoring them.

After all, such a battle would definitely lead to heavy casualties amongst the ants, especially the unranked ones which were rare in the area. But now that they at least managed to get one group to the peak of Rank One, they had leeway.

Even if all the beasts in the area died from the aftermath, the PR1 women could just help their companions back at the stadium looking for new prey. Which wasn't an option before.

"Yes, it's our time. But since there are only a few of them, and they don't give that much KP, I'll leave this to you all. I'll guard the rookies while you all fight" Muku spoke with a little smile on his face.

"O...okay" Jade replied with some suspicion in her voice. While it wasn't the first time he had stepped back and let them take care of the beasts. She couldn't help but feel that something was wrong, but since she couldn't see any problem, she agreed to his words.

"I'll join you in watching over the rookies. Like you said, there really are only a few beasts after all," Audrey, not wanting him to stand alone, chose to wait with him. She couldn't possibly improve her strength while her master stood by.

"Okay, If that's what you want" Muku didn't refuse, still subtly smiling.

Unlike Audrey, the others didn't think too deeply. All they thought was that with two fewer people, the more KP they got. While they were nice in every other situation, they were quite selfish when KP came into the picture.

And so, the five girls jumped into the fray. It was like throwing R2 wolves into a flock of R1 sheep. It was a one-sided massacre. The girls ploughed their way through the ants with no resistance at all.

Emily was burning them to ash as she proceeded. Layla was freezing them up and then breaking them into tiny junks of frozen flesh. Jade was brutally punching her way through, one fist's force killing many. Chloe was striking them down as they came, one bolt killing plenty. Hope's poison turned them into black puddles of goo on the ground.

To the ants, it likely seemed like the end of days. Which was understandable since the strength difference was just too large. This was why even though the girls were holding back, they were just trying to get further into the nest where the rank twos were. They still killed a lot more ants than they thought they would.

At the same time, none of them noticed the threatening air around them that thickened the more they killed. It was different from their aura which came from their strength. But it was just as threatening to any enemy. That's right, the girls were developing killing intent.

In fact, they all already had it, it just wasn't that noticeable yet. But with so many ants around and with how many they were killing. It was understandable that their killing intent would improve at a heightened speed.

"SKRRRR!"

"SKRRRR!"....

Suddenly multiple ant screeches sounded from deep within the nest. Before anyone could react, multiple Rank Two giant ants that were around 12 metres tall came out.

"Well, aren't they big?" Jade spoke while excitedly cracking her fingers, getting ready for battle. What made her even more excited was how the beasts were all at least MR2.

There were seven MR2 ants and two PR2s that were a bit larger than the others. The ants all released such a strong aura that the little ants around them were all killed.

Their black exoskeleton shone in the sun, looking threatening and strong. On top of that, their two sharp mandibles looked like they were sharp and strong enough to cut adamantium into two if it existed.

"This doesn't look like it's going to be easy..." Chloe commented more rationally than Jade as she looked at the beasts that weren't releasing any elemental aura.

Such beasts were the type to have bullshitly strong defence and strength like the male boar from before. And unlike that time, there wasn't just one such creature, but nine, with two of them being even stronger.

"So what's our plan?" Emily asked the others after they gathered together while facing the gigantic R2 ants. Their strength might be strong, but they weren't at the peak yet while the ants had two PR2s. Not to mention the difference in number that almost multiplied them by two.

"I suggest that two target one at a time while the rest distract the rest. That way, it will be faster and we'll change our roles after every kill. With so many of them, everyone will get KP worth their while even if it's a team battle" Layla proposed a plan right away.

While she would rather fight one on her own. She was certain that getting through their defence wouldn't be easy. Which would be even more troublesome if she's constantly interrupted. So she opted for the second-best thing. Which was teaming up with one person for the fight while the rest kept the others at bay.

"Okay, sounds good. What do you all think?" Emily agreed to the plan and then asked the others what they thought.

"While I'd rather fight on my own, I am not at my best right now. So yeah, we can do it like that," Jade, who was self-aware of her situation, reluctantly agreed.

"I also don't mind doing it like that" Chloe also agreed. Like everyone else, she was sure she could kill an ant on her own. But also like them, she could tell that it wouldn't be easy or quick, so she agreed to Layla's plan.

"I really wanted to fight one alone, but I guess you're right. We'll do it your way" Hope also agreed. She had been looking forward to soloing a beast since her poison ability improved, but it seemed luck wasn't on her side.

"Only if he had agreed to join the fight along with Mother. They would have kept the extras busy while we took care of one each" Layla lamented, a bit resentfully too.

"Nuh, this is fine. We get more KP this way" Jade thought in a completely different way from Layla. She knew that things could get tough, but she didn't mind. It would be more fun then. Plus the bigger reward.

"Yeah... I guess you're right. Let's do it then" Layla spoke her last words before the ants arrived in front of them.

As the one who suggested the plan. She couldn't be the first one to kill something as the others might think she used them. So she immediately ran to distract eight ants with Chloe and Emily while Jade and Hope went to kill the first ant.

For people like Layla, Chloe and Emily, who had wide-range spells as well as the area-of-effect spells. Distracting a few beasts wasn't hard.

...

"So what's our battle plan?... It's always hard to work with you. Even more than Emily and her flames." Jade asked Hope how they were going to fight since Hope was attached from a distance with poison while she fought at close range. So she was afraid of getting poisoned while fighting the ant.

