

## **Few Wives 151**

Chapter 151: Lady Iris

"No! Take me! I'm sure my body would be more to your liking than a man" Hope shouted while stepping in front of Muku.

"No! Me!" Then Chloe stepped in front of her.

Then Layla in front of her, then Audrey after that. Emily followed after that. She had wanted to step in sooner, even before Muku spoke, but everything happened too quickly for her to keep up.

The group ended up making a queue of people screaming about why they should be the ones getting possessed over the others. It was a rather comical scene that the Plant Lady couldn't help but enjoy.

Suddenly everyone paused and looked in the same direction. There, Jade and Elsa stood while silently looking on. The two showed no sign of stepping up like the others before them.

"What?" Jade was prompted to speak by the stares.

"Why didn't you two step up?" Emily asked in a slightly annoyed voice. The two had "betrayed" her before and now were just looking as if she was campaigning to get possessed.

"Simple really. I don't want to get possessed. Not to mention that you all seem very eager to get possessed anyway. So, I wouldn't want to get in your way" Jade spoke calmly as if she was saying the most logical thing ever.

Though honestly, she was. What sane person would campaign to get possessed? She was willing to fight it out with the Plant Lady if it came to that, even if it was hopeless. However, she wasn't willing to get possessed. Being in control of her body was one of her favourite things, so... It was out of her hands, really.

Jade's words made everyone speechless. The Plant Lady couldn't control herself as she started laughing amusedly. She liked the group of brats more and more. They were such an interesting and funny group.

"Umm, I'm already possessed by a water fairy, so... It wouldn't make sense for me to get possessed again when you all are free right?" Just when the group was trying to recover from Jade's words. Elsa said her reason and they were stunned again.

It was for the same reason they got stunned by Jade's reasoning. They couldn't argue against it since it sounded logical. Even if Elsa spoke in a way that made it seem like her having a water fairy instead of them was a great sacrifice.

Which wasn't true at all, since it was nothing but beneficial to her. It did make sense for her to say that she couldn't house another being in her body.

However, that wasn't the point. What Emily cared about was whether they'd have her back or not. Which they clearly didn't. To even give reasonable excuses as to why they'd let her get possessed... The nerve of the two!

"You two are really determined to go against me in recent history aren't you?" Emily spoke with a dark expression while looking at her best friend and little sister.

She was even worried that they'd actively sacrifice her if the situation required it. After all, she couldn't understand their recent behaviour. Of course, she was just overthinking it. She had gotten used to them being always behind her, supporting her. So the sudden change caught her off guard.

"Wait... Elsa, what do you mean by fairy?" Muku interrupted Emily's rant as she was going off-topic. He caught something from Elsa's statement that piqued his interest.

He had heard the voice say fairy before, but he thought that he might have heard wrong. After all, the way the Plant Lady looked before the transformation had nothing to do with a fairy. Also how her humanoid form didn't have fairy wings like Elsa's Water Fairy made it hard to believe.

So hearing Elsa say it so confidently, he had to ask. As for what he'd do after gaining the information, he wasn't sure yet. He just thought it might be useful in some way.

"Yeah... She's a fairy. Can't you all sense it in her aura?" Elsa replied, a little confused as to why he'd ask such an obvious thing. Though she quickly realised that it might have been an exclusive ability to her she gained from her fairy.

She could tell that it was a fairy that had invaded Freya's body. Which she realised soon after calming down. It was also part of the reason why she was so calm in the current situation. That was because she knew something about fairies that inhabited people's bodies. Which gave her the confidence to be calm.

"Fufufu... While I'd like to know where you're going to go with your story. I can't help but feel like you're all starting to go off course. It's like I'm getting invisible to you." The Plant Lady interrupted. She couldn't stay quiet anymore.

"Anyway, let me get to the point. While I feel honoured that you all are willing to offer yourselves to me. Unfortunately, only this body can house me. The owner's neutral element barely lets me enter. The ideal host would have been a Plant-type, sadly... The point is, you all have specific elements, so only fairies of such elements can inhabit your bodies" The Plant Lady continued speaking, educating them a bit.

"Now let me get to the point. From now on, you all are under my command. You do whatever I tell you with no questions asked. That way, we can all be happy and no one has to die. I promise that I won't treat you too badly. I like how you all are united... Mostly anyway. Oh, and don't call me Plant Lady, it sounds tacky, Fairy Lady would have been better. However, just call me Lady Iris instead" The Plant Lady... Or Iris rather, quickly moved to her demands.

She spoke in a tone that didn't leave room for discussion. In her head, it really wasn't something that required discussion as little Rank Twos and ones like them should feel honoured to serve someone as great as she was.

However, the expressions of everyone present darkened as soon as they heard her words. It was the worst-case scenario they didn't want to occur. What would be the point of living if they had to spend their days as someone else's slaves?

"Can't we discuss it? Such an arrangement seems a bit excessive. I'm sure someone of your status wouldn't want weak servants like us right? We can barely go outside without getting killed" Muku hardened his face and tried to negotiate.

If he was alone, he would have immediately fought her with everything he had. Even if he died soon after. He wouldn't mind. Living as someone's slave wasn't something he was willing to do, period.

However, like always, he had to consider the girls. He didn't want them to die. They mattered more to him than his pride. His care for them couldn't be called a drawback though. After all, that's just how caring for someone worked. Being considerate of them is a must.

Which was why he asked for an alternative from Iris. Maybe they'd be lucky and there was something she wanted instead of enslaving them.

"Well, there is one thing..." Iris spoke with her hand on her chin, seemingly in thought. Considering how pretty Freya was, the action looked quite cute. Unfortunately, Muku wasn't in the mood to enjoy it.

"Yes! Please! What is it?!" Muku asked, practically shouting. That's how desperate he was.

"Woah! No need to be so loud. I'm still speaking... Anyway, if you can get me, let's say, a hundred Rank Three beast cores or twenty-five Rank Four cores, I'm willing to let you go free" Iris first shut down Muku's rashness, then told them what she wanted.

Her request was so absurd for the current them that they were left speechless. They couldn't even kill a peak Half-step R3 beast yet. So, going after a legit R3 or even a R4 was out of the picture. Hell, they didn't think that their current world even had R4s yet!

She was clearly setting them up to fail. They could easily tell that she had no plan to let them go. Besides, with her strength wouldn't she be able to do that herself if she wanted to?

"Hehe" Suddenly, out of nowhere Elsa let out a little laugh. It was the laugh one lets out when they try to stop themselves from laughing but fail.

"What are you laughing at brat?" Iris immediately spoke while looking at Elsa with narrowed eyes. Her aura even suggested that if Elsa said something she didn't like, she would attack.

"No! Please, she's just a little girl who doesn't know any better. Just ignore her" Emily immediately stepped up in front of Elsa as she tried to defend her sister. Even if they were having some issues recently, that wouldn't stop her from protecting Elsa.

As Emily spoke, Jade came beside her. Though, unlike Emily's submissive attitude, Jade seemed like she was ready to throw hands the moment Iris tried something against Elsa.

Seeing this, Emily and the others were alarmed and she was immediately dragged back behind the others. The girl really didn't know the difference between heaven and earth. Was she trying to get herself killed?! While casually bringing them along with her??

"Okay, I'll forgive her this once. Make sure it doesn't happen again" Iris spoke in her superior tone.

While it wasn't nice to hear. They all breathed a sigh of relief knowing that she wasn't going to attack.

"Thank you!" Emily immediately thanked her.

"There's no need for that sis. She isn't what she seems. It's just her aura that's left, otherwise all her strength is basically gone" Elsa dropped a bomb that shocked everyone in the room.

The tension immediately reached its highest peak. The room was silent as Iris and Muku's group stared down at each other.

The next step unknown...

Chapter 152: Little "Chat"

"Explain" Muku only spoke one word. Which he was directing at Elsa. However, his eyes didn't stray from Iris.

"Don't you dare!" Iris snapped at Elsa before she could respond.

"A fairy loses all their prior strength when they bond to a human" Elsa who wasn't scared of Iris, ignored the warning as she spilled the beans.

"What about Freya?" While he did feel better that they weren't in a life-threatening situation like they thought. Muku didn't immediately make a move against Iris.

Not because he was afraid of her possibly still having her powers. Rather, it was because he was worried that she could still do something to Freya. So even if they were safe, Freya might still be in danger.

As for why he believed Elsa so easily. It was because they had observed Iris for a while as she battled the beats. He noticed that while she was a chatterbox, she preferred the action of words when it mattered. If she had the strength, she probably would have killed one or two of them to make the rest obey.

She wouldn't have let Elsa speak so freely. She wouldn't have been so forgiving and stopped at verbal warnings. Not to mention that, while Freya's aura had improved after the possession. It wasn't by a large margin. At best, she was now stronger than Elsa but still far from Rank Two strength.

As for why he and the others ignored it earlier. They thought that maybe it was her test for them, to see whether they'd attack. If they did, she would then murder a few to instil fear in the rest.

However, after Elsa's words, everything seemed a lot more clear. Not to mention Iris' confident expression that had already started cracking.