"Oh that, don't worry about it. I can manipulate it to avoid you. In fact, I'll just target its head to get as much poison into its body as possible while you attack the rest of it. I'm sure we'll be done in little time that way" Hope explained the game plan while also trying to ease her worries. After all, she could understand why she was so worried. Nobody sane would willingly play around with poison.

"Oh, sounds good. That could work. Though I thought you were going to say something like "I'll make my poison not harm you" Jade replied, agreeing to the plan. Though with a comment.

"What!? How could such a thing be possible? Even if it was, I'm nowhere close to such a level of manipulation. Anyway, it's here, let's do this!" Hope replied exaggeratedly since the idea sounded absurd in her head.

Before Jade could reply, the giant ant reached them and their battle began...

Chapter 126: Hope the manipulator?

"Poison beams!" Hope immediately attacked with one of her strongest attacks. Beams of concentrated poison that worked faster than clouds of poison. Not to mention they travelled at a much faster speed than clouds.

"Tsk, as expected" Hope spoke in frustration as her beams failed to penetrate the ant's hard exoskeleton. Which was their weakness, they lacked penetrating strength when the enemy's defence was relatively strong, not to mention the ant's hard exoskeleton.

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"Whatever, explode!" She used an ability she had copied from the old Emily of making her attacks explode on impact. Which she did after the first beam failed to do anything. So the remaining beam, as there were two exploded on impact on the ant's head. Creating a green poison cloud around the head.

Which she had targeted for obvious reasons. The gas under her control immediately seeped into its mouth before disappearing into its body. She didn't use the purple poison as, after a study, she realised that it couldn't give the enemy an emotion it did not have.

So the ant which was a soldier ant, wouldn't have fear to magnify. As for making it angry, that would be a dumb decision. This was because they wanted to finish the battle quickly. While making it go berserk would likely only drag out the battle more.

"Skrrr!" The ant screeched in pain as it felt its internal organs getting attacked by the poison. Slowly eating away at them. It started to dizzily lash around, completely forgetting about attacking the girls.

"Woah, that worked better than I thought it would..." Hope spoke to herself. She didn't think it would be so effective. After all, that was the first time she had fought with her current strength against such a strong opponent. A crazy plan immediately formed in her head...

"I guess now it's my turn" Jade spoke as her hands and feet were covered by Beast Aura. The more she converted, the more of her strength she got back. What she got back was even stronger than what she had previously even.

She then sped toward the ant with a wild smile on her face. She had gotten into her battle state. Even if she couldn't transform. She still could make the ant feel some pain.

Boom! Boom! Boom!...

She then ran around the ant, avoiding its flailing body as she punched it anywhere she could. She was so engrossed in what she was doing that she didn't notice that Hope had sneaked away.

.....

On the other battlefield...

"What are you doing here?...hey!" Chloe asked Hope after she came to them leaving Jade behind. But instead of answering her, Hope seemed to be getting ready to attack.

"Poison beams!...barrage!" Hope screamed as she threw attacks at all the MR2 ants targeting their heads. And then the attacks exploded then, like the first ant, entered their bodies. Also like the first ant, they were weakened and started flailing all over the place.

She didn't do the same for the remaining two. They had some kind of mana barrier that would block off her poison, so she saw no point in it.

"With this, you can all attack more freely and kill them faster" Hope said before walking to the back. Signalling them to continue what they were doing.

"What a crafty little girl..." Layla spoke to herself in a low voice. She had realised that while Hope helped them by making the battle easier, she would also get some KP from every ant after it was killed. But it was acceptable as only her poison could attack the ant's body internally like that.

As for Layla and the others. If they tried such an approach. Their abilities would damage the mouth at best, if they tried it. That is if they were even strong enough to get through the defence as it wasn't like the ant would have its mouth widely open, ready to receive their attacks.

Which was why despite her words. She was actually impressed by Hope. Without further delay, she, along with Emily, immediately attacked the ants intensely.

"Frost Drill!" Layla created a large ice drill above one ant. The drill spun at high speeds. Yet surprisingly it also couldn't break through the ant's defence like her prior attacks.

"Burning storm!" On the side, Emily targeted another ant. They were both competing for the remaining ants so she used a rather strong spell. Even though they had not discussed it, they knew that whoever

killed their target first would definitely get more KP. Which was because they would move to the next target before the other.

So Emily immediately engulfed the ant's body. She realised that even if she couldn't break through its defence in a short time. She should be able to suffocate it right?

After all, the flames would burn away all the oxygen around the ant... But did the ants even breathe oxygen though? Well, whatever they breathed would be burned away.

The ant started screeching in even more pain. Now the poison was wrecking its body while the flames were also cooking it alive. It was definitely having the worst time. Yet unlike what Emily expected, it didn't seem like it was affected by the lack of air at all.

What she didn't know was that R1 ants could all go at least a day without breathing. Let alone a MR2. It probably didn't even notice the absence of breathable air. Its spiracles were closed even before the battle began.

"Tsk, so selfish. They left me to deal with these two alone!" Chloe complained as she kept running around the two PR2s while distracting them. While it made sense for her to be the one to do it because of her high speed. That didn't mean that she would like it.

"Right... Why don't you all just let me kill the MR2, and you four kill the two PR2s, two on each? That will save time. And I'm sure the rewards would be quite substantial still," Hope spoke from beside Chloe, almost making her jump from being startled.

She didn't even sense her approach. Not to mention that she had been running all over the place, so for Hope, who wasn't that great physically, would appear so suddenly, it was quite surprising indeed.

"What do you mean?" Chloe asked for clarification. She had a bit of time since she had lured the two PR2s a bit of distance away.

"Nothing much. Just that I'm sure you can all see that the current plan won't work out too well. Your abilities are all getting countered by the ants' hard defence. While you all can bring out the big guns. You can only do it once, which would leave you powerless at the mercy of the other ants," Hope spoke with

an innocent look on her face as if she was just trying to help. Her words were so measured that it seemed like they were rehearsed.

"Hmm... You're right. But why are you so sure that you can kill them all?" While she could easily tell that Hope was trying to lead her on. Chloe still played along, after all, what she was saying made sense. They didn't have all day to worst on the ants. So a change of plans was good.

"Why not let me try and you'll see. There's no harm in that right?" Hope replied still looking innocent. Eerily so at that point.

"I'll only agree on three conditions. First, the others agree as well. Second, you won't participate in the next beast battle if there are a few of them and lastly, you will stop acting like that right now. It's so weird, like I'm talking to a manipulative villain or something" Chloe gave her answer.

"Okay, done! The others have already agreed and they also mentioned the other two reasons which I agreed to. But is my mastermind mode really that bad?" Hope, who had already talked to the others, agreed to Chloe's demands. She was just trying the "mastermind Hope" persona for fun. But to receive such negative feedback really hit her hard.

"Yeah, it's that bad. I kinda wanted to punch you in the face for a moment there" Chloe replied, not mincing her words.

"Okay, I get it. I won't do it again. Now step back" Hope replied annoyedly at how she didn't even hold back. Then she released all her aura.

**Boom!**

A vague purple energy spread from her covering twenty metres around her. It was still nowhere close to being as visible as Muku's grey aura or Jade's Beast Aura, but it was definitely among the best most people could do in the current world.

"Baneful serpent!" She then cast one of her stronger and more costly spells. A giant dark green serpent made completely from poison appeared in front of her. The poison body then struck at the dizzied ant closest to to Hope.

A weird scene to the untrained eye then took place. The serpent, which was about the same size as the ant, disappeared into its body through its mouth. The ant immediately fell dead, acidic juices coming out of its mouth.

The fight ended so quickly that Chloe and the other two, who were looking on from a distance, were surprised. Hell, even Muku and Audrey, who stood far away, were surprised. They never knew that Hope already could one-shot a MR2 beast.

It would have been quite understandable if it was the others who had explosive abilities, but her? They did not see it coming. It was at that moment they all realised that poison shouldn't only be feared for its ability to kill one slowly while remaining unnoticed if Hope willed it. But it was also just as deadly as the other elements even in normal settings.

Not to mention that Hope wasn't even using her strongest spell. Which was obvious by how she seemed to still have a lot of mana left. Which wouldn't have been the case if she used the best she had. None of them were sure of what it was.

Without waiting for the others to react she could see the two PR2s getting closer. She immediately sent out "Baneful serpents" at the other MR2s. Killing them all in less than thirty seconds while the others struggled to even hurt them. This greatly showcased the hidden factor of "natural advantages" which they had not considered before.

"Hehe...I guess you can all get to work now" Hope spoke with a silly smile on her pale face from expending most of her mana. She was happy because of the significant amount of mana she got from the kills that got her one step closer to the peak of Rank Two.

"Yeah, it's our turn now..." Instead of Chloe replying to her. It was Emily from behind them that was walking toward them with Layla. Battle intent blazing in her eyes. Layla also had the same look. They refused to be upstaged by a junior.

The approaching PR2s paused for a bit feeling like the air around them had changed for some reason...

Chapter 127: Ultimate Spells

"Okay, girls. Communism is good and all. But I feel that we should try something more interesting instead" As they held off the two Peak Rank ants. Jade started a conversation.

"Okay, what do you have in mind?" Emily asked trying to figure out where Jade was trying to go with her words. The other two also listened on, waiting for Jade to explain.

"I can't be the only one who doesn't like sharing all the time, right? It's okay for when it's opponents like Ares' avatar. But for little ants like these, it just doesn't feel good. So why don't we have a rock-paper-scissors match and the two who win will get these, and the losers will get the next?" Jade explained herself.

"Of course, the two losers will also have to hold off the two ants while the winners prepare their attacks. What do you all think?" She continued before anyone could respond, then went silent, waiting for their reply.

"I agree" Layla didn't even think for a second. She had been having such thoughts for a while. Just that she didn't know whether the others thought the same way. She hadn't said anything because she didn't want to come off as being selfish. But now that someone else was thinking about it, she didn't have to hold back anymore.

"Me too... I didn't know that you were also thinking like that" Chloe also agreed quickly. Like the other two, she had agreed.

"Really?... Well, if that's what you all want. I guess we can do it like that," Emily,, unlike the others, didn't have any problems with their current arrangement. So she was really surprised and saddened by the fact that the others were all thinking like that.

"Aww, come on Em, it's not like we're breaking up and going our separate ways. We're just giving way for each other. This way, we can improve a lot more" Jade, who already knew that at least Emily wouldn't agree with her, spoke her prepared answer.

She measured her words as she knew her friend could get super emotional sometimes. Even over such little things.

"Okay, okay. I get it. Let's get it over with" Emily replied while holding out her hand.

At this point. They were hiding behind an ice wall that Layla had created. The ants couldn't find them easily as she had created something like a maze in the area.