"She's fine. Her soul probably just got overwhelmed by the sudden intrusion, which made her pass out. That's the only reason why Iris here is the one controlling her body. A fairy can't take over a human's body. So as soon as Freya comes to... Her body will return to her control, and Iris will be kicked to the back" Elsa explained everything.

Much to the dismay of Iris. Who didn't know what she could do to get out of the? Could she even escape from R2s as a R1 that wasn't even a physical type?

"Oh! And, she also can't leave as easily as she came in. For that, Freya has to be willing to let her go. Otherwise, she's stuck in there forever. At this point, this is actually beneficial to Freya as she will gain plant manipulation from Iris. Of course, since she didn't originally have a plant element, her manipulation won't be anywhere as strong as Pseudo-Legendary, but it could reach Rare Level" Elsa continued speaking after a little break.

She said basically all the information she was getting from the bond with her fairy. Apparently, even newborn fairies like hers had such information in their minds. So her being bonded to the fairy at a soul level gave her access to the information. However, it seemed to only be accessible in certain situations like the current one.

"Oh... Is that so? Doesn't that mean she's been playing us for fools all this time?" Muku commented calmly after Elsa finished speaking. He even had a smile on his face but to Iris, his smile looked like the scariest thing in the world.

At that moment, only one thing came to her mind. That was one simple word. A word she never thought she'd think of ever again after getting strong enough. That word was, "Run!".

She didn't think about anything else after that. She simply followed her thoughts and made a break for it. She basically flew towards the door at her fastest speed. Which was pretty significant considering that Freya was a Peak R1 Evolver. Such beings were a lot better in every way compared to even Olympic athletes. Even if they weren't physical types, they could easily fold the greatest of athletes.

So it was understandable that within a second or two, she was already at the door. The door was closed. She didn't have the time to stop and open it. So she chose the next best thing. She closed her eyes as she ran forward, bracing for impact. She was going to break through it.

However, for some reason, after closing her eyes. She felt a lot lighter as she ran forward. The impact she was expecting when she came into contact with the door also didn't come. She was so confused that she immediately opened her eyes.

She was instantly startled. The reason being that she was floating just slightly above the ground. Her feet hit the ground softly, and she wasn't going anywhere. At that moment, the door seemed so close and yet so far at the same time. Her hope for escape was crushed on the spot and she sank into the pits of despair.

She had realised what power was keeping her in place. It was a rare power she had only come across once before and didn't want to come across again... Telekinesis.

The last time she was luckily not the target. So she just observed from a distance as someone she feared was bullied by its user. While she was happy that her enemy was getting brutalized at the time. She hoped to never be at the receiving end of it until her death.

Unfortunately, it seemed fate had other plans. There she was, ensnared by Telekinesis, and she could not escape. She was powerless to do anything.

"Hehe, why are you so quick to leave now? Don't you want us as your servants anymore"? Muku spoke as he slowly walked toward the helpless Iris.

She had almost brought him to the brink. For that, she had to pay. His brain worked in overdrive just because of her bluff.

"You can't do anything to me! I'm in the body of your comrade. So hurting me is no different from hurting her. In fact, I'd say you'd be hurting her more than me since this is her body" Iris immediately started speaking whatever came to her mind as she tried to spare herself from a beating.

As she was the one in control at the time. The pain Freya's body felt would be hers to handle. Which wasn't something she wanted to go through since she wasn't good at dealing with pain. She had been injured so few times in a significant way to the point that she had long forgotten what real pain felt like. All she could remember was that she didn't want to go through a painful experience.

"Umm, since she's in control of the body right now. All the pain would be felt by her and not Freya's consciousness" Elsa, who was like the devil to Iris at that point, spoke. Her words got rid of the last hesitation Muku had in dealing with Iris.

While he wouldn't do anything that would harm Freya's body. He had a way of punishing Iris without hurting Freya... Too much. So, he smiled while looking at Iris whom he had turned around to face them.

Seeing his smile, she felt a chill go down her spine. At the same time, she couldn't help but wonder if humans were always so scary or if she unluckily provoked a psycho. She would soon get the answer to that question, however...

"Everyone, if you'll excuse me. Me and Lady Iris here need to have a private chat" Muku spoke to the girls while cracking his fingers. He then walked upstairs as Iris floated behind him.

Everyone could tell that he was really pissed off, so none said anything to stop him. Most of them knew what the "chat" was going to be. They felt that Iris deserved at least that for scaring them like that.

However, Jade, as a pioneer of the "chat", couldn't help but touch her behind. She could still clearly remember the chats. For that, she was the only one who felt a little pity for Iris. However, she mostly felt pleased to gain a comrade who would also have some "chat" experience.

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In Muku's room...

"Now, let's have that chat shall we?" Muku spoke after sitting on the bed and setting Iris up for the "chat".

"No, please don't! It's not even my fault that I'm here. You all are the ones that invaded my home and woke me up. Yet now you want to punish me for doing what I did as a result of your actions?" Iris tried to defend herself through logic.

Honestly, she was making a lot of sense. If it wasn't because of Muku and the girls who attacked her first. She would still be underground, lying dormant. They basically ruined her life if one thought about it. Their actions almost got her killed.

Also, it wasn't like she had done anything significant to them that warranted some deep resentment. So instead of punishing her, shouldn't they be talking it out instead? Aren't humans supposed to be reasonable?

"Hhm... You do have a point. However, I'm the stronger party right now. So what I say goes, and I say take this..." Muku understood where she was coming from. However, that didn't mean that he would be willing to listen.

He didn't delay his punishment anymore as he immediately hit her butt after saying "this".

Pat!

"Ah!" You monster! What are you doing?! It hurts so bad!" Iris screamed as she felt her whole body lose all its strength from the pain of the strong hand to the butt.

However, Muku didn't stop. He kept on doing it until Iris' cries filled the room. Everyone would have heard them had Freya's ability not mostly soundproofed the mansion.

While punishment was a major part of what was happening. It would be a lie to say that Muku wasn't getting some personal satisfaction from the experience. After all, what man wouldn't like... Anyway, soon he was done and Iris felt nothing but numbness in her butt. Which was understandable after ten minutes of getting spanked hard.

She had never felt such pain and humiliation before. If possible, she wanted to get revenge on him someday. Though remembering her situation, she didn't hold much hope. She was quite pragmatic after all.

"You bastard. I'll make you pay someday..." Iris spoke in a low and hoarse voice from all the shouting and screaming. She then went silent.

Muku didn't think much of it until something unexpected happened.

"Where am I? What's going on? And why does my Ah!... Huh? Ahhhhh!" Freya suddenly regained her consciousness and control over her body.

He immediately noticed her weird position, in an unfamiliar room. Then she felt pain from her butt she has never felt before. Just as she moved her hand to touch it, she touched a male hand resting on her butt instead.

She then looked back, her eyes met Muku's. She was startled and so she screamed.

Seeing the situation, Muku couldn't help but feel a headache come on. How was he going to explain it to her?

Chapter 153: Hello! I'm Freya!

"Hey! Would you believe me if I said that this was a misunderstanding and there's a very reasonable explanation for it?" Muku spoke before Freya could say or do anything.

He didn't want a situation where she would run out of the room crying while grabbing her butt. So he spoke quickly before it came to all that.

Surprisingly, as well as fortunately for him. After the initial shock, Freya didn't seem too shaken by the situation. She even nodded to what he said while looking at him. Which was basically an indirect way of saying, "Go ahead, speak. I'm listening"

"Wait... You believe me?" Muku couldn't help but ask. He wasn't expecting her to be so cooperative.

After speaking through, he mentally kicked himself. Did he want her to runaway instead? Wasn't this the best result? Why would he ask something so dumb?

"Well... Why wouldn't I believe you? I mean, I don't know how I got here, and there was no reason for me to faint. I also vaguely remember a green shadow smashing into me. You weren't there when it happened, so you couldn't have been the perpetrator. Plus I'm certain that you wouldn't do something improper to me. Even if you did want to do such a thing, there would be no reason to knock me out first. You could easily take me there and t..." Freya who wasn't able to read that Muku had only asked the question subconsciously, replied.

Maybe because she was still not completely awake. She was a bit too honest without holding back at all. Muku had to stop her at the end as her words were getting a bit too graphic.

"Okay! Stop, I get what you mean" Muku exclaimed as he cut off Freya.

He then proceeded to tell her everything that had happened. Iris' name appears quite a lot in his explanation. Which was understandable since she was the main character of the situation.

"Oh... So the bottom line is I now have a hostile and possibly ancient fairy inhabiting my body?" Freya asked. At that point, her mind had completely cleared up. How could it not be, after everything she was told?

"Yes..." Muku only said one word. He wasn't sure what to say other than that.

"It's not too bad since I get plant manipulation, which I assume will make me a bit more useful in fights now. Also, since she can't harm me in any way. I practically benefited after putting in zero effort" Freya continued speaking.

She was even getting a little excited at the end. She had been secretly feeling insecure about her inability to help much in battle. She could tell that while she and Elsa were technically equal in strength, she was nothing in front of the little girl if they had to fight. Now, however, while she probably would still be beaten up, she would at least be able to land a blow or two.

"Yes, definitely. It's basically a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity" Muku fed her enthusiasm, hoping that she would quickly forget about what she woke up to.