On top of that, she was blocking their energy signatures with her shadow element. She really could play the role of a spy on top of being a mage if she wanted to.

Anyway, the point was that they had all the time they needed for their little match. Which they promptly took care of. And the winners were surprisingly Jade, who had never won before, and Layla, who had also never won before. They were both over the moon. Just that it looked obvious on Jade's face while it was mostly covered up on Layla's.

"Congrats! We'll hold them off for you as you prepare then," Chloe spoke with no jealousy in her tone. She was going to get her chance soon enough, so there really was no reason to be envious.

"Yeah..." Emily only gave a one-word answer before going after Chloe. She wasn't feeling bad that she lost. She was just still stuck on the fact that the others wanted change.

Knowing that it was something she had to figure out herself. The others didn't say anything and just let her be. They were thinking about the bigger picture. While it made sense to always fight together when they were weaker.

It was getting rather redundant as they got stronger. If they kept it up, it would likely hold them back in the future as they would always depend on each other.

Which was something Emily had yet to realise. Muku and Audrey already knew of the drawbacks, but they didn't want to decide for the girls. So they let them decide for themselves.

Which they could afford since it wasn't an issue yet. Though they would be pleased that the girls came to such a conclusion sooner than expected.

While he wouldn't have mentioned it. Since he had to live up to his choice of not making them completely reliant on him. But he would subtly guide them with his actions. Which was partly the reason he stood back from the ant battle.

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He just didn't think they would realise the drawback so soon. And he would be even more amazed if he found out that three of them had long thought of it a while back. Or maybe not, he knew that the girls were all rather intelligent after all. Even Emily, just that she usually let her emotions lead her.

....

"Well, Layla can obviously take the ant down... But can Jade do it in her current weakened state?" Chloe asked Emily for clarification as she was closer to Jade.

"I'm not sure. But Jade is just impulsive and not stupid. So I'm sure she has a plan. We'll just have to do our part and see what happens" Emily though still sour, defended her friend.

"Hmm... I guess you're right" Chloe spoke as she fought back the ant. Targeting its head, especially its eyes, with lightning bolts. While they weren't doing much damage, they were quite painful to the ant. Which kept it from even looking in Layla and Jade's direction.

Emily also used a similar strategy. Just that she used fire arrows instead. It was just as effective, but still couldn't burn through the eye's protection. The ants were basically a perfect tank with no obvious outward weakness.

As the two kept the ants busy, they felt the air behind them change and noticed the sky darken. They immediately knew that Layla was close to done with her art.

And they felt something else they could vaguely remember. They were sure it was Jade, but they couldn't spare a second to look at the time. So they could only wait and see the final result.

And like they predicted. Soon after, a familiar voice casting a familiar spell sounded...

"Shadow Charged!: Black Ice Dragon!" Layla shouted her spell.

And surprisingly, it wasn't the lance Emily as Chloe expected. Before they could react, a large Eastern Dragon made of black ice passed by their heads, heading for one of the ants. It just passing by left a layer of frost on their bodies that they had to get rid of with their abilities.

The ant was also caught off guard. And before it knew it, it was in the mouth of the monstrous dragon that was even larger than it. The teeth bit down and the PR2 ant was instantly killed. It didn't even resist for a split second at least.

The ant's body, along with its unreasonably strong exoskeleton, was broken apart and spat out. The spell was so strong that even without the defence-ignoring effect, it likely would have still killed the ant.

Such was the power of Layla's current all-out attack. Though it was only that strong because it was a combination of two elements, otherwise her ice alone wouldn't have been able to do it.

"What th..." Chloe was about to express her shock at the new spell before she was interrupted by a familiar voice.

"Beast Empress ROOOOOOAR!" Jade cast an unexpected spell no one thought they would see before she completely converted her mana to Beast Aura at the very least.

But there she was using it, she's shocking them all. She was even floating in the air above them for an even more majestic scene. Though it seemed quite strenuous. Green veins were popping out of her whole body.

She seemed to be in great pain, but there was a resolute look in her eyes. She cast the spell till the end. By the time she was done, the ant had been completely erased from existence. There was even a large crater on the ground.

Then something that hadn't happened to her for a long time occurred. She fainted, in mid-air too. She likely overtaxed her body by using a spell that only her beast form could completely support.

Beast Aura just wasn't something that should be let loose in a normal human body. Even if that body was one of the world's strongest evolvers.

"Tsk, I really thought I would never have to do this again. Why couldn't you just wait until you got your beast form back? Such a troublesome girl," Muku, who appeared out of nowhere, spoke to the unconscious Jade in his arms.

Of course, he wasn't expecting her to respond. He was just venting. While he didn't mind catching her. He didn't like it when she was so reckless, putting her body on the line.

"SKKKKKRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRR!!!"

Before Muku could even float down with Jade and address the others. An angry and loud screech, unlike none they had ever heard before, sounded. Accompanied by the shaking of the earth around the area.

"Ant so it begins... Too bad this idiot is unconscious" Muku spoke to himself softly while looking at the cracking earth beneath him. At the same time, he grabbed the girls who were standing on the shaking ground with his telekinesis.

They were all confused about what was going on. After all, they had already taken care of the strongest ants in the area. Even after the monstrous screech they still couldn't sense anything...

It was like the planet was evolving again, but just in the area they were in...

Chapter 128: Muku versus The Ant Queen

"What's happening over there?" Audrey asked after he took the girls back to the sidelines where she was.

The stadium women and Elsa were also there. They didn't back up more since the area was still stable, unlike the battle site. Which was still shaking and cracking, accompanied by the loud Ant screech.

"Oh, that?... That's nothing. Just the ant boss none of you sensed despite coming here so many times. Hell, none of you even considered the fact that ants always have a queen. Even if they are alien ants, it's something you should have kept in mind" Muku replied to her calmly.

But they could all see that he was taking the moment to lecture them. None of them could look him in the eye since all of them had overlooked it. They had let their strength cloud their eyes.

Which was understandable since they had yet to meet any other human who was even close to being as strong as them. That wasn't on their team. With such realisation, they all felt rather ashamed of themselves.

Despite knowing that they weren't really that strong compared to the strongest beasts out there. They still somehow let their guard down. It's like they just assumed that any strong opponent would appear with an obvious sign. Like a scary aura, easily noticeable aura, or something like that.

"Umm... So how are going to deal with it" Audrey asked after a little moment of silence. While Ashe felt quite ashamed, she had to suck it up as things weren't looking too pretty. She could tell that whatever was appearing out of the group wasn't going to be easy to take care of.

"You aren't going to do anything. None of you are. I'll take care of this myself. Here, take her" Muku replied while handing her the unconscious Jade.

"Can you do it alone though?" Audrey asked again, this time with some worry in her voice.

"Hmm...who knows. If I can't, then you can join me. But if the battle doesn't seem like something we can handle even if we join hands. We'll make a break for it" Muku replied before flying away. Not waiting for them to say anything else.

The girls could only worriedly look at him at that point. They wanted to fight with him but chose not to go against him in the end. After all, he did say they could help him if things became dicey. So they will just do that.

.....

"SKRRRR!"

BOOM!

Finally with a little screech from whatever was coming out of the earth. The ground exploded and then it emerged.

Its emergence killed most of the ants that were present in the area. It seemed like the soil around the area had an effect that suppressed its overwhelming aura. The moment it left the ground, the unparalleled aura came crashing down on everything in the area. Enjoy new adventures from My Virtual Library Empire

Only a few PR1 and Half-step R2 ants survived. The others were all wiped out in their thousands under their mad mother's aura.

"Oh... So that's why you didn't come out. Though I suppose it makes sense you'd have such a weakness when you can create such a large army for yourself. It would have been absurd if you could do whatever you wanted as well" Muku spoke calmly while looking at the huge monstrosity that had just destroyed its kingdom by just appearing.

His voice might have seemed calm, but he was very nervous inside. The thing he was looking at was at least 25 metres tall after all. Just its aura was enough to shake his mana stability to the point that he couldn't fly too high.

With just that. Even without the IA notifying him what rank it was. He could easily tell that the monster in front of him was definitely at the peak of Half-step R3.

"Strong opponents are fine and all... But did you have to be so strong??. Going by the script, shouldn't you have only been a little stronger than me??" Muku nervously added as the huge red eyes that were way bigger than him stared at him, radiating anger.

And he wasn't the only focus. It was also looking at the girls behind him from time to time. The Ant Queen was really pissed off. It could take them killing her weakest soldiers. But to kill her best as well??

On top of that. By causing it to appear, they basically wiped out the rest of its colony. Nothing but blood could return the favour. Maybe even that wasn't enough. Even then, it would at least kill and eat them all to ease its anger a bit.

"SKRRRR!"

Whoosh!

The ant screeched again. This time the screech was accompanied by a beam of white energy that flew out of its mouth. The beam reached Muku before anyone could even blink.

"Oh shit! I thought they were physical types!?" Muku screamed out with slight fear in his voice as he barely managed to dodge the beam attack.

Bang!

Boom!

While he was still thinking about the beam. The huge ant queen moved at an unreasonable speed. It swiped at him and struck him down. He crushed onto the ground before he knew it.

The girls who were looking on from a distance screamed in fear and surprise. None of them expected such a thing to happen. Luckily, Muku flew up from the ground again before they did something stupid.

"Cough, cough! Well damn! I almost died there" Muku spoke to himself while looking at the dented armour that he had managed to cast on himself at the last moment.

He suspected that the only reason he even survived was because the ant didn't use all its strength. Which wasn't because it was holding back. But his positioning in the sky didn't allow it to. Otherwise, the battle would have been over just like that.

"Okay, turn now.... Sword Rain!" Muku stopped playing around and focused on the fight. He finally realised that the Ant Queen was every bit as strong as it appeared to be. He couldn't afford to be playful.

As soon as he cast the spell. Thousands of swords appeared in the sky above the Ant Queen. They then flew down, targeting its leg joints.

It was easy to guess that its defence was even stronger than the peak-rank ones. So he decided to target the joints where the defence would be weaker.

Clang! Clang! Clang!....

Unfortunately, even they were too strong for his blades to cut through...

"Tough guy huh?... Okay. King's Blade!" Muki wasn't disheartened as he dodged another swipe and transitioned into his next spell. A huge blade that was around ten metres long and five metres thick appeared above the ant. It then stabbed down at its neck.

Clang!

And it, too, failed to do anything...

"Freaking cheater! I'll show you my greatest skill then!" Muku finally gave up on relying on his blades to fight the Ant Queen. His spells just weren't strong enough.

Their difference was just too large. The ant was an inch away from Rank Three while he hadn't even reached the peak of Rank Two.

His eyes started glowing silver and the air in the air felt slightly heavier. Everyone could feel it, the little hairs on their bodies stood still. He was finally about to use his bloodline in battle!