"Yeah... Can I get up now? Something is poking my stomach..." Out of nowhere, Freya mentioned their awkward position.

Muku had started explaining before she could get up. After he started she couldn't find the right time to get up. So she just awkwardly stayed there doing her best to hide the awkwardness.

While she really wanted to hear what he was saying and she was paying almost all her attention to it. She still couldn't ignore the constant poking her stomach was facing. It was part of the reason why she sobered up so quickly.

Wanting to mitigate the awkwardness, she chose a random moment to mention it. Unfortunately, it didn't work. The awkward atmosphere immediately thickened in the room.

"S..sure" Muku replied robotically. He didn't know how to react or what to say. He practically froze up and could barely move his mouth. He couldn't help but wonder how he always found himself in such situations. Was that really the kind of main character the author wanted him to be?

"Ummm... Your hand..." Freya hesitantly spoke.

Her words immediately brought Muku's attention to his hand. The very hand he had used to spank Iris/Freya with. The hand that was resting on Freya's butt at the moment. The hand he didn't remember when he put it there. The hand that was even moving back and forth on Freya's butt as he looked at it. The hand that had been actively stopping Freya from getting off his legs.

"Oh shi... I'm sorry about that! I don't know what's wrong with me"

Whoosh!

"It's fine!" The moment Muku moved his hand away. Freya got up at her fastest speed and ran for the door. She only spoke after opening it and ran out.

"Go see Hope and get healed up!" Muku shouted in Freya's direction as he stood by his door.

He wanted to go after her. However, his 9-inch pitched tent wouldn't let him leave the room for a while. So she could only shout and hope that she heard him.

"Okay!" Luckily, Freya heard him and she responded. She didn't slow down her speed, however. Even if running hurt like hell for her butt, she didn't stop.

After passing everyone by. She ran out of the mansion from the back door. However, she still knew her limits, so she didn't go outside the gate. She ran to the large tree that stood at the back.

"Ahhhhh!" Freya shouted to vent her embarrassment. She covered her mouth to muffle the sound. What she didn't know was that almost all the group members had at least one embarrassing moment with Muku. So, in a way, she was now officially part of the group.

The girls looked on from a distance. With how Freya was behaving and how Muku let her go. They realised that Freya had woken up and reclaimed control from Iris. With how she was behaving, they could also tell that she woke up at the wrong time.

A green glow then appeared on Hope's hand. She then shot a green beam of light toward Freya. Freya wasn't even able to sense it before she was hit. Which showed just how different their power levels were.

"Hhm?" Freya only reacted after when she felt the pain disappeared from her bottom. She immediately looked back and saw Hope holding her hand out from a distance. Beside her were the other girls.

Emily even waved at her with a rather awkward smile on her face. Immediately she realised that they figured out what happened in Muku's room.

"Thank you" Like the well-mannered young lady she was. She immediately thanked Hope. Even though her face was as red as it possibly could be as she did so. Hope nodded in reply.

Freya then covered her face with her hands afterwards. At that moment, she wished for nothing more than for the world to open up and swallow her. Fortunately, the others realised how embarrassed she felt, so they left.

{They are gone now. So you can stop covering your face. Like, do you have to be so dramatic? You're not even the one who had to go through the real experience} A salty voice suddenly spoke inside Freya's head.

Which gave the girl a jump scare, she almost had a heart attack. In fact, if she wasn't an Evolver. She definitely would have had a heart attack.

{Sigh, I really chose a wimp huh? Not only are you weak, but your mentality is weak as well} The voice spoke again. This time it was more dejected than salty.

Which showed just how unhappy the owner was with Freya's seemingly easily spooked personality. Though honestly, the only reason the owner thought like that was because they themselves had never had a voice suddenly speak in their head. After all, it was really easy to judge others based on something you have no experience in.

Obviously, the voice's owner was Iris, who found herself seeing life through Freya's eyes. It was like she was watching a TV while in solitary confinement. So while the thought of being stuck there unless Freya let her out wasn't inspiring. At least she could see and hear whatever Freya did. Not to mention that she could comment whenever she wanted.

It seemed Freya couldn't cut her off. Or at least didn't know how at the time. So for a while at least, she would be able to annoy her as much as she wanted. Immediately a sadistic idea formed in her mind.

So what if she couldn't do anything to Muku? She could at least mentally torture his teammate, right?

"Woah, that scared me. So it's just you Ms Iris. Hello! I'm Freya! Your host! While we got together through sheer coincidence. I hope that we can get along from now on okay? What do you think? Are you willing to be my friend?" Freya spoke to the motionless Iris standing in front of her.

"You! How are you here?!" Iris shouted as she pointed at Freya with a shaky hand. She looked really spooked like she had seen a ghost...

Chapter 154: Mindscape...

From ancient times. Long before the recorded history known to Muku's civilisation.

It was common knowledge that humans could only gain the ability to enter their mindscape after reaching Rank Four. Yet, there Freya was, standing next to Iris with a big smile on her face.

"Hhm? What do you mean?" Freya was confused by Iris' question. She also couldn't understand the exaggerated reaction of the fairy.

"You aren't supposed to have access to this place!" Iris screamed, still shaken by what she was witnessing. She even wondered if she was dreaming or having a nightmare.

"Well... I don't know how to answer that. I've been able to do this even before the apocalypse. I think I was ten when I first found myself in here" Freya replied, while also trying to explain after catching on to what could have been bothering Iris.

"Lies! There's no way that's true!" Iris screamed as she refused to believe it. Even fairies and beasts needed to be at least Rank Three to gain access to their mindscape. Only a rare few beasts with incredibly powerful bloodlines could access their mindscape at Rank Two or even rarer at one.

From such statistics, Iris' reaction became a lot more understandable. The fairy started feeling a bit afraid of Freya even. After all, all sentient beings are afraid of the unknown just like humans.

Freya's case, if it were true would be one of the biggest anomalies to ever happen. It was such an odd case that it should have been impossible.

"While I'm not lying to you. I won't go out of my way to prove it to you. All that matters is that I'm here. Now, do you want to be friends or not?" Freya didn't want to keep on discussing what she deemed a boring conversation.

So she tried to get Iris to forget about it. Which was understandable considering the amount of time she could do it. She also didn't know what Iris knew. Otherwise, she might have also been spooked by her situation.

However, in all honesty, Freya's situation didn't have any hidden cause to it. She was just that one variant in an established system that almost always exists. At best, she was just a lucky child who got a gift she would eventually get, a lot sooner than she should have.

It's not like the mindscape was significant to her in any way at that time anyway. So it was practically a fancy toy that didn't do anything. She rarely entered the scape in recent years since there was no point to it.

"Tsk, fine. You really don't know what an amazing feat you have accomplished. And I don't want to be your friend. If anything, I want to break your soul and take over your body" Iris spoke after collecting herself a bit.

She was an ancient being from an era long forgotten by time. So she had experienced quite a few things. For that reason, she could recover quickly.

After which she made her stance clear to Freya. While she could have faked some friendship and stabbed Freya from the back at some point. She chose to be straightforward with it.

In her mind, only trash hides their intentions from the opponent. She wasn't trash, she had accomplished way too much to be such.

"Oh... Too bad. I had thought that us getting along, considering the situation, would be for the best. However, it seems you don't want to. I guess I can only do this instead" Freya was disappointed by Iris' reply, but wasn't too affected.

She immediately did something that caught Iris by surprise as she was about to finish speaking.

Out of nowhere, Iris found herself bound to the ground by heavy chains, unable to move. Her mouth was covered by what seemed to be tape, so she couldn't speak. Not to mention an invisible pressure that was constantly bearing down on her.

That's when it struck her, she was in Freya's mindscape. Freya had access to that mindscape. Which meant one thing... Freya was the almighty in the mindscape. Anything Freya imagined would happen.

While the ability couldn't affect reality and was somewhat the same as daydreaming. It had real consequences for Iris. It meant that if she was willing to face the soul backlash of destroying a bonded fairy. Freya could actually kill her right there and then.

Or she could just torture her. Which wouldn't affect Freya in any way. Though it would be no different from hell to Iris.

Fear immediately crept into Iris' mind. She had been so confident that while she could irritate Freya. Freya wouldn't be able to retaliate just a while ago. Yet now, there she was, bound and facing a life-or-death situation.

She couldn't help but complain about how her life seemed to become one unlucky event after another recently. It all started the moment Muku's group broke into her habitat. Or rather, the moment they killed her avatar which exposed the hole.

Her hatred for Muku, especially after remembering the spanking, increased. It was all his fault that she was suffering so much.

"Mmmm! Mmmm!..." Noticing how Freya was about to heartlessly leave her like that. Iris tried to scream through the tape that covered her mouth.

Which, fortunately for her, worked as Freya stopped. The tape also disappeared from her mouth.

"Yes?" Freya signified for Iris to speak with only one word.

Using her imagination reminded her of the time she didn't want to remember. A time when she was younger after discovering her mindscape.

Just like one can imagine in such a situation when you discover a world in which you can do anything you want. A place where anything you imagine becomes true. The young Freya quickly got addicted.

It got to a point that she wouldn't eat all day or even move as she revelled in her imagination. She became a disobedient child who didn't listen to her parents no matter what they said.