Which would be a lot different from when he was demonstrating it to the girls. As for whether it would be as strong it was the first time it was used. It was yet to be known. The girls all looked on with bated breath.

Even the Ant Queen felt something was wrong. It suddenly started feeling a little crisis when everything was okay a few seconds before.

"Die...Hmm?" Muku, who was about to activate his bloodline ability and end it, noticed something at the corner of his eye. He, of course, looked.

And it turned out to be a little golden ape with red energy coming out of it. There was even a smirk on its mouth as it flew toward him. Which, of course, was rather weird and confusing to him. Prompting the confused sound.

"No, YOU DIE HUMAN!"

An unexpected but familiar voice sounded from its mouth. A ball of red energy formed in its hands, which it then fired at Muku.

Bang!

It was so fast he couldn't dodge. It completely hit its target. The force knocked him out of the sky toward the girls who were screaming hysterically.

Boom!

"Hehe... You dared go against me, the great Ares, and even kill my soul fragment and expect to live?" That's right, the little ape was Ares. Another one of his avatars to be accurate. It might not have even been as strong as Mest, but it was perfect for ambushes, which it just proved.

The Ant Queen looked at the little ape that was weirdly fading then at Muku. It repeated this action a few times before making a break for it.

While it could take on Muku easily if he didn't use that weird ability he was about to use. It knew that it definitely couldn't mess with the little ape despite how weak it seemed. So it immediately fled the scene. It could create a new ant nest somewhere else after all.

Not to mention that its huge body was energy inefficient, so it needed to find a spot to rest. Which was another reason it wasn't willing to move. Even when its soldiers were getting killed daily.

"Listen up human females. I'm not done with you at all. He was just an appetizer. I will end you all one by one!" Ares' avatar spoke one last statement before completely fading away.

The little body he hijacked just couldn't support his soul for long. Even if it was again a tiny little fragment of it. Though this time he didn't mind much as he had managed to take care of Muku before time ran out.

Chapter 129: Gloomy Mansion

"Noooo! Big brother!" Hope screamed as she ran towards the place Muku crashed on. The others screamed too and were also running toward him. But her voice was so loud she covered up everyone else's.

Her body was already glowing a gentle green as she prepared to heal him instantly. She was so scared she'd be too late that she was finding it hard to breathe. Yet that didn't affect her spell casting.

She suddenly felt someone lift her up. Which turned out to be Audrey, who was just as worried as her and felt she wasn't running fast enough. Which, of course, she wasn't opposed to. The quicker she reached him the better.

"Hallowed Ground! Overcharge!" Hope immediately cast her best healing spell with all of her remaining mana. She wasn't even sure if it would be strong enough since she had already used a significant amount of her mana.

An overwhelming magic presence exploded out of her. She used every ounce of power she had. She had only taken a glance at Muku's state and she was horrified.

His armour was completely gone on his chest. His skin wasn't spared either. His chest was so injured that his ribs were faintly visible behind the flesh. There was a semi-visible red mist coming out of his chest area, which seemed to be fighting back the healing power of her spell.

The others just stood around him with worried expressions and tears in their eyes. They felt so powerless and useless for not being able to react in time.

The emotion that stood out most in all of them was fear. Muku's breath was faint and it seemed like he could die at any time. His situation seemed to be even worse than the time he suffered a backlash from his bloodline.

"Ares that bastard! One day I will make him pay..." Layla, who was the last one to arrive on the scene, spoke to herself.

Her body was still weak from having used her best spell recently. So even if she had managed to see Ares' avatar before he attacked, she still wouldn't have been able to do anything. Despite knowing that she still blamed herself just as much as the others.

"Let's go. We can't stay here anymore," Audrey, who was trying to stay calm for the sake of the whole group, spoke.

She then corrupted a few of the Half-step R2 Ants that had survived. Which became their transport since Muku was out of commission. The ants didn't even resist. They had long been stunned stiff by all the strong auras around them to the point that they couldn't move their limbs.

Soon everyone was on the backs of crimson ants heading back. While Muku's group were afraid for his life. The stadium women were scared for their lives.

They just realised that even someone as strong as Muku wasn't safe in the apocalypse. Which pretty much shattered all the confidence they were slowly building up.

The ride back to the stadium was a very gloomy one. Completely different from the morning before when they went for the hunt. The few unlucky rank-one beasts they met on the way were killed off in the most horrifying ways.

One had half of its body burned off and left to die. Another one, which was a LR1, had a bolt strong enough to strike down a peak. Half-step R2 struck it down. Another one had its blood drained out of its body through its pores while still alive.

The girls were trying to vent their emotions on the poor beasts. Which didn't even know what was happening. Layla, Hope and Jade would have probably tried something, too, if one wasn't completely out of mana and the other two were unconscious.

That's right, Hope had used all her power to the point that she fainted. The worst part, it didn't seem to have done anything to improve Muku's state. The red mist was a lot stronger than they all thought.

What was surprising was how they couldn't tell what kind of energy it was. They knew for certain that it was different from their mana or Jade's Beast Aura. But other than that, nothing.

All this suggested that Ares was a creature they shouldn't mess with. But after what he did, they will definitely have their revenge, or die trying.

....

At Ares' residence...

"Hmm? It seems that the attack did not kill that human. How commendable. But he will die soon enough. There's nothing they can do to fight against my power after all. Sadly, I can't find another suitable host in such a short time, or I would have gone to finish them off" Ares' main body, which had just taken its focus back from the human world, spoke to itself.