It became so bad that her parents started fighting because of her. Her mother wanted to be harsher with her, while her father wanted to be more lenient since she was just a child.

Their fighting escalated until they got a divorce. Of course, it wasn't the only reason, as there were already some cracks in their relationship before her. So the breakup was inevitable.

However, the young Freya blamed herself for it. Especially when her mother was later found dead from a drug overdose. She again thought that her mother got into drugs because of her.

This, again, wasn't true. In fact, it had been part of the reason why her parents separated since her mother couldn't get over the habit. Which she had started long before Freya was born.

She only briefly stopped during Freya's pregnancy and a few years after. Then she started doing drugs again. Which later led to her death in a lonely one-room apartment. Freya was living with her father at the time since her mother had refused to take her.

After all, that. Little Freya swore to never enter her mindscape for the rest of her life. That's when she started turning her life around for the better. She even became a model student at school. Completely wiping her reputation clean.

It was only later on, when she got older, that she found out about her mother's issues. Then she realised that she might not have been as to blame as she thought.

She then started entering the mindscape again. Though for some reason, it was no longer as fun as before. Maybe she has hated it for so long she couldn't love it in the same way she did before.

So, she rarely entered it. If it wasn't because of Iris' presence, she wouldn't have entered it so randomly.

Anyway, that was the reason why she seemed eager to leave before Iris' actions stopped her. She still didn't like the scape as it reminded her of a painful time.

"Can we talk this out? Let's make a deal" Iris spoke in an unwillingly submissive voice. She had realised that she was the weaker party in the matter.

"Hhm, sure. Go ahead. Be quick about it, though," Freya replied in a slightly bossy tone. The scape affected her personality a bit, making her a lot less friendly and nice than she was.

It wouldn't have been a problem if Iris had been nice from the beginning, however. She was just reacting to the situation.

"R-right, while still don't want to be your friend... Wait! Wait! Don't leave! Let me finish first!. Right, instead of being a friend or enemy. I want to be a partner instead. I don't know if you already knew about this, but without my say-so, you can't use my plant element," Iris spoke in a calm and slightly passive tone.

Her previous confident and flirtatious air was gone. She hated every moment of her new situation, but she knew to do what had to be done.

"Oh... Is that so? I didn't know. Okay, what do you propose then?... Just so you know, I'm not selling you my soul. Only fools do that," Freya replied; there was a contemplative look on her face. She was wondering what Iris would ask for.

Before she was planning to reject whatever Iris suggested. However, the new information changed things. To think she couldn't use plant magic without Iris' permission. Though it did make sense if one thought about it. Otherwise, she would have way too much power in the bond.

"Tsk, I'm not a demon... Anyway, my proposition is that in return for using my power. You'll let me take over your body for at least eight hours every day" Iris rolled her eyes at being likened to a demon, then moved on to her proposition.

After saying what she wanted to. She went quiet and gave Freya the chance to reply.

"... I'll think about" After a little pause, Freya replied while she stepped through a white door that appeared out of nowhere to leave the mindscape.

Behind her, Iris was bound again. While the pressure was removed. Her eyes and eyes were also covered. So she could no longer see or hear what was going on outside the mindscape.

What would come after was a complete mystery to her...

Chapter 155: Her search was over...

A while later in the lounge...

Freya had gotten over her embarrassment after the conversation with Iris. She told everyone about the conversation after they had their dinner.

"Hhm... While there's no way I'm letting you give up eight hours of your time to her. I think it's only fair that we give her something in return for allowing you to use her powers. However, let's not discuss it

now. It has been a long day that has spanned too many chapters. So we'll talk about it tomorrow. Too many things have happened today," Muku spoke after Freya told them everything.

The girls all agreed they had a really long day. So, discussing such an important matter that required a lot of thinking and consideration would be put on hold. They might not have been too tired physically, but mentally, they were spent.

And so, everyone said their good nights as they headed off to their rooms. The petty Emily ditched Elsa and went to sleep with Freya.

Her words before leaving with her pillow to Elsa were, "I refuse to sleep with a snake. Why if you bite me in my sleep. Hhmp!". Then she stormed off.

Elsa, however, easily saw through her. The real reason Emily left was because she, like the rest of them had noticed that Freya seemed a little down. So Emily didn't want her to be alone at such a time which could make her feel worse.

Knowing this, Elsa quietly let her sister go. It was one of the things she loved most about her sister after all. Emily, despite her flaws, was a pure and kind soul that cared a lot about everyone. Especially those around her.

...

In Freya's room...

"So, you left your room because you don't want to sleep with Elsa... And you want to stay here with me?" Freya asked for confirmation after Emily told her the reason why she was at her front door in the middle of the night.

Her tone when speaking to Emily had significantly gotten a lot more relaxed. Which was understandable after how much Emily had stuck close to her. It was only natural for her to quickly get used to her since the golden-eyed teen was quite charismatic when she wanted to be.

"Yes," Emily replied with a one-word answer while she nodded her head cutely. Even though Freya wasn't planning on refusing her. She wasn't sure if she could refuse such a cute face if she wanted to.

"Okay fine... But tomorrow, you must reconcile with Elsa, okay?" Freya agreed, she saw no reason to refuse the eager girl.

"Sure... For now, let's go sleep" Emily replied with a smile on her face as she walked past Freya, heading for the bed. She then jumped onto it like it was her bed. There was zero respect for something that wasn't her's in the way she acted.

Freya just looked at her with a wry expression on her face. Emily reminded her of the funny videos where one person tells their friend to "feel at home", and then the friend really gets into the role. To the point of even selling the house or kicking out the owner.

Freya didn't particularly dislike Emily's behaviour, however. She actually liked it. It showed that Emily trusted her enough to let her guard down like that.

She felt a warmth in her heart she hadn't felt for a long time. That was because, like Elsa, she had also noticed that Emily just wanted to keep her company after noticing her mood.

It reminded her of her father she hadn't seen since the apocalypse began. She was attending University when the apocalypse began. Her father should have been at work, so his fate was unknown to her.

Thinking up to that, her eyes got a bit teary. She wiped away the tears and went to join Emily with a smile on her face. It wasn't time to think about such things.

Maybe when she got a bit stronger and contributed something significant to the ground, she could ask for their help in looking for her father.

What she didn't know, however, was that even in their current situation. Where she was just a noobie who hadn't done anything yet. The team would still be willing to assist her. In their minds, just being comrades was enough for them to help. Sadly, she didn't know that yet.

Soon she and Emily were in bed. Without her noticing it, Emily got her to talk about herself. In an hour or so, Freya had told Emily about all the significant events in her life. It was like she had found the release she had been looking for even before the apocalypse began. She just wouldn't stop speaking after she started.

At the end of it, she couldn't help but start crying. Remembering everything that had happened in her life up to that point. Be it good or bad, made her quite emotional. Especially when she was unaware of her father's fate.

She only managed to stop crying another hour later. Which was only because she had fallen asleep. That too in Emily's embrace.

Emily really felt sad for this older sister of hers. While she had also gone through some stuff. At least she had Jade and others from the start. She then got Elsa, too, after a while.

On the other hand, Freya had basically had to navigate through everything alone since she didn't have friends before the apocalypse. She only became friends with Lisa a while back. So they hadn't gotten too close to each other. Which likely had something to do with their bad past as well.

After hearing everything, Emily promised herself to never let Freya feel alone again. She felt that Freya had been alone long enough. It was time for her happy ending. She then hugged Freya tighter as she also fell asleep.

And so, like that, the day finally ended... For real this time.

....

The next morning...

"Okay, there are a lot of issues we need to address before we move on. The first is Freya and Iris' matter. Without dealing with it, another important issue can't be dealt with" After they had their breakfast Muku immediately addressed the most important matter.

"Yeah, I also think that we should deal with that first. So what are the possible solutions to it? Has anyone thought of anything yet?" Emily added to what Muku said.

Hell, she even took over the conversation. After her talk with Freya the night before. She was more than eager to do anything in her power to make Freya's life easier.

The others noticed how she seemed way too enthusiastic. Freya blushed embarrassedly. The way Emily behaved made her seem like the older one, while she seemed to be the little sister. It was worse when she saw the teasing looks the others gave her.

"You seem to have an idea though. Why not tell us your idea first" Jade spoke before anyone else did as she directed her statement towards Emily.

She had known Emily long enough to know that she wouldn't be so enthusiastic if she didn't have something to say. So she thought to speed up the process.

"How presumptuous of you... However, I guess I do have something..." Emily replied, she apparently still hadn't gotten over the previous day as she rebuked Jade a little.

She then went on to tell everyone about Freya's mindscape which she had been told about the previous night. Of course, she first got Freya's permission before telling the others.

The reason she mentioned it was because Freya was able to completely restrain Iris through it. So, maybe they could use that in their favour when negotiating with Iris.

"Well... Before we get to the important matter. I have to say, what a wondrous ability you have. It's like the dream ability for anyone trying to escape reality. I'm rather jealous actually" Muku was the first to comment. He was so amazed by Freya's ability, he had to pause the important stuff.

"I agree... I'm jealous as well" Jade joined him.

Soon everyone expressed their jealousy. The whole team were impressed. While they were superhumans who could do some amazing things in real life. They couldn't do everything. So having a mindscape would be great... It would be like a virtual world in which they would be gods.

Elsa was the most salty. After all, she also wanted to interact with her fairy "personally" in her head. Just feeling the little fairy's mood and feelings wasn't enough for her. If the fairy could talk, it would have been better. Unfortunately, it couldn't.

The only positive point was that she could mostly understand what the fairy wanted to say through their soul link even without speech. Even then, entering into the scape and personally interacting with it would have been better.

As for why she didn't just summon it... She was still too weak for such a thing. From how things looked, she could only do so at Rank Two. Which was likely part of why Iris wanted to possess Freya's body. She knew she couldn't get out with her real body for a while.

Freya looked at the group oddly. They weren't the first people she had told about her ability. Others either didn't believe her or believed her then called her a freak. Interestingly, those who called her a freak were actually jealous and wanted the ability for themselves. However, she didn't know that so it hurt her when they said that.

Anyway, the way Muku and the girls reacted was new. Not only did they easily believe her, they were even looking at her with genuine eyes filled with envy. On top of that, they were admitting it to her face.

She immediately realised that she had joined a crazy group of people. At the same time, for the first time ever since she got her ability she felt at peace and at home. Even more so than at her father's house. A beautiful smile appeared on her face as happy tears started flowing out of her eyes.

She had finally found her place in the world. Her search was over...

Chapter 156: Discussions

A rowdy while later...

"Okay, we've fooled around long enough. Let's get back to business" Muku spoke after noticing that they were wasting too much time.

"I have an idea" Chloe was the first to speak after his statement. She had been waiting for the conversation to get back on track so she could express her thoughts.

"Oh, okay. Let's hear it" Muku spoke with some curiosity in his voice. That others were also curious about what she had to say. So everyone quietened down and paid attention to what she wanted to say.

"Okay, so Freya can do anything in her mindscape, right? Which I think is perfect for my plan. Instead of giving in to Iris' demand for eight hours... We can propose something else. If she refuses, then Freya will threaten her with an externally burning flame in her mindscape or something," Chloe spoke, and the others just listened on while nodding their heads.

Seeing them paying attention as they let her cook. Chloe became more confident and continued speaking.

"Of course, we can't just force things like that. Like she said, it is partly our fault that she's even facing all these problems. Even if she has her own faults. Anyway, we can promise her anything she wants in the mindscape if she agrees to the deal. Which I'm sure would be very tempting to her" Chloe spoke a bit more before pausing again. She was trying to organise her words as well as measure the reaction the others had to her plan.

"With her personality, I'm sure that won't be enough for her. She has shown a strong desire to be outside in the real world. So without getting that, I don't think she'll agree to anything we say. This means that we likely have no choice but to sacrifice some of Freya's time. However, I don't know how much Freya is willing to offer and how much Iris is willing to accept. You all can work out the finer details... What do you think?" Chloe concluded by asking for the opinion of the others.

"I like it... I'm willing to go along with it. Though I don't think I can give up more than an hour of my time" Freya was the first one to speak.

Well, she kinda had to speak since everyone was looking at her. After all, it was her life and they didn't want to dictate it for her. They chose to work around what she wanted instead. It wasn't easy to willingly give up your body's control to someone else when it had been yours to control for 19 years.

"Are you sure?" Emily asked Freya, with some worry in her voice. While an hour a day didn't seem long. It was quite a significant amount of time if you really thought about it.

"Yeah... I can just have some fun in my mindscape during that time. I probably won't even notice it pass by" Freya replied with a sweet smile on her face.

Whether she meant it or not, only she knew. What was certain to everyone, though, was that Freya really wanted to use Iris' power. While they didn't feel like she needed to... They could tell that she felt like she needed to do more to be relevant to the team.

"... Okay. If you say so," Emily relented, not wanting to make the difficult situation even more difficult for Freya.

"Let me add my take on it... Why must it be daily? Why not once every three days or so? Iris is in a rather terrible position. So I'm sure she would agree to the deal with the other benefit of having whatever she wanted in Freya's mindscape. Maybe she just set a high bar to have more negotiation room" Jade nonchalantly chimed in.

Her words, however, were quite insightful. The others hadn't thought of it like that. For some reason, they had thought that "daily" was a key part of the deal. However, after Jade's input, they realised that they might have been overthinking it. Anyone in Iris' position would probably be willing to take even the worst of deals if they provided some kind of benefit.

"Hhmm... Good point. Let's go with what Jade said then. We'll offer her a luxurious life in the mindscape plus an hour of Freya's time outside of it every three days. Does anyone disagree or have another better idea?" Muku spoke, ready to finalise the plan.

However, he did give everyone the chance to speak before he did so. No one said anything though. They all agreed with the plan. All of them had thought of a plan somewhat similar to what Chloe said, which was the obvious plan. So, no one could say they had a better plan.

"No one? Okay, good! That's final then. Freya can talk to Iris after the meeting. For now, let's move on to the next matter. Layla, if you please..." Muku finalized the plan and then immediately moved on to the next matter.

"Sure..." Layla replied after hearing his words. She then held her hand out. A large ice disk was formed in front of it creating a significantly sized shadow underneath it.

Before anyone could ask what was happening. Well, it's not like they would have asked anything anyway since they knew what was happening. Four orbs radiating strength rose from the ice's shadow.

That's right, she had summoned the four R3 beast cores from the Iris battle from her Shadow Pocket. The enviable ability she had, that basically stored whatever she wanted in a different dimension. She could retrieve it whenever she wanted from wherever she wanted to retrieve it from.

One pitch black, one earthy brown, one light green and one dark purple. Though their colours were different, all four beast cores radiated an astonishing amount of energy. It was so intense that even Muku and his girls' strength combined couldn't stand up to one core's strength. It wouldn't even be a fourth of it.

Which showed the difference between them, semi-peak R2s and Half-step R4s. Fortunately, the energy, which was masterless,, lacked inten,t, so it was docile. Otherwise, Muku and the girls wouldn't even be able to get close to the cores.

However, Elsa and Freya still found it hard to breathe if they got too close. This made it safe to say that unranked beings likely wouldn't be able to come close to the cores due to the strength difference alone. With that same logic, legit R4 Cores might be a challenge for the current Muku and the R2 girls.

"So, these are our spoils. As for how we're going to use them. I'm only sure about the black core. Sadly, we don't have anyone with an element like any of the other three," Muku spoke after grabbing the cores with his Telekinesis and making them float in front of him.

"Wait..." Layla spoke one word not sure how to continue.

"No need to say anything. Your Shadow Element lets you use Darkness Element cores. So the black one is yours. Don't say it's too much since we didn't particularly do anything to get it, and we'll be Rank Three soon anyway, so they won't be that rare as long as we have beasts to hunt," Muku spoke before Layla could come up, with a way to refuse.

He didn't discuss it with the others before making a decision. It was one of those things that was a no-brainer. It just made sense to do what he did. This was evident from how no one but Layla seemed to be against it.

All the others felt was dejection for not aligning with any of the cores. Jade was hit the hardest when she realised that she wasn't getting the urge to consume any of the cores. Which meant only one thing... She couldn't consume higher-rank cores and gain their abilities.

Which meant she'd have to wait until she ranks up. She wasn't sure how long it would take after the fiasco the previous day. There was no way weaker-rank beasts like R2s didn't run away after that.

"Just take it... You know he won't give up until you do" Audrey chimed in after seeing that Layla was still a bit hesitant.

She had long noticed that her daughter had an issue taking anything from anyone. Especially when she felt like she didn't do anything to deserve it. As for why she was like that, she wasn't sure.

"Yeah... S-sis, take it. It's really not a big deal," Chloe added; she was a little awkward in calling Layla sister. She wasn't used to it yet.

"If you refuse, I'll take it. I don't mind a darkness ability after ranking up" Jade spoke in a salty tone.

"You wouldn't dare!" Layla snapped as she snatched the core from the air.

Everyone was immediately dumbfounded. Only for a little while though. That's because they immediately realised Layla's personality defect.

The girl really didn't like taking any losses. They just didn't know that she would even compromise some of her standpoints just because of that.

She really was a weird girl. Everyone couldn't help but look at Audrey all at once. They were silently asking her why Layla was like that.

To which Audrey smiled wryly. She also had no idea why Layla was like that. Maybe there was no reason, and the girl just didn't like losing at anything. Not everything has to have a deep meaning after all.

Chapter 157: Meat!

"Okay... With that taken care of. Let's move on to the next matter" Since Audrey also didn't know why Layla was so weird, and there was no way Layla would tell them, Muku decided to move on. No one disagreed. The best part was about to come after all.

"Meat!" Before Layla could even start casting her Shadow Pocket spell to take out the meat. Jade was already excitedly shouting. The girl really loved meat.

Her excitement at the moment was indescribable. She was thinking of how good R2 meat tasted. So, following the trend, R3 meat would be even better, right? That thought alone was enough to excite her to the max.

"Don't you dare snatch some of it when it's taken out. If you do so, you won't have any of the rest," Seeing Jade, who was barely controlling herself even before seeing the meat. Muku immediately warned her.