He had actually been lucky to find the little ape so soon. Beings of his strength level have issues finding compatible hosts for their immense power. Even if it's only a little of it. Its quality was not something any average body could take.

While he could adjust humans to his preference in some cases. He couldn't do the same with beasts. And even the humans he adjusts couldn't take it for long.

As for waiting for the world to evolve a bit more, giving him more leeway to do what he wants. That seemed too long for him. Even if time was inconsequential to him, he still wanted to get it done as soon as possible. And what if the humans died before the world evolved enough? Wouldn't he be left with a lot of regrets then?

"Maybe I can get someone to help me with their avatar or servants" Ares spoke to himself again. Thinking of who he should ask for the favour from.

"Damn! I don't think anyone would be willing. And I would also practically be revealing my failure to deal with those ants myself. Those humans should count themselves lucky to be able to live a little longer. The death of their leader should be enough for now" Ares continued for a while before closing his eyes and returning to his resting state.

...

The next morning at the mansion...

"How is his condition?" Emily asked Audrey who had been the one taking care of Muku all night.

"His condition has not changed. Which is more good than bad if you look at the situation. After all, there's nothing we can do if the situation gets worse," Audrey, who had calmed down more after a whole night, spoke.

"Oh okay... Can I go see him?" Emily asked Audrey for permission.

"Sure, no need to ask me. You can go whenever you want. Also, how are the other two?" Audrey replied naturally, not seeing any reason to stop her. She then proceeded to ask about Hope and Jade who also had yet to wake up.

"Jade's condition is improving. But very slowly. I don't know when she will wake up. As for Hope, you will have to ask Chloe" Emily replied, giving Audrey an update on Jade.

The green veins that had popped out of Jade's body were still there. Just that they seemed to have receded a little. Making Emily hopeful that she was getting better.

"Hope is also getting better. Her breathing is less laboured now. But tears come out of her eyes every now and then" Chloe spoke sadly, not waiting to be asked.

She could, after all, understand the pain Hope was going through. She had lost all her family at once. Finally got a new family. But now it seemed like that family was going to leave her as well. The worst part, her power, which she was so proud of, couldn't do anything to improve the situation.

So for her to cry even while unconscious was understandable. Muku situation likely hurt her more than anyone else. Even if they were all hurt terribly.

"Oh okay. At least the situation isn't getting any worse" Audrey accepted the situation for what it was. They do say that misfortune comes in groups after all... Or something like that.

"So what now?" Emily asked, not having an idea of what they should do next.

"Nothing. For now, we can only wait for Hope and Jade to wake up before deciding on what to do next. And without Muku, we can't move the mansion, so we're basically grounded here," Layla replied before Audrey could.

She had been quieter than usual since they returned. In fact, that was the first time she spoke since the previous evening.

"Yes, what Layla said makes sense. We'll do that" Audrey supported her. She was thinking of something along those lines anyway.

"I guess we can use this time to catch up on our meditation... If we can manage to focus" Chloe spoke, suggesting something they could do while they wait. If they did nothing, they would probably be crushed under the weight of their own thoughts.

"Yeah, we'll do that" Emily agreed. And Layla immediately walked away, going toward her room. So it was safe to say she agreed too and was going to do the same.

And so, the usually jolly mansion suddenly became gloomy and serious.

Even little Elsa joined in the meditation. Of course, her reason was different. She was doing it to realise some of her potential. Hopefully, it would work...

Chapter 130: Hope wakes up

Two days later...

While they had visibly gotten better, neither Hope nor Jade had woken up.

As for Muku, his condition remained unchanged. If it wasn't because of his bloodline, he likely would have died long ago. It even could heal him, but it couldn't for obvious reasons. While Ares couldn't see what was happening through his energy. He could sense if something strange happened.

Especially then, when he was in a terrible mood because he could sense that Muku wasn't dead yet. While his condition, had not gotten better, it had not gotten worse either. So, if the bloodline tried to heal him. Ares would know as he was paying close attention to Muku's situation.

The girls who were awake were doing almost nothing else but meditate when they were awake. Their mana control was improving significantly but they were still not happy. Not when three of their members were out of commission.

...

Hope's room...

"Mmm" Suddenly, Hope, who was lying unmoving on her bed, made a little sound.

Chloe, who was meditating on a couch in the room, snapped her eyes open and looked at the bed. Which was just in time to see Hope start to stir. Without any delays, Chloe rushed to the side of the bed.

"Hope! Are you finally awake? It's me, Chloe! Are you okay?" Chloe exclaimed while shaking Hope's shoulders. She knew that she was overreacting, but she just couldn't stop herself. Her emotions had gotten the better of her.

"Caaaaan....yooooouuuu....stooop shaaaaking meeee please?!" Hope tried her best to speak clearly after finding herself getting her soul shaken out of her body just after waking up.

"Oh! Right! Sorry," Chloe embarrassedly apologised as she stopped shaking Hope.

"Argh, finally. I was close to vomiting my guts out there" Hope spoke while trying to gather herself. She was not only disoriented from having been unconscious for so long. Chloe's shaking also added to the disorientation.

"What's happening? Where am I? Where's Big Brother?... Big Brother! Where is he?" Hope started asking random questions while still trying to clear her mind. She soon remembered what happened to Muku.

Her mind cleared up immediately and she grabbed Chloe's shoulders as she asked. She was giving off a rather crazy vibe at the moment.