"Tsk, do you think I'm such a shallow person? I'd never do such a thing. I'm offended that you'd even suspect me of such" Jade immediately defended herself looking very offended. At the back of her mind, however, she was glad that Layla hadn't gotten the meat out yet when Muku spoke. That's because she was definitely planning to snatch some.

"Right... Anyway, Layla" Muku and probably everyone else didn't buy Jade's claim of innocence. They knew her well enough not to buy such a thing. Even Freya, the newbie, wouldn't buy it.

Layla then proceeded to take out a little bit of the meat. It had some brown fur on it, making it easy to identify which beast it was. It was from the Buffalo-like beast. Most of the meat they took was from it for obvious reasons. After all, it somewhat looked like a cow while the rest were a fox, tiger and an eagle.

While their bodies could definitely handle the meat from all the beasts, and the beasts would likely be equally tasty. They had gotten used to eating certain kinds of meat as humans, so they had some bias.

"Firstly... Elsa and Freya, sorry but you won't be getting a chance to try this. As for the rest, while you'll get a chance. We'll first eat just a small bite just in case we can't handle the energy. Does anyone disagree?" Before they even got to cooking any of the meat, Muku first addressed the girls on how it was going to go.

Again, none disagreed. Elsa and Freya were also completely fine with it. They were definitely disappointed that they couldn't have any of the meat. However, they were disappointed in themselves because they knew it was because of their weakness. If they were as strong as the others or at least close to them, maybe they would have had a chance to taste it as well.

"Well, some no one disagrees. Let's get on with it. Emily, you're our MVP for the next part," Muku spoke while looking at Emily, who nodded with a serious expression on her face as if she was getting ordered to go to war or something.

"I promise I won't let you all down!" Emily replied dramatically as she got up and walked to the kitchen.

"I'm sure you won't ma'am!" Muku decided to play along as he also replied dramatically then followed her with the meat floating behind him.

The others just looked on and quietly followed behind them. It was one of those "we listen and we don't judge" moments, just that they were looking instead. Other than Audrey, their whole group was crazy anyway. So, they were quite accommodating of the quirks their teammates had.

Even Freya, who hadn't behaved in any crazy way yet, didn't judge. She actually thought that it was quite cute how they were so open with each other, free of embarrassment.

Being with them made it easy to forget that they were in the apocalypse and could get attacked at any moment. However, she knew that they were vigilant despite how they behaved. It was like they found the perfect balance between surviving and living. Which was definitely a requirement if one wanted to stay sane in such trying times.

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Around two hours later...

"Emily... Are you sure you're trying your hardest?" Jade spoke with some obvious suspicion and disbelief in her voice.

Emily had been cooking the meat for two hours straight with her flames and yet it wasn't properly done. So, Jade's question was somewhat understandable. However, Emily wasn't in the mood to hear such a thing at that moment...

"Why don't you do it then?" Emily immediately snapped, some annoyance obvious in her voice. She didn't know that cooking the meat would be so hard. Maybe because the beast was an Earth-type that specialised in defence. Its meat was very resistant to Emily's flames even after its death.

Emily had been trying her best without outputting too much power that would ruin it. It was quite strenuous since it required a high level of concentration. So hearing Jade ask her such a thing with obvious suspicion in her tone made her unable to control herself.

She couldn't help but feel like Jade was purposefully trying to ruin her reputation in front of Muku. Which only made her even more angry. What she didn't know, however, was that Muku didn't mind the moments she was like that at all. To him, all humans had flaws. So when a person exposes their flaws, the more comfortable he is with them.

It might sound crazy but he dislikes people who seem perfect. People who always have it together. So, in a way, Emily, who was getting more relaxed around him and making more mistakes, was actually improving her chances with him for the future. If she had stayed as she was before when she measured every action she took around him. She likely wouldn't have had a chance.

"Sorry. I wasn't thinking clearly" Jade immediately backed off noticing that Emily really was annoyed.

Not because she didn't want to annoy Emily. Rather, she didn't want Emily to stop cooking the meat. Otherwise, on a normal day, annoying Emily was one of her most favourite things to do.

"Hhm!" Emily didn't say anything more. She then continued to do her thing, the others watched on in silence.

It was only thirty minutes later that Emily managed to properly cook the meat. Immediately after she made it clear that she won't be involved in cooking it ever again until she reaches R3 first.

Seeing how spent she looked. The others didn't try to persuade her. After all, cooking wasn't supposed to be so troublesome. Not to mention that they probably couldn't properly eat the R3 meat anyway.

"So, how are we doing this? Is one person going to eat first while the others look on? Then, based on what happens to that person, the others will decide their next step or all at once?" Layla, who wasn't too keen on experimenting with her body, spoke.

While she definitely wanted to have some of the meat. She just didn't want to eat it without knowing what was going to happen after.

"I'll volunteer to go first. My body is probably the strongest here anyway. However, I want a bit more meat for my troubles" Of course, the carnivorous Jade immediately jumped at the chance to get more meat.

So what if there could be dangers involved? Everything could be discussed as long as there was tasty food.

"Sounds good to me. Sure, go ahead" Muku immediately agreed. While he wouldn't have suggested such a thing or nominated anyone for it. He wasn't against it. After all, the mage-type girls really weren't anywhere close to Jade when it came to their bodies.

Jade might look as delicate as the rest of them without any obvious muscle showing on her body. But he knew that she was a beast inside.

"Great!" Jade expressed her happiness with one word. Then she immediately tossed the little piece of meat into her mouth. There was zero hesitation in her actions.

"If you want to kill Jade, just add poison to her food. Even if she smells it, she'll still eat it happily then die" Emily spoke sarcastically as she made fun of how Jade liked food too much.

"Hmm... Actually, you might have a pint there" Jade replied after swallowing the meat. She didn't even try to defend herself since she felt that there was a real possibility she would do such a thing.

"Whatever... So, how is it? How do you feel?" Emily wasn't moved by how Jade wasn't triggered. All she cared about at the moment was how Jade felt. So she immediately asked, putting all the pretence aside.

"I'm not sure... I was so excited I swallowed it without chewing. I don't feel anything yet tho... Oh!" Jade was replying to Emily when she suddenly felt a chaotic energy explode in her stomach. Without waiting, she ran outside.

"Roooooar!"

As soon as she got outside, she looked up at the sky and then released her breath attack. The attack seemed just as strong as her usual ones despite her not having gathered up her energy before the attack.

The long-range attack even cleared up some clouds above head. If she had fired it off in the mansion, there would definitely have been nothing left of whatever she hit.

"Woah!" Jade exclaimed while looking at the sky she cleared up...

Chapter 158: Mansion matters

A while later...

"I think it's fair to assume that we can't handle R3 meat yet. However, we might as well have the meat we already cooked. Audrey, you can go ahead and divide it equally among us. Give a little of mine to Jade. As for how you all are going to eat yours. I'll leave that to you" Muku made his decision after seeing the Jade incident where her body immediately ejected the energy it couldn't handle.

Her body was so overwhelmed it didn't even absorb a little bit of the energy. Otherwise, Jade's hidden attributes might have gotten a second significant boost.

"Okay, with that. I think it's about time Freya talks to Iris. We need her cooperation to understand what was happening yesterday and who the owner of that voice was" Muku moved on to the next matter after Audrey finished sharing the meat.

"I'll go do it right now" Freya replied as she got up. Her mood had stabilized, so she wasn't as averse to entering her mindscape as before.

As for why she didn't do it in front of the others... Well, she just didn't want them to look at her practically unconscious body. When she enters her mindscape, her body enters a state similar to an unconscious person.

It wasn't that she didn't trust them with her defenceless body. Just that, like most people, she wasn't comfortable with having people looking at her when she was in such a state. Like, who would want to be surrounded by people looking at you when you are asleep or unconscious?

The others didn't object; they just nodded as she left. Everyone's EQ was quite high so they could easily tell what was happening.

"So you want me to come with you?" Emily called out just as Freya was about to go upstairs.

She knew more about Freya than the others after all. Not to mention that she had promised herself not to let Freya be alone again. She knew that entering her mindscape was the thing that made Freya feel alone the most. So she had to ask.

"... Sure, if you don't mind" Freya thought for a bit but agreed to let Emily come along. While the way she saw her mindscape improved. She was still not completely fine. So Emily's presence would be quite helpful.

"Don't be silly. Of course, I don't mind," Emily replied with a smile on her face as she ran up to Freya. The two then went upstairs.

"... They've gotten really close huh?" Layla spoke with some jealousy in her voice. She then looked at Chloe unblinkingly.

"...What?" Chloe tried to ignore it at first but she couldn't ignore it for long with Layla being so obvious.

"Why aren't we so close yet?" Layla immediately replied, some obvious confusion in her voice.

"Well, it's only been one day, so... It's quite understandable, actually", Chloe replied, trying to defend how she wasn't as proactive as Emily.

"It has only been one day for them as well... Do you perhaps not like me?" Layla didn't relent. She even looked a little sad at the end.

"No! That's not it... I, ah!" Chloe immediately became flustered.

She really liked the idea of being sisters with Layla and she wanted to get closer as well. Just that she didn't know how to approach Layla who always emitted an unapproachable air without realising it.