"Calm down. Nothing bad has happened to him. He is still as you left him" Chloe calmly replied. The moment she said that he hadn't gotten worse...or worse, she felt Hope's grip on her ease.

"Good, I'm going to see him now...hmm? Why do I feel so weak?" Hope spoke while trying to get up. But she quickly realised that she couldn't support herself on her legs.

"Well, you've been out for a few days. And you had used every ounce of strength before going unconscious. Your mana recovery while unconscious was extremely poor. So your body is pretty empty right now. Let me go get you some food. Then you can go see him" Chloe spoke while getting up.

"No wait! Why don't you help me get to him first, then you can get the food?" Hope called out to Chloe, who was about to leave the room.

".....Fine" Chloe wanted to refuse the absurd request since it wouldn't take long to get some food. But seeing the pleading and resolute look in Hope's eyes, she just couldn't say no.

She was almost certain that the moment she left. Hope would try to crawl into Muku's room. It was at that moment she realised just how much Hope loved her Big Brother.

Initially, she thought that they were all about equal. With Hope maybe being a little bit above them. But in that moment, she realised that their love for him paled in comparison to hers by a long shot. Hope was one of those people who loved completely once they chose to love.

At the same time, she couldn't help but feel fortunate that Hope wasn't a yandere or something. Otherwise, with such a strong love, the rest of them might have had to watch out. Or they would get poisoned in their sleep.

As she thought of this, she had already grabbed Hope's shoulder. As she helped her get to Muku's room. Which was thankfully beside Hope's room they were in.

....

Muku's room...

"Is there anything wr.... Oh! Hope you're awake,," Audrey, who was lost in thought while sitting beside Muku's bed, spoke. She thought someone had something to tell her until she saw Hope who was getting supported into the room by Chloe.

"Yeah... How is he?" Hope replied to Audrey, but her eyes were focused on Muku, who lay on the bed unmoving. Tears immediately gathered in her eyes before they started falling out.

"Go and get her something to eat" Audrey said to Chloe while taking Hope from her and supporting her to Muku's side. Chloe didn't delay and immediately did what she was told.

"I'm useless" Hope spoke to herself in a voice that was close to crying as she touched Muku's cheek. It really broke her that she couldn't do anything to help him even when she was a so-called Pseudo-Legendary Class Healer.

"No Honey, don't blame yourself. The situation was just beyond all our capabilities. And he will be fine soon enough. Just have faith okay? If you break down like this, what will he think? Would you want him to see such a sorry sight if he were to wake up now?" Audrey immediately rebuked Hope softly.

The child's love for her master overwhelmed even her. She didn't think it was so strong. She definitely couldn't compete with her bloodline-induced feelings. At times she even felt like everything about her was fake when it came to him. She felt like her strong emotions for him were all fake.

Well, that was a story for another day. What mattered to her in the moment was to keep Hope from breaking down.

"Ye-yeah, you're right. I shouldn't dwell on the past. I should work hard to get stronger and heal him" Hope was swayed by Audrey's words.

A resolute look to gain more strength appeared in her eyes. She would do everything in her power to gain the power she needed. She immediately started thinking of what she could do to gain that power. Unknowingly, an eerie air appeared around her as she was stuck in her thoughts.

"Hope?" Audrey called out to her while tapping her shoulder.

"Hmm?" Hope snapped out of her thoughts and the sinister air around her immediately disappeared. It was as if it was never there.

Audrey, who had clearly sensed it, was even questioning if she had sensed it properly. But she was certain that she had sensed something. She would have to notify Muku when he gets up. It seemed like an issue that could lead to problems later on if left infixed.

"I've brought the food!" Thankfully, Chloe's crisp voice disrupted the awkward silence.

"Here, Hope, have some", Chloe continued speaking as soon as she got to Hope's side.

Hope wanted to refuse since she didn't feel like eating. But realising that she really needed to eat to be able to function properly. She accepted the food. And so began her long and tasteless meal under the urging gazes of Chloe and Audrey. Who were soon joined by the others who had been notified by Chloe?

Soon the room was a little noisy. While it wasn't the same as when everyone was okay. It was definitely an improvement from the gloomy atmosphere in the last few days. They could vaguely sense that things were changing for the better.

Soon Hope had finished her meal and her body had also regained some of its strength. Which was the best part about beast meat. It worked almost immediately and the change was visible to the naked eye.

Unfortunately, it had been the last of their beast meat. So when Muku and Jade wake up. They won't have any. Unless the team went to hunt for more. Which was easier said than done with their rarity in the area.

.....

The next day...

Hope had spent most of the previous day recovering in Muku's room. She even slept there. No one objected that time around for obvious reasons. Plus she might or might not have threatened to poison them into a state of fear for a whole week if they denied her.

"I think I should see Jade. While I can't help Big Brother. Maybe I can help her. Her state is even naturally improving after all" Hope spoke to the others after they had gathered for breakfast.

After a night she was finally willing to leave Muku's side. Though not for too long. But it was an improvement nonetheless.

"Good idea!" Emily, being Jade's best friend, immediately agreed to the idea. She had even wanted to bring it up. But wasn't sure because of the condition Hope was in.

"Great, let's go do it now then. I have to get back to Big Brother soon," Hope spoke, the last part of her sentence making the others smile wryly.

The girl really only had her big brother in her mind. Which wasn't too obvious when Muku was fine. But when he wasn't, it was a glaring fact.

And so, they quietly agreed to what she said and they all headed for Jade's rooms.