"I have an idea... Why don't the two of you go out on a reconnaissance mission together? Just look around our immediate surroundings while talking and getting to know each other better?" Audrey chimed in. She was all for the idea of Layla and Chloe becoming like real sisters for obvious reasons.

"I like that idea as well. In fact, you can go right now if you want. We'll tell you about the Iris matter when you get back" Muku immediately supported the idea.

He had long noticed that to some level, Layla hadn't been able to properly connect to the rest of the girls. It was like she saw them as allies but barely as friends, if at all.

However, since he had promised himself to not get too involved in everything they did. He just looked on, hoping that the situation would improve on its own. Since someone else brought it up, he didn't mind supporting it though.

"Yes! Let's do that! Let's go!" Layla didn't think twice as she immediately got up, grabbed Chloe's hand, and dragged her toward the door. Obviously, she liked the idea.

Poor Chloe's brain short-circuited as she was dragged. She didn't even know what was happening anymore. So she was easily dragged away by Layla.

"Remember not to go too far!" Muku couldn't help but remind them with a shout.

Like always, he didn't like them being away from him. However, he knew that they could keep themselves safe. So he unwillingly let them go. It was necessary for their growth as well.

"Yes!" Layla shouted back, then they disappeared into the distance.

"Are you really okay with letting them go?" Audrey came beside Muku and asked.

"Of course not! And why are you asking that when you're the one who suggested it?!" Muku replied annoyedly to Audrey's open taunt of a question.

"Hehe. Sorry for asking" Audrey replied with a little laugh. Clearly enjoying his plite.

She had noticed that the closer she got to him, the more the "shackles" that were imposed on her by his bloodline loosened. Now she didn't even need to call him master and could joke around with him like she was doing.

It seemed while he couldn't control his bloodline much yet, he still played a part in the way it dealt with her. The day she realised that, was one of the happiest days of her life. Knowing that he saw her more than the mother of one of his students made her very happy.

She wasn't certain why that was. However, she did have a sneaking suspicion. She dared not dive deeper into that thought for the time being though. The situation was way too messed up to allow her to think of such things.

"Tsk, enjoy it while you can. I'll get my revenge!" Muku spoke while exaggeratedly raising his fist with a serious expression on his face.

"Hehe," Audrey laughed again, her hand covering her mouth. Even with that, her beauty captivated everyone present.

"Should we give the two of you a room?" Suddenly a jealous voice sounded from beside Muku.

The first person Muku assumed to be the speaker was Jade. Then he remembered that a different person was sitting beside him. The voice also belonged to someone else who wasn't Jade.

That's right, it was Hope who spoke. The girl's face had turned green with envy. Not because of the romantic atmosphere Muku and Audrey were creating, but because he wasn't paying attention to her. All she cared about was being the one he paid most of his attention to when he wasn't talking about business matters.

"Aw, little Hope is jealous. Fufu, don't worry, your Big Brother still cares about you the most. So there's no reason to get a room" Audrey was the first to speak before Muku could.

While she seemed to be unbothered by what Hope said. She got a faint blush on her face when she said, "Get a room", which betrayed her inner feelings.

"Come on, Hope, you know I care about you the most, right?" Muku spoke while pinching Hope's nose and then patting her on the head. Immediately Hope was appeased, a happy smile appearing on her face.

"Hehe, yeah", Hope replied, then jumped into his embrace. Her clingy side coming out again.

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Upstairs in Freya's room...

Freya, who had been in her mindscape for around ten minutes, finally opened her eyes. The first thing she saw was Emily who was holding her hand with worry written all over her face.

A warm feeling washed over her heart, it was what she had always wanted. To have someone look at her with such pure eyes full of worry. Even her father couldn't manage it. There was a slight judgemental look that would appear in his eyes from time to time.

That look told her that while he said that he believed her. He actually had his doubts and sometimes they would get the better of him. For that reason, she couldn't get too close to him despite his care and support.

"So, how was it?" Emily immediately asked for the outcome of the deal with Iris.

"Well..." Freya only spoke one word and then trailed off.

Before Emily could say anything else. Freya held out her hand and a small green plant appeared out of nowhere in her palm. The little plant grew at an amazing speed visible to the naked eye.

In less than five seconds, it was already a long vine that wrapped around Freya's whole arm.

"What do you think?" Freya spoke with a big smile while looking at Emily.

Obviously, it was a rhetorical question. For Freya to use the plant element, Iris must have agreed to the deal.

With that, Freya became an honorary double-element Evolver.

Chapter 159: Odd occurrence?

"Wow, congratulations!" Emily congratulated Freya excitedly.

"Thanks, hopefully now I can get stronger faster and be more useful in battle" Freya replied with a smile on her face.

"Well, as long as you're happy. Was she difficult to talk to?" Emily didn't try to remind Freya that she was already enough as she was since Freya wanted to be more. Instead, she asked about how the deal with Iris went.

"Umm, it was a lot easier than I thought it would be actually. She seemed more than willing to take it. The reason I took more time to come out was for another reason. I was asking her about what the leader mentioned before" Freya told Emily why she took a little more time than expected.

"Oh... So, what did she say?" Emily asked curiously. Like the others, she was also eager to know the finer details of what took place the previous day.

"Let's go down first. I'm sure everyone is waiting for us. I'll tell you then, along with them" Freya replied. She didn't want to keep the others waiting any longer.

"Ah! Right! I had completely forgotten, let's go" Emily spoke with a jerk as Freya reminded her about the others.

She then grabbed Freya's hand and dragged her downstairs. Which was not too different from how Layla had dragged Chloe away before. Freya didn't mind as she just let herself be dragged forward. She was well aware of Emily's sometimes hyper personality.

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Downstairs...

"Finally..." Jade spoke as her ears twitched a bit.

Before anyone could ask what she meant. They noticed Emily and Freya come down the stairs. Everything became clear. While the feat wasn't anything too crazy, it was still impressive since Emily and Freya weren't making any noise as they walked forward. Which was a tendency most people in the apocalypse had subconsciously developed.

Soon the two girls reached the others and took their seats. No one said anything, after all, Freya already knew why they were gathered there. So there was no need for anyone to say anything for her to speak.

"Where are Chloe and Layla"? Emily asked before Freya could speak. In such a small group where everyone was close, it was easy to notice someone's absence. So both Emily and Freya had noticed the missing people from the moment they laid their eyes on the group.

Emily, who should have been able to sense them around the mansion if they were around, couldn't. Freya, who had a connection to the mansion, which allowed her to sense everyone's position if she wanted to, also couldn't find them. So Emily couldn't help but ask. After all, they rarely separate.

"They went on a recon, slash bonding mission. They should be back soon enough" Muku replied.

The way he spoke in a somewhat uneasy tone made it easy to guess that he didn't particularly like the idea of them going out alone. It was already a good thing that he wasn't secretly stalking them actually. When it came to the girls, he was no different from an overprotective papa-bear.

"Oh... Okay. Anyway, I'll let Freya speak now. I'm sure we're all dying to know" Emily replied.

She was a little surprised by Chloe and Layla's sudden departure, but she had a lot of trust in their abilities, so she wasn't too worried. She didn't delay anymore as she made way for Freya to speak.

"Umm, so Iris said that she's only allowed to review that the owner of the voice we heard was someone with high authority. The being won't do anything to us since we're too weak. Oh, and this isn't the first time our world has gone through an apocalypse. Other than that, she can't say anymore. Literally, she tried speaking, but it was censored, like in a video or something. It was honestly quite off-putting" Freya didn't waste any time as she immediately told the others what Iris told her.

There were even goosebumps on her arms as she spoke. Which showed just how creeped out she was by what she had witnessed.

The information wasn't a lot, but it was better than nothing. At the very least, if they were to trust Iris' words, they wouldn't have to worry about being attacked by such a being. While Ares seemed to be way stronger, he couldn't randomly appear in the sky above them. Which made the Authority a lot more dangerous in the short run.

So knowing that they were safe was reassuring. As for it not being the first time the world faced an apocalypse, they didn't care. After all, that was then, which has nothing to do with them. All they cared about was surviving their current apocalypse. So there will be no quest of "seeking the truth". None of them particularly cared about history.

"Is that so?... Oh well, as long as we're safe. So, are you going to show us your new power or what?" Muku replied, clearly not too bothered by the lack of deeper information.

While he was curious to know, he wasn't willing to go out of his way to attain it. In fact, he kinda didn't want to know. The information sounded like the type that would get you into trouble for just knowing it. The Ares problem was enough for him.

Though if by some twist of fate the information falls on his lap in the future. He won't mind taking a look. After all, even a cat with nine lives died because of its curiosity. Meaning, that even after multiple deaths, it still came back for more. What's a human who hasn't died even once compared to that? Of course, the human would give in to their curiosity.

Anyway, that wasn't too important. This was shown by how Muku showed more interest in Freya's ability display.

"Please don't laugh since I'm still getting used to it... This is all I can do for now" Freya spoke a bit shyly. She was a lot more self-conscious when dealing with a larger group compared to when it was just Emily. After all, it wasn't just any random group of people. It was likely the strongest group of humans in the apocalypse.

So her shyness was understandable. However, she still showed them what she could do to the best of her abilities. Like before, vines sprouted out from inside her palm and wrapped around her whole arm. If one looked closely, however, they would notice that the vines weren't actually coming out of her arm. They were forming from mana just a few millimetres above her skin.

Not wanting to only do what she did last time. She then tried her best to straighten the vine. Which she managed to do. So it turned into what seemed like a pointy green stick that was protruding out of her hand.

"Interesting... Can you shoot it?" Jad was the first to comment, and she also paused a question that made Freya wonder. It wasn't out of malice but she was actually helping Freya open her mind more.

Something her Beast Aura had taught her was how to be versatile and open-minded. She noticed that the current Freya seemed to lack. It was obvious that the idea hadn't even appeared in Freya's mind.

Of course, Freya might have thought of it on her own eventually, but Jade didn't want to wait. Besides, wasn't helping each other out the point of being allies anyway?

"Hhm, I don't know. Let me see..." Freya replied, then trailed off at the end while trying to digest what Jade asked. She really hadn't thought about it. Which was understandable since she had only had the ability for a few minutes.

In the moment of trying to figure it out. Freya ended up closing her eyes without noticing it. It was like she entered into a trance. The others just looked on quietly. They were curious to see if she could do it. They could tell that a "borrowed" element was harder to use than an "inborn" since they knew how to use theirs from the start. While Freya seemed to be struggling a little.

It was like an "inborn" element user already has the instincts to use their ability from the start. Even if it's to a minor degree. However, a "borrowed" element user needed to start from scratch and develop those instincts themselves. So if Freya actually manages to do what Jade asked, she would be quite the genius.

Soon, thirty seconds passed by. Then a minute. Then two, but no one said anything or moved. They could sense that Freya was close to archiving something. They were barely blinking, not wanting to miss anything.

It was then that Freya, who still had her eyes closed, raised her hand and did the "Ironman" firing pose. She held her hand in front of her. The one-metre-long vine with a pointy end then shot forward before at an astonishing speed. The speed could easily penetrate the body of a MR1 beast. Even a PR1 would be killed if caught off guard by the attack.

Unluckily for Jade, she just happened to sit directly opposite Freya. So the attack flew directly at her face. She was completely off guard, not expecting the attack. Her eyes widened as the arrow-like vine approached...

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Three kilometres away from the mansion...

"I think we should go back and tell the others" Chloe spoke in a serious tone while looking forward.

"I second that; let's go", Layla replied. It was quite surprising how she didn't just say something like "agreed" and then go quiet. She really was trying her best to get closer to Chloe it seemed.

The two girls then nodded at each other before turning back. Their destination being the mansion. They had come across quite an odd occurrence which had to be reported as soon as possible...

Chapter 160: Beast Gathering

Back at the mansion...

"Honestly... That was a bit too close for comfort" Jade spoke lazily as she held the vine-arrow between two fingers, just an inch away from her eye.

From how relaxed she seemed, however, it was easy to tell that she wasn't in any real danger. The event didn't rouse even a little bit of her excitement.

"Hhm?... AHH!" It was only after hearing Jade speak that Freya opened her eyes. She immediately noticed the vine that Jade had stopped, a scream escaping her mother instantly.

"I'm so sorry! I don't know what happened to me. I was stuck in a trance. I didn't mean to do it. Please forgive me!" Freya spoke one word after the other hysterically.

Tears flowed nonstop from her eyes. She was regretting even trying such a thing indoors, especially when there were people around her. She didn't think she'd be able to do anything dangerous so soon after gaining the ability.

"Calm down. There's nothing to forgive. I'm the one who asked you to try it. So it's partly my fault that we ended up like this. Besides, you're crazy if you think you could have possibly injured me in your current state. I only let it get so close for a more dramatic scene. I had a line I've always wanted to say so. Even if I couldn't stop it, that guy I've there would have been able to take care of it no problem" Jade immediately interjected before Freya could continue rumberling on.

She immediately explained to the girl that there was no real danger. On a normal day, she would have teased the girl a bit. However, Freya just seemed too innocent and soft for her to try such a thing. So she immediately got to the point.

"Yeah, while Jade did put it a bit too bluntly. She's right. The current you really has no way of hurting her unless she lets you," Muku added to what Jade said for emphasis.

While it was kinda cute seeing how she was so hysterical thinking that she could have hurt Jade. He was of the same mind as Jade. Freya was really just too innocent to bully. It seemed her loner lifestyle from before the apocalypse spared her from all the filth of humanity.

While the filth did make people wiser. It still wasn't anything to be proud of. If a person is to be wise. It shouldn't be brought up by their terrible environment. Which is rather sad actually. It should be brought up by positive things like reading books, enlightenment and such.

So Freya's pure personality that took things based on their surface view wasn't bad. It was the world that was bad. Muku and the others didn't mind it.

"Really"? Freya asked for confirmation as she tried to calm herself down.

Inside she was feeling a bit embarrassed for how she acted. She couldn't help but look back at all your recent actions. Especially how she had exposed her fragility a lot in just two days. It was almost like she was the youngest in the group, with even Elsa being older than her. Yet only two members of the team were older than her.

"Yes... I suggest you learn to first observe and think before reacting when the situation allows it" Muku replied, even giving her a little advice while at it.

"Y-yes, I'll try my best" Freya replied while nodding her head furiously, maybe trying to shake off the embarrassment.

"Congratulations on your first long-range attack. With it, you've officially stepped on the path to greater strength that you want," Audrey spoke with a smile.

Being the oldest member of the group at thirty, she was always happy to see the girls improve. Like a mother watching her kids grow. Though with her looks, it would be more believable to strangers if they said she was a slightly older sister instead.

"T-thank, I will do my best to get stronger from now on" Freya replied, still feeling a bit embarrassed. The excitement in her voice was extremely evident though. While she hoped the incident with Jade didn't happen, she was happy to have archived such a feat on her first try.

"... They are back. In a rush too. I smell a juicy story" Jade suddenly spoke. Everyone immediately realised what she was talking about though. Only two people were missing among them after all.

Soon everyone could hear the rapid steps as Layla and Chloe approached closer. From the way they budged through the door, it was easy to guess that there was a problem.

"So, what's up?" Muku asked as soon as the girls arrived in front of them.

"Beast gathering", Layla, who was out of breath, replied with only two words. She wanted to say more. However, her mage body was spent after running so much.

"What she means is that we saw a lot of beasts gathering toward a specific place a few kilometres away from her. The reason we rushed back was that they were all Rank Twos. We thought that this could be the opportunity our group needs to reach the peak. If the situation isn't serious. If it's something serious, we can quickly prepare for the worst and escape if necessary," Chloe, who wasn't anywhere near as tired as Layla, explained a bit more.

It was understandable that she wasn't too tired considering that her lightning boosts her body. If she had better control over it, she would have carried Layla over. However, she wasn't there yet. So if she

tried it, Layla would have been cooked by the time they arrived. All she could manage at the moment was to not ruin her clothes.

Anyway, that wasn't the main point. The main point was that while they were patrolling around. They suddenly noticed beasts coming from all over. Some beats even spotted them, but didn't attack. Which was super odd since beasts usually attack humans on site.

After observing a whole longer, they noticed how all the beasts were gathering toward one area. While they were curious to know what was there. They chose to run back and notify the others.

For some reason, they were certain that something significant was happening in the place where the beasts were gathering. Like good teammates, they wanted to share it with everyone if it was something good. Also, like good teammates, they wanted to share it, if it was something bad. The meaning of "teammates in whatever situation" was something they understood well.

"Well, what are we waiting for then?" Everyone get on! I doubt any beast will attack the mansion for no reason. I also doubt that there are people around here" Muku immediately sprang into action. A familiar silver platform appeared as he spoke.

While he wasn't completely sure about leaving the mansion unattended. He could clearly see that everyone was eager to go and see what Chloe and Layla were talking about. For that reason, he couldn't leave anymore behind. He would rather choose to take a chance with the mansion than make some of his teammates feel left out.

After all, the mansion was just an object. While it was rare in the apocalypse after the great collapse brought by the World Evolution. It still was nowhere near as important as the feelings of his teammates in his head.

"Are you sure about all of us going? I couldn't stay behind and look after the mans...Oh my!" Audrey, being the response adult she was spoke while thinking about the greater picture.

She could tell that leaving the mansion unattended was risky. However, as she was still making her point, standing beside the platform, she found herself getting lifted up by an invisible force. Then she was placed on the platform with the rest. Which obviously surprised her.

"We don't have time for this. We'll talk after we're back!" That's all Muku said then he flew the platform forward. Since it had been created indoors, it was narrow so that it could pass through the door. With people standing in a line-like formation.

He changed it to the usual one after they were outside and they flew away. Chloe guiding the way. Somewhere along the line, Audrey tried to bring up the mansion matter, but Muku ignored her again.

He was even thinking that he should take her with her whenever he went out. She was getting too used to staying behind. Which might not be good for her development in the long run.

Soon, everyone set their sites forward, toward the great mystery that was causing the beasts to gather. They could already spot a few beasts as they got closer to the place.

The closer they got, the more beasts they discovered. Soon, there were more than a hundred different kinds of beasts around them. Yet they hadn't even arrived yet.

This made them more curious about what was to come. Hopefully, Author-san figures out wtf that was before they arrive. In the next chapter